

Decision of the Accreditation Commission of AQAS on the degree programme

▪ **Licenciate in History**

at the Cahul State University (Republic of Moldova)

Based on the report of the expert panel, the comments of the university and the discussions of the Accreditation Commission in it's 62nd meeting on 22./23. February 2016, the Accreditation Commission decides:

1. The Bachelors-level programme "**History**" (**Licenciate in History**) offered by the **Cahul State University (Moldova)** is accredited according to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The accreditation is **conditional**.

2. The study programme essentially complies with the requirements defined by the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in their current version. The required adjustments can be processed within a time period of nine months.
3. The conditions have to be fulfilled. The fulfilment of the conditions has to be documented and reported to AQAS no later then **30. November 2016**
4. The accreditation is given for the period of **five years** and is valid until **30. September 2021**.

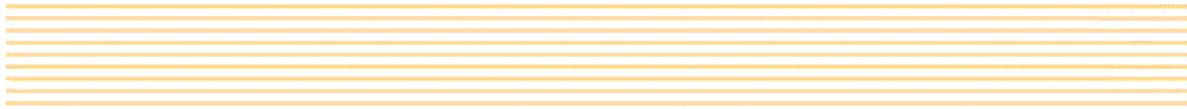
Conditions:

1. The module/course handbook must be reviewed and updated with regard to the following aspects:
 - a. All courses must be described transparently.
 - b. The Intended Learning Outcomes must be more specific regarding teacher education and in accordance with the appropriate and intended level of a bachelors programme and documented in the module/course descriptions.
 - c. All module descriptions must include the specific assessment method used in each course/module matching the described Intended Learning Outcomes.
 - d. It must be clear how and where generic and professional competences are included in the programme.
2. The realization of Learning Outcomes by the different courses/modules has to be documented in a matrix.
3. The existing documents describing the programme need to be specific in outlining the main focus of the programme as teacher education.
4. The module/course descriptions must be publicly available, preferably online.

The following **recommendations** are given for further improvement of the program:

1. The number of modules should be reduced by merging courses of the same domain to larger modules with a clear (maybe wider) denomination/topic.
2. There should be a concept to develop capacities of staff members including measures of individual coaching.
3. The number of English classes and courses taught in English should be increased.
4. Efforts to strengthen the link of the intended outcomes of the programme to the labour market should be intensified, e.g. by institutionalized exchange with the employers or by introducing a career centre at University level.
5. Staff development and qualification measures should be increased. Particular attention should be paid to increase staff training in French or English language and support of national / international publications.

With regard to the reasons for this decision the Accreditation Commission refers to the attached assessment report.



Experts' Report

on the bachelor degree programme:

“History” (B.Ed.)

offered by the Cahul State University

Visit to the University: 12th - 14th of October 2015

Panel of Experts:

Arus Harutyunyan	Student at the Armenian State University of Economics, Yerevan, (student representative)
Margareta Simona Ivan	National Qualification Authority of Romania, Bucharest (representative from the professional field)
Prof. Dr. Nicole Küchler-Stahn	University of Applied Sciences Frankfurt, Germany Public & Nonprofit Management
Prof. Dr. Ferdinand Müller-Rommel	University of Lüneburg, Germany Center for the Study of Democracy
Prof. Dr. Bogdan Murgescu	University Bucharest, Center for Administrative, Cultural and Economic Studies

Coordinator:

Ronny Heintze / Dr. Katarina Löbel AQAS e.V., Cologne, Germany

1 Introduction

This report results from the external review of the Bachelor program in History offered by the Cahul State University (CSU) in Cahul, Moldova. The review is based on the criteria that were developed jointly as part of a TEMPUS project under participation of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova. They are based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) that were developed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and presented to the Bologna Follow-Up group in 2005.

The University produced a Self Evaluation Report. The accreditation procedure was officially initialized by a decision of the AQAS Accreditation Commission on 18./19.05.2015. The Accreditation Commission nominated the before mentioned expert panel and the University did not raise any concerns against the composition of the panel.

