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

Nicolae Balcescu Land Forces Academy Sibiu

EVALUATION REPORT

May 2013

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1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of Nicolae Balcescu Land Forces Academy Sibiu (named hereafter LFA). The evaluation took place in 2012-2013 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.

Whilst 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.

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



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- 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. Nicolae Balcescu Land Forces Academy Sibiu and the national context

Nicolae Balcescu Land Forces Academy Sibiu is the only specialised academic institution that develops commissioned leaders for the Romanian Land Forces. Moreover, it is able to form or specialise professionals for other beneficiaries in the national defence, public order and national security system or in the civilian environment. LFA reports to two ministries: the Ministry of National Defence (MND) and the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport (MERYS).

The LFA's training offer comprises:

- Three accredited study programmes at Bachelor level: organisation management, economic-financial management, public administration
- Three accredited study programmes at Master level: organisational leadership, organisational capability management and management and technology
- Seven professional specialisation courses for the needs of MND are also provided

Among the four local universities in Sibiu, LFA is one of two that are classified as teaching and scientific research universities. At national level, LFA in Sibiu reached the same level of classification as the other four military institutions of higher education ("Henry Coandă" Air Forces Academy, "Mircea cel Batrân" Naval Forces Academy, Technical Military Academy, "Carol I" National Defence University).

The LFA's infrastructure has been modernised in recent years in order to meet the new requirements and quality standards established at the national, European Union and NATO levels, regarding both the academic and military fields of studies. LFA has been designed for a number of about 1 100 students, and offers a great deal of opportunities and facilities for students and staff.

In 2011/2012, 854 students went through a Bachelor programme, of whom four-fifths study in the organisation management programme; 253 students are enrolled in a Master's programme; 18 students attend the professional training postgraduate programme. LFA employs 103 teachers and the students/teacher ratio is 11:1 (year 2011/2012).

The Senate establishes the annual number of students according to the requirements of the MND and of other structures of the national defence, public order and national security



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system and the permanent dimensioning of the structures of the MND, a process that is shared in all NATO and EU member states.

1.3. The Self-Evaluation Process

With a view to successfully accomplishing the self-evaluation process, the LFA Sibiu Administrative Council established a self-evaluation group on 30 July 2012. The members of the Self-Evaluation Group (SEG) were as follows:

- Lieutenant colonel Vasile CARUTASU, PhD, Scientific Researcher I – Vice-Rector for Scientific Research – SEG chairman;
- Colonel Mircea POPA, PhD, Professor - President of the University Senate;
- Marioara PATESAN, PhD, Associate Professor – Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Military Management;
- Lieutenant colonel Danut MOSTEANU, PhD, Associate Professor - Head of Technical Sciences Department;
- Luminita GIURGIU, PhD, Associate Professor - University Senate member;
- Anca DINICU, PhD, Assistant Professor - University Senate member;
- Stefania BUMBUC, PhD, Assistant Professor - University Senate member;
- Lieutenant colonel Dan POPA - Scientific Research, Community Programmes, Didactic Logistics and Acquired Experience Department member;
- Lieutenant colonel Constantin TROCAN, Head of the Evaluation and Quality Assurance Office within Educational Management Section – SEG Secretary;
- Senior student Ciprian GOTCA - the students' representative.

The selection of SEG members reflects a balanced representation of the LFA structures and their range of expertise within the institution.

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) is the result of a collaborative process that took place in the period July-October 2012. The SEG members collected the data used in the report in association with the colleagues working in all structures of the institution. An important support was also provided by the management of LFA and by University Senate members.

The SEG recognised some difficulties associated with the amount of data necessary for the information in the annexes and the data presented in the report, but also due to the particularities of the institution and the characteristics of each unit (that must meet both the standards imposed by Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports (MERYS) and those of the Ministry of National Defence (MND)).

The evaluation team recognises the quality and consistency of the SER as well as the participatory approach opted by LFA. Whilst the report could have been less descriptive and



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more strategic, it contains sufficient information to prepare the visit and equip the evaluation team with a vast knowledge of the situation and the dynamics occurring at the LFA. Honesty of the content and transparency of the process have driven the self-evaluation, despite the novelty of such exercise for LFA.

1.4. The evaluation team

The self-evaluation report of LFA, together with the appendices, was sent to the team in October 2012. The visits of the evaluation team (hereafter the team) to LFA took place in November 2012 and February 2013, respectively.

The team consisted of:

- Tove Bull, former Rector, University of Tromso, Norway, Chair
- Jürgen Lüthje, former President, University of Hamburg, Germany
- Emilia Todorova, student, Glasgow Caledonian University, United Kingdom
- Fabrice Hénard, higher education consultant, Team Coordinator

The team thanks the Rector-Commandant of LFA, Ghita Barsan, for his engagement in the evaluation process, his commitment and enthusiasm, and Vasile Carusatu, the LFA liaison, as well as the management team, the students, support staff, the interpreter and the stakeholders whose engagement in the evaluation was remarkable and allowed the team to build a comprehensive and nuanced picture of the functioning, the strategies and challenges of LFA.