After a review of the Self Evaluation Report, from 12th to 14th of October 2015 a site visit to the University took place. On site, the experts interviewed different stakeholders and consulted additional documentation and student work. The visit concluded with the presentation of the preliminary findings by the group of experts to the University representatives.

2 General Information

Cahul State University is a public institution founded in 1999 with a view to prepare and ensure localities from the Southern part of the Republic of Moldova with qualified teaching staff. The Cahul State University is divided into three faculties: Faculty of Philology and History, Faculty of Law and Public Administration and Faculty of Economics, Computer Science and Mathematics. The teaching staff consists of 106 teachers. At the time of the application, over 1,700 students study at the Cahul State University. The study programme "History" is located at the Faculty of Philology and History.

3 Profile / Outcomes of the Programme

According to the SER, the purpose of the history programme is to develop historians who possess both intellectual range and specialized competence. The aim is to provide the students with essential historical knowledge along with the necessary skills, attitudes and values of a professional historian. The students should learn to examine changes occurring over time in Moldova, Romania, Europe and the globe from ancient times to the present. Furthermore, the students should be enabled to develop and excel in reading, writing, critical thinking, organizational and oral presentation skills. They are also taught to understand historiographical analysis, use of historical methodology and research technology in order to present original research.

In addition, the students should be enabled to educate the rising generation, to change the nature of the professional activities of teaching and assessing at organizational and managerial level. They shall also to carry out professional work by using modern methods for teaching, learning and assessing. On a more abstract level, the students should also develop the ability of continuous self-improvement.

To access the study programme "History", applicants must hold a Bacalaureate diploma, a secondary education or a higher education diploma. The admission to the University is carried out on the basis of the normative acts issued up by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova, based on Regulation of organization and carrying out the admission in higher education institu-

tions. Recruiting students is done by procedures laid down in the regulation of admission, according to the Nomenclature within their respective fields of professional training and plans for admission set by the government.

Experts' Evaluation

The intended Learning Outcomes of the programme exist and are published. During the site visit, an additional catalogue of courses that are held in Romanian language was provided to the panel of experts as not all courses were documented as part of the Self Evaluation Report (SER) and consequently part of the course/module handbook. **(Finding 1)** The catalogue contains a list of learning outcomes of the History Programme, split in no less than 8 categories of so-called “competencies”: gnosiological, prognostic, management, praxiological, evaluation of professional activity results, communication, social integration, research and continuing training. The competencies are described in terms of knowledge and skills but it is not fully clear if and how all of the listed competencies are covered by the content of the programme. **(Finding 2)** Moreover, according to the SER, the National Qualifications Framework for the programme of History exists and it was taken into consideration for the programme design. The experts found no evidence that would contradict this statement.

The experts observe that there is still room for a more coherent approach regarding the different aims/profile of the programme named “History” as well as for the balance between the core disciplines and the optional ones. While it was clearly stated in the different discussions that the main intention is to qualify teachers, the description of the programme, especially when consulting the course descriptions, is not that clear. **(Finding 3)** An advantage of the programme is that it leads primarily into practical fields - schools, archives, museums, and libraries. The intending learning outcomes are leading to graduates who should be both specialists in history and teachers or researchers and can follow also a master programme or PhD.

The entrance requirements, transition possibilities and selection procedure are defined and adequate.

Furthermore the panel of experts concludes that the aims of the programme comply with the profile of the University of Cahul (USC). The USC proclaimed itself as a local and regional university, which is a clear mission and what can be seen as an advantage. However this can also be seen as a threat as in some parts that are vital for Higher Education the national and much more international perspective needs to be taken into consideration. The title of the programme (Bachelor in Educational Sciences) seems to be problematic, having in mind the ambition to cover in only 3 years of studies something that seems to be in-between two fields of sciences according to the Moldavian Classification of scientific specialties approved by the Governmental Decision no. 199/2013. According to this decision, the History programme belongs to the specialty domain called Humanistic sciences and not to the Educational sciences. This conflict can only be mitigated by a clearer and more visible orientation of the programme towards teacher education. **(comp. Finding 3)** Due to the fact that most of the graduates are becoming history teachers in the region (South part of Moldavia), the title of the programme (Bachelor in Educational Sciences) is also an answer to the labour market requirements, meaning the local and regional educational departments. On the other hand, the content of the programme is based on the department teaching and research resources. This inconsistency should be considered in the further development of the programme. While this might have a positive impact on the employability of the graduates it can also become a threat to the curriculum itself.

Moreover, looking at the description of the outcomes of each course from the catalogue it becomes obvious that they are not very specific regarding the intended level and field-specificity, especially in their orientation towards teacher education. **(Finding 4)** When combining the different described competencies from the course handbook they are not yet enough in line with the intended learning outcomes of the programme as such. **(comp. Finding 2)**

Based on the discussions on site the experts conclude that the students seem to be informed about the outcomes of the programme and the content of the curriculum by the curators/tutors and methodologist responsible from the department. This positive impression does not allow to overlook the fact that it did not become fully clear, if and how the learning outcomes are specifically used in the process of teaching and evaluation. In order to make this process more transparent and less dependent on the motivation of the curators/tutors and methodologist responsible it would be suitable to ensure a regular use of the module descriptions via e.g. the available moodle platform or website. While the moodle platform exists, it is almost empty regarding the History programme: at the time of the review only one course is available online. This could be a clear field of development for the future of the programme.

4 Curriculum

The university explains that the curriculum is composed of seven competence components: fundamental disciplines, disciplines developing general skills and competencies, socio-humanistic orientated disciplines, specialization oriented disciplines, disciplines oriented to another field of formation (teacher education, especially psycho-pedagogical modules), internships, and bachelor exams. The internships are a compulsory element of the study programme. They are distributed over the study years in the amount of 30 CP. The study programme ends with two Bachelor exams and a Bachelor thesis.

One credit point is allocated for 30 hours of study, 15 contact hours plus 15 hours of independent work. On average, each semester six assessments are planned. 60 credits are provided annually.

According to the SER, courses range from large introductory classes to small, focused seminars that are supposed to encourage intensive interaction.

To assess the competence progress of the students, the university applies examinations, tests, current activities in seminars and laboratory work as well as year papers. Tests can include simple questions, statements followed by a question, various exercises, tasks, structured questions, essays etc.

Experts' Evaluation

The Curriculum reflects the tension between the goal established by the national authorities (training of history teachers), the ambition of the teaching staff to include all the elements considered necessary for the training of a full-fledged historian, and the limited resources available in the framework of a B.A. program of only 6 semesters and 180 ECTS. **(comp. finding 3)** The inevitable outcome of this unresolved tension is the fact that the curriculum is somehow overcrowded with a large number of curricular elements (disciplines), some of which are having allocated a too small number of credits.

The Curriculum is described in detail in the relevant university documents, which also include a scheme about the way the learning outcomes of each individual curricular element (discipline) contribute to the overall learning outcomes of the programme. Yet, because of the imperfect correlation between the overall learning outcomes of the programme and the resources allocated for it, often the relevance of the learning outcomes of each individual curricular element is described in rather general terms and/or needs to be sharpened in the future. **(comp. Finding 2 & 4)**

For many curricular elements the SER includes descriptions or such descriptions were supplied for review during the site visit. While the experts were informed that a folder including the curriculum, the descriptions of all individual curricular elements (disciplines) and the general procedures of the study programme is available to be consulted by the students, it is important to reassure that a full description of all elements following the same standards and meeting the minimum requirements is available at once (independent from the language used). The students acknowl-

edged that they are well informed about the curriculum and its components, but the dissemination of information seems to be based less on the written form of the official documents and more on oral communication forms, which are easier to be effective in the framework of a rather small academic community.