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2. Governance and institutional decision making

2.1 A mission-focused institution

The mission of LFA Sibiu is to generate and transfer knowledge at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels to officers from all army branches/military specialties under the jurisdictions of the Land Forces of Romania. The mission is equally open to military and civilian experts. Bachelor programmes are being incrementally opened to civilian students whilst all Master programmes already taking in both military and civilian students.

The mission is dualistic in that LFA trains students to become efficient officers and equip them with a strong academic education. In this respect, programmes delivered at LFA combines vocational and academic features. Physical training and practical courses constitute the vocational ground of the programmes. High-level theoretical formation and research-based projects constitute the academic pillar of the programmes.

The mission is clearly understood by the LFA community (students, teachers and support staff) and all embed its dual characteristics in their daily work.

The dualistic mission is furthermore reflected in the types of students who enrol at LFA. Programmes are equally open to civilians and military. Most military students have previously graduated from a military high school. Civilians are not required to have gone through a similar education as long as they comply with the military rules that govern education at LFA.

2.2 A strategy complying with the mission statement

The Strategic Plan of LFA Sibiu for 2012 to 2016 sets as the main objective the functional integration of LFA in the national higher education system and in the European Higher Education Area. The Romanian economic integration, the specifications set by both the ministries (MND and MERYS) and the NATO-specific engagement, have been driving recent developments at LFA.

The main areas addressed in the strategic plan are: institutional management; academic education; military training; scientific research, development and innovation; human resources, material, financial and informational resources, and institutional development. The strategic goals are summarised as follows:

- Maintaining/obtaining the legal right to hold integrated curricular cycles of academic studies and postgraduate education training and professional development.
- Strengthening a modern university management, focused on providing quality education. This includes an efficient management of financial resources and liabilities.



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- Improving the quality of teaching and learning process and assessment and the continuous adaptation of programmes.
- Complying with performance standards to train fighters with a leadership mentality, in Romania or abroad.
- Improving theoretical and applied scientific research and disseminating results.
- Encouraging competency-based professional excellence for personal, commitment and loyalty to the institution.
- Modernising university infrastructure, including increasing computerisation.
- Promoting the image of tradition, honour, accountability, openness, excellence and ethics.

The team found the LFA strategy to be consistent with its mission. The team also underlines the capacity of the LFA leaders to take into account the current financial difficulties of the institution without compromising the quality-focused strategy. They have set the right balance between what is feasible and desirable.

2.3 Organisational autonomy is limited despite a wide academic freedom autonomy

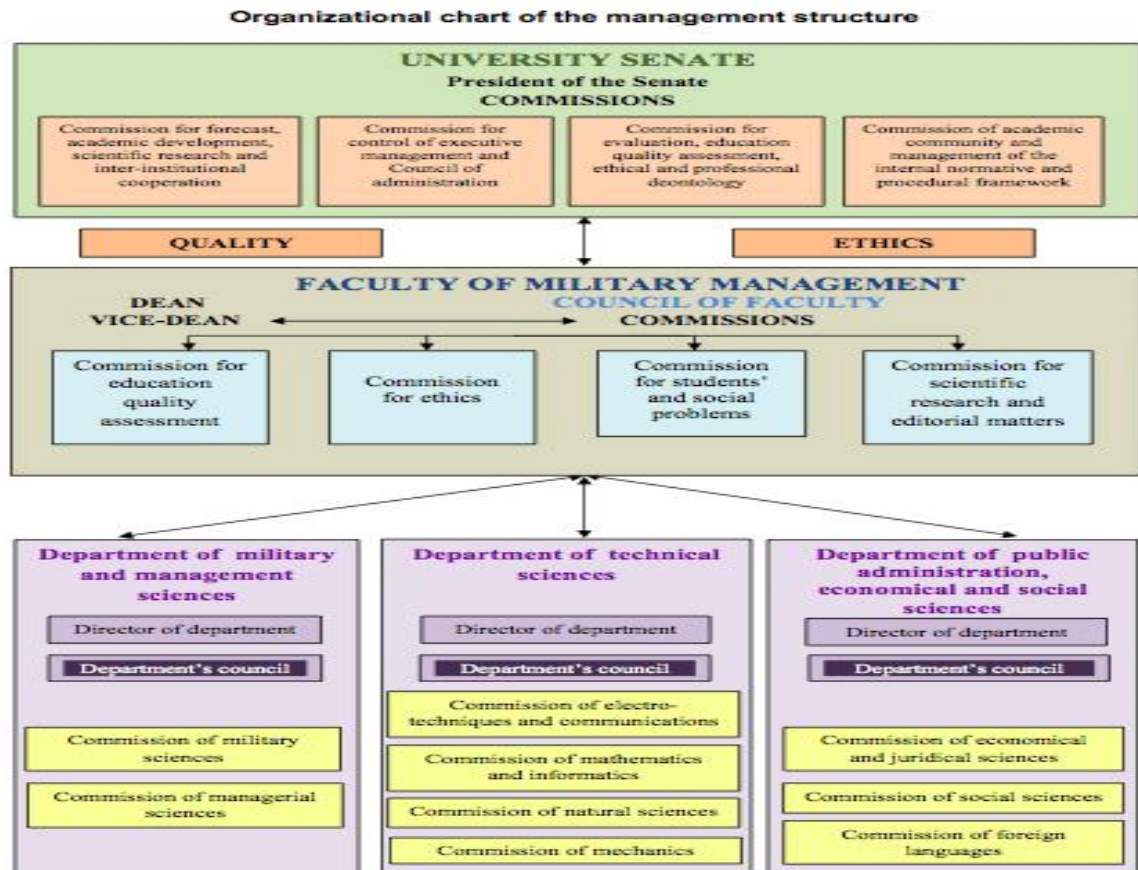
Due to the characteristics of military education, that is meant to train graduates capable of defining high-stakes strategies and leading troops, LFA does not have much room for autonomy in the sense commonly used in a civilian university.