The intended learning outcomes of the programme exist and are published. But, looking into the manual of modules/courses it becomes obvious that the generic and professional competences listed for the study programme are simply repeated in the description of several courses (like: Ancient History of the Romanian Space, Prehistory, History of World Culture, General Archaeology and so on). It does not become clear how these competencies are included and embedded in the teaching process. Consequently these learning outcomes of each module/course should be reformulated in order to point out the contribution of each of them to the generic and professional competences of the History programme. **(Finding 7)**

A methodologist helps the students in their orientation throughout the curriculum and in their choice of optional disciplines. Due to the limited number of students and financial restrictions, it is not possible to offer each year the whole range of optional disciplines, but the process of student choice is well organised and transparent.

The programme's structure allows for international mobility of students, and the regulations to promote international mobility are well in place. Nevertheless, due to scarce financial resources and to insufficient competence in using foreign languages, only very few students of the History programme of the Cahul State University take advantage of the opportunities for institutionalized international mobility. Here it might be very helpful to increase the offers in English language, not only in order to facilitate mobility for students. **(Finding 5)**

Furthermore it became obvious that the curriculum consists of a high number of relatively small units leading to a fragmentation of the qualification profile. Serious consideration should be given to the possibility of a reduction of the number of curricular units (disciplines) that are provided with a small number of credits, and in some cases their merger in larger curricular units (disciplines) encompassing several modules. This will help strengthening the core competencies of the graduates and provide a stronger profile of the qualification. **(Finding 11)**

In addition the experts conclude that currently there is a double requirement for successful graduation in the programme: a bachelor thesis as well as a more or less centralized final exam. While the time and workload available to students to prepare their bachelor thesis is at the minimum level students spend a lot of time preparing for the final exam. Allocating more time to the preparation of the bachelor thesis might be a good way to strengthen the academic character of the qualification. Recognizing the limited influence of the university on that issue, at the same time a simplification of the final state exam would not harm the quality of the qualification.

The significant demand for history teachers in the region enhances the employability chances of the students, and the programme includes practical stages that help the students to acquire the skills needed for becoming good history teachers. Nevertheless, since it is currently not clear enough, the correlation between the teaching-, learning-, and assessment methods and their practical application in the subsequent career of the graduates needs a serious upgrading and appropriate documentation **(Finding 6)**, based on a guided and informed reflection process about the specific professional requirements for a successful historical education in such a complex region like the southern part of the Republic of Moldova. The relation between research and teaching is shaped by the yet limited amount of genuine scientific research undertaken by the teaching staff. Nevertheless, to positively mention an example, the history students were involved in an interesting oral history project regarding the victims of Stalinist repression.

The programme uses a credit point system to describe the student workload. The student workload is calculated in a transparent manner for all elements of the programme. There are proce-

dures to monitor the student workload and to adapt the curriculum / the credits if necessary. It should however be mentioned that the experts were not provided with any concrete example about the enforcement of such an adaptation, so it is impossible to assess how this procedure works in reality. Even in a small institution with a positive communication culture, the proper documentation of use of the proclaimed instruments should not be underestimated.

5 Student Support

The curriculum is coordinated by the teaching-methodical-commission established within the department. The responsibilities of this committee are according to the SER: development and updating of the curricula, updating of the study plans, monitoring of the assessment standards, assisting lecturers, evaluation of the student internships and evaluating the satisfaction of service recipients. The results are according to the university discussed and approved during the department meetings.

The university offers consulting, support and guidance to students through existing subdivisions such as: Department of PR and Alumni, Department of Quality Management, Guidance and Career Orientation, student's syndicate organization, Department of European integration and academic mobility, dean's offices and English, French, German Resource centres. Faculty advisers for individual guidance and direction are available throughout the entire period of enrolment. The faculty methodologist for quality, guiding and career counselling performs the following activities: organizes the process of signing study-contracts at the beginning of each academic year, performs the evaluation of teachers by the students, and informs first year students about peculiarities of studies. In addition, each teacher for his/her subject provides consulting and guidance activities during the office hours and by mentors/tutors.

The department provides information necessary for an effective management of the individual student workload, such as how to develop a research paper, a diploma paper, a portfolio, solving a case study, searching for information, etc. A schedule is approved at the beginning of each academic year and is available for the students.

There is a number of offers for students who want to go abroad. Information services can be accessed online at the university website. Involvement in academic mobility programs is done based on partnership agreements signed between the sending institution and another institution.

Professional training is achieved also in compact periods of study: on archaeological sites, practical training in museums and archives.

The study programme follows the regulation of organization and development of the teaching process in higher education institutions of Republic of Moldova on training forms and cycles. The assessment process takes place according to the institutional regulation concerning the students' learning process approved by the Senate of Cahul State University on February 18, 2010. This regulation is published on the university website. The specific methods of assessments for the study programme "History" are discussed and approved at the chair meetings, then at the Faculty Council meeting. Course unit or module assessments as well as the criteria for the assessments are made known to the students at the beginning of the term.

Experts' Evaluation

Based on the discussions on site, evaluation forms and methods of assessment are regularly discussed at the managerial level of the faculty; there are established mechanisms and assessment methods include oral and written exams, testing, group assignments or projects. Teachers announce the assessment policy in the beginning of each course. Beyond this the students have the opportunity to go to the Dean to consult the programme documentation and the module descriptions. Furthermore some descriptions are also available on the Moodle platform.

The university regulates assessment by the composition of the final mark and the assessments methods. The usual composition of a mark is a combination of 60% for the seminar activity including two mandatory written tests, seminar activities depending on the subject specifics (e.g. portfolios, case studies, presentation), and individual work. A final exam contributes the other 40% of the mark.

The chosen methods of assessment are generally appropriate to the content, however sometimes a stronger link from acquired competency to assessment method could be helpful. The forms of examination allow students to concentrate on developing various kinds of skills including teamwork, oral and written communication and presentation. The professors who have led the course perform the assessments. Based on the discussions on site it seems to the experts that many professors implement alternative teaching methods in their practice. Student's feedback is valued.

The exams are organised according to the publicly available plan and take place on time, also according to a previously defined plan. The results of the exams are available to the students. While regulations concerning the assessment are clear and seem to be well practiced the experts do not see the additional value represented by the additional final exam. It seems much more in line to assess the final level of achievement of the intended outcomes of an academic programme by closely assessing the final thesis written by the students. Adding the additional requirement of a centralized final exam does not stipulate an understanding of an active role of the learner during the process and gives away the chance to use the final thesis (that is written anyway) as a demonstration of the academic achievements of the Bachelor-candidate. Following the information available to the panel of experts this procedure results from national regulations and this cannot be adjusted within the scope of this procedure. However, in order to further support the academic character of the programme the department might consider to move the existing course/module "introduction to scientific research" from the optional part of the curriculum to the compulsory section.

There are clear requirements and assessment practices to be respected by the evaluators for student assessment/exams, which are stressed in the SER and academic staff tends to follow those criteria. The organisation of exams is appropriate with regard to timing. There is an opportunity for resits, and students who failed a course are granted the opportunity to retake it. Regulations for compensation of disadvantages are in place. The distribution of grades in the grading spectrum is analysed. There are personal dossiers for the students including their progress sheets and grades.

At this time Moodle is the main tool when it comes to the use of ICT and it is currently only used to a limited extent in the teaching-learning-assessment processes.

An important role for student counselling and support falls to the faculties methodologists who also handles students' future employment issues. They also ask the students about their opinion about the programme. The tasks, position and function of a methodologist were discussed intensively during the site visit to better understand the position.

The information about the study programmes is available on the university's website; every spring there is a campaign to the high schools to inform potential applicants on the available course. Beyond this the experts welcome that first year students also undergo special introductory seminars that allow them to adapt easier.

From the expert's perspective student advisory services are quite well developed. There is a service for guidance and career so the students can receive support after graduation. The university has a vice rector on education and extracurricular activities who holds primary responsibility for these services on the level of the top management. There is a good practice of curators/mentors whom the students can turn to in case of any questions regarding their academic life.

Also there is a good practice of student's psychological support, as there is a psychology centre operating in the university to ensure support for those students who need consultation. There is a clear vision and motivation from the management perspective on student involvement. Student movement is encouraged and is ready to be supported. There are several clubs, student corners and support mechanisms for organising extracurricular activities and leisure, as well as structures for social support. In the future, the students could benefit from a stronger self empowered students movement enabling them to speak with a more independent voice. This could be reached by connecting the local student organisations to those in other regions/countries.

At this time it has to be recognised that there are not many incoming or outgoing students, mainly due to financial reasons. However it has to be recognised that the university has an understanding of the need for increased internationalization and has started to develop good connections with the Lower Danube University of Galați (Romania) and has signed agreements with universities from Romania, Ukraine, Italy, France, Portugal and Spain. Beyond this the University is involved in some Tempus projects. Internationalization is clearly a field of action that requires further development in order to increase the competitiveness of the institutions and its programmes.

While not used in many cases in practice, students may request transfer from one institution to another or switch faculties. The process is organised according to a National System of Study Credits. The transfer can be made only for the second and following years. In the discussion the faculty could provide examples when students were transferred from one university to another or abroad.

6 Employability

Graduates with a degree in History are supposed to act as a teacher as well as a researcher in scientific research institutions and they have the opportunity to continue their studies at Masters and PhD programmes. The graduates can act as well as collaborators in museums and archives, or as library workers in non-profit organizations.

The department offers opportunities for students to gain experience as teaching assistants during the latter part of their degree programme. The obtained qualification is supposed to enable the graduates to work in various types of institutions: in gymnasiums, general schools, high schools, colleges, museums, and institutions of higher education.

The department has implemented a register of employment of the graduates and a career development monitoring.

Experts' Evaluation

According to the documentation available to the experts and based on the discussions on site the Department of History and Social Sciences has not yet fully developed a systematic mechanism to correlate the education and the labour market requirements. This is compensated by personal contacts that are very important and through alumni and former or actual professors and collaborators of the teaching staff. Beyond this some institutional agreements have been signed, especially on the purpose of internships. The students have access to different kind of information and receive recommendations from the professors.

A diploma supplement is handed to the students upon completion of the programme reflecting the qualifications achieved through it. An example was available to the experts as an annex to the documentation.

Recognizing that during the site visit the panel of expert did not discuss with labour market representatives the main evidence regarding the inclusion of employers comes from the documentation and the indirect assessment by interviewing the students. History students met by the panel of

experts were very confident about the employability opportunities due to the fact that already during the internships they are asked by the schools to assume teaching responsibilities. The lack of teachers especially in the rural area of the south of Moldova is so high that students and graduates who accept a job in that part are highly welcomed. Although the payment is very low, the graduates are satisfied with the fact that the first job is almost guaranteed. This very peculiar situation clearly can be seen as a strong point but it can easily become a threat for the programme. The teaching staff of the History and Social Sciences department should increase their efforts to search for new links and collaboration with the representatives of the labour market also beyond the regional Educational centres. National and international connections might help to increase the competitiveness of graduates and modernize the teaching.

In order to reflect both academic and labour market requirements in the structure of the study programme and intended learning outcomes it could be useful to establish a so called “qualifications committee”, including representatives of teaching staff, students, alumni and employers. On the basis of a transparent procedure this structure should report to the faculty or department on the requirements of the labour market as well as to propose improvements of the curricula in order to allow students and graduates to acquire the most important learning outcomes to facilitate their social insertion.

Moreover it is highly recommended to establish a Career Guidance Centre at the university level, which will increase on one hand the transparency of the learning outcomes provided by the study programme for the employers and on the other hand will give to students, graduates and alumni a space to meet each other, to change information and build projects. **(Finding 8)**

Having in mind the fact that the CSU wants to be a local/regional university it should be very important for the employability of its graduates to institutionally establish at the university level a platform for regular and open discussions with the employer’s representatives of the region. **(comp. Finding 8)**

7 Resources

The university explains that usually are admitted 15 to 20 students per year to the study programme “History”. In the academic year 2012-2013, nine teachers occupied the academic posts: one professor, four associate professors, one doctor and three senior lecturers.

The institution has two large study blocks, three student hostels that provide students with housing, a library with access to research literature and with three reading rooms, as well as four multimedia rooms with access to the Internet and to study new information technologies. An electronic platform (moodle) is used at the department.

Experts’ Evaluation

All staff involved in the teaching of the programme is documented including their academic and other relevant qualification as well as research activities and quantitative involvement (teaching hours) in the programme. Recognizing the general risk of staff change and dropouts, there are procedures to ensure that the basic teaching capacity will be maintained during the whole period of accreditation.

During the previous period, the teaching staff has improved their academic qualification, most of them having obtained their Ph.D. According to the information included in the SER, the two members of the faculty who have not yet obtained this degree are enrolled in doctoral studies at the Historical Institute of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova or at the State University of Moldova. This effort will help support the academic quality of teaching as well as support the fulfilment of the requirements of the new code of education of the Republic of Moldova.

According to the information provided during the visit, the institution has strategies and mechanisms of performance promotion and staff motivation. Thus, the performance of all staff members is reviewed periodically (each five years), and contracts may be discontinued if certain performance benchmarks are not met; nevertheless, it has been acknowledged that the cases of discontinuing contracts are very seldom. Although the students expressed a high degree of satisfaction regarding the level of expertise of the teaching staff, this satisfaction may be also determined by the lacking comparative experience, which might have helped at more accurate benchmarking. To put this in context: The current teaching staff has been exposed only to a low level of international academic interaction. Most of them have participated to international conferences only in Moldova and Romania, have not been involved in major international research projects, and have published mainly in journals and at publishing houses of limited international academic visibility. While determined to a large extent by the level of mastering foreign languages – most of the staff is proficient only in Romanian and Russian, and has only limited knowledge of French and/or English -, this pattern has been furthered also by the policy of the university to prioritize publications in its own journals and at its own publishing house. The university organizes conferences and supports to a certain extent the international mobility of its staff, but there is no clear strategy in force for enhancing international exposure and the academic performance of the faculty. Clearly on the long run the good motivation, capacity and willingness of staff to develop in this direction should be supported by increasing their training in French or English language in order to enable them to stronger participate in international exchange and publish more in journals beyond their own publications. **(Finding 9)**

Taking a broader perspective it should be recognized that the development of the capacities of existing staff members should be a priority for the university considering that the opportunities of recruitment for new staff members are limited. Individual career coaching offers will help staff in their development. As the challenges regarding staff development are beyond the specifics of the programme or department these activities should be integrated in a wider concept of the university regarding the internal staff development. **(Finding 12)**

The Learning Resources seem to be adequate in terms of room and space required for the number of students enrolled, laboratories, computer workplaces and Internet facilities. A critical point clearly is the library. Compared to today's standards it might be seen as underprovided and clearly needs an upgrade both in the capacity to provide information about its resources (the electronic catalogue is still a task for the future), and in the number and diversity of the books it supplies to the students. Not only recent Western literature is scarce, but also basic historical reference works are lacking. The current possessions of the library testify more about the networks of book donors and about patterns of occasional purchases than about a systematic development of the existing resources. With great satisfaction the experts understood that the management of the university expressed intentions to enlarge the access to international databases beyond EBSCO, but these intentions need to be transformed into concrete plans, with clear schemes of pooling together the necessary financial means and deadlines for their implementation. Not neglecting the clear need to improvement, at current stage the library can be seen to reach the minimum requirements when considering the intended learning outcomes of the programme.

8 Quality Assurance

Cahul State University has developed a Quality Management System that is supposed to provide the structures and defines the procedures and responsibilities of the quality management. Its foundation consists of the strategic plan as well as the University's target programme together with the related target programmes and action plans of the units (faculties, departments, independent institutes). The operations management process, which involves setting objectives and monitoring their achievement, is at the core of quality management. The University has defined

indicators and quantitative follow-up targets to monitor whether it is moving in the direction defined by its objectives. The rector conducts target negotiations with the faculties and university departments on the eve of the strategy period to agree on quantitative and qualitative objectives. According to the SER, the following key quality management procedures are used on a regular basis:

- quality assurance procedures applied in the international academic community that are of relevance to the University's core duties,
- quality assurance of the recruitment (researchers, teachers, students),
- documentation of the quality system, including definitions of the quality policy, operations, actors and responsibilities,
- evaluation of research, education and stakeholders, as well as of administration and support services,
- self-evaluation and related reporting, and
- collection and evaluation of feedback from students, interest groups and staff, as well as the resulting measures.

The Board of Cahul State University bears ultimate responsibility for quality principles and policies. The University leadership is accountable for the overall quality of operations and results. The faculty deans answer for the operational and qualitative results of their own units. The quality management steering group and the Senate Commission on the quality of education issues coordinates the University's quality management. Each operating unit has at least one quality coordinator whose duty is to communicate about quality management procedures, to promote quality management in his or her unit as well as to support the University leadership in quality management issues.

The quality assurance of the study programme in "History" is in the responsibility of the departments' chair. The quality assurance instruments used at the department are:

- course evaluation,
- identification of students' demands,
- graduates' survey on the programme,
- evaluation of the teachers,
- employers' survey, and
- labour market surveys.

Experts' Evaluation

The History programme is subject to the university policy and procedures for quality assurance. A member of the teaching staff acts as a curator of the programme and helps to organize and manage the student feedback.

There are regular feedback mechanisms involving various stakeholders, and during the discussions on site it became obvious that the feedback from the employers has also been considered in the revision of the curriculum by adding a curricular unit regarding civic education. The student survey that focuses on the study plan, quality of teaching, and teaching resources, besides documenting the satisfaction of the students, also contributes to the development of the quality-culture inside the university.

The course/module descriptions are available to the students. While it seems that the information about the intended learning outcomes, methods of learning and teaching, assessment methods,

and the expected workload are highly standardised – and following the impression of the experts – not primarily used for the information of the students and stakeholders about the programme, their relevance for the actual unfolding of the teaching process seems questionable. Making the module/course description publicly available will help to increase the use of these descriptions.
(Finding 10)

The course offer is well coordinated, and the programme (including internships) is implemented in a way that allows students to complete their studies in the advertised regular course duration.

9 Recommendations of the panel of experts

The panel of experts recommends to accredit with conditions the Bachelor programme “**History**” offered by **the Cahul State University** in Cahul, Republic of Moldova.

Findings:

1. The course/module handbook must be completed in a way that all courses are transparently described.
2. It is not fully clear if and how all of the listed Learning Outcomes on the level of the programme are realized by the contents of the curriculum.
3. The existing documents describing the programme are not specific enough regarding teacher education as the main priority of the programme.
4. The intended learning outcomes documented in the course handbook should be more specific regarding their orientation towards teacher education as well as appropriate regarding the intended level of qualification.
5. The number of English classes and courses taught in English should be increased.
6. The assessments methods for every module/course must meet the intended qualifications/competencies and be described in a transparent manner as part of the course/module description.
7. The learning outcomes of modules/courses should be reformulated in order to point out how generic and professional competences are included in the programme.
8. Efforts to strengthen the link of the Intended outcomes of the programme to the labour market should be strengthened, e.g. by institutionalized exchange with the employers or by introducing a career centre at University level.
9. Staff development and qualification measures should be increased. Particular attention should be paid to increase staff training in French or English language and support of national / international publications.
10. The module/course descriptions must be publicly available, preferably online.
11. The number of small (low number of credit points) modules/courses (disciplines) should be reduced, and in some cases their merger in larger curricular units (disciplines) should be considered.
12. There should be a concept to develop capacities of staff members including measures of individual coaching.