The regulations at national level are highly detailed and impose serious constraints on LFA. LFA manages to cope with the specifications thanks to the commitment of all the community and a strong compliance attitude towards the hierarchy. LFA abides by the law in all its aspects.

LFA faces a high degree of centralisation of governance and management. This reality is due to the double subordination to MND and MERYS. The subordinating structures belonging to MND — higher education institutions included — encounter difficulties in maintaining an operational functionality. In relation to MND, certain limitations related to the academic autonomy and the level of centralisation of LFA Sibiu governance are obvious as a great number of approvals from the higher echelons are necessary. This can be mostly seen when various management structures of the academy initiate actions regarding the development of some educational and research activities, institutional cooperation and the modalities of spending the institution's own funds. On the other hand, the LFA Sibiu obligation of implementing the MND decisions reduces the possibility of action and of assuming responsibilities of the internal structures of the academic management.

Despite many regulations and prescriptions, the autonomy of the pedagogy and in the organisation of the courses is preserved. The military form of the programme does not impede from calling into questions theories, practices or strategies.

2.4 A renewed, multi-layer governance structure



The new Law of Education adopted in 2011 offered the opportunity for the entire academic community of Romania to design new management structures. Three layers characterise the management structure at the LFA: the central level with the rectorate and Senate, the faculty and the departments.

The University Senate is composed of democratically elected representatives from each department of the faculty and students representatives from Bachelor and Master programmes. It is the decision-making body of LFA and decides upon LFA strategies, policies and academic activities.

According to the LFA specific regulations and to a referendum, all university's academic staff and student representatives elect the **rector**. He then nominates the vice-rectors. Following public competition, the **deans** are selected between at least two candidates. The Senate



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validates the results of this competition. The role of Faculty Council consists in analysing and validating the candidatures on the basis of their managerial projects. Subsequently the deans nominate their vice-deans.

The **Faculty Council**, composed by the dean, the vice-dean and departments' and students' representatives, is the collective management structure with competences in the field of planning, organising, developing, monitoring and improving the educational processes.

Scientific research is under the responsibility of the **Faculty of Military Management**, which manages both academic and military activities. The faculty of military management has its own management structure.

The **Administrative Council** is the operational management structure and includes the rector, vice-rectors, the dean, the university administrative director and the students' representative.

The **departments** are responsible mainly for the academic programmes of study, selection and promotion of its staff and the research and education activities.

The Senate is the ultimate decision-making body. This is where most of the strategic decisions and reflexions take place. The departments have limited decision-making power and rather endorse the role of counselling or advisory bodies. In between these two structures, the Faculty council addresses the more operational issues whereas the Faculty of Military Management conducts the academic activities and coordinates the military ones.

The new Law of Education adopted in 2011 stipulates the 3-layer-management structure: the University Senate, the Faculty Council and the Department Council (art. 207). The Team thinks that kind of structure is inconsistent with the size of the LFA and prevents from a smoother, more efficient functioning. The Team also considers the excess of layers of the management structures, by including the same staff, blurs the delineation of the jurisdictions. The Team therefore calls for a simplification of the structures and invites the LFA to advocate for a 2-layer-structure.

In addition, the team advises LFA to explore the areas of decisions that could be delegated to the faculty or department level. This would alleviate the heavy workload of the Senate and allow the Senate to refocus on more strategic issues whilst devolving the more practical issues to lower structures. Despite a stringent legal framework and limited leeway left to the leaders, the team recognises three major assets and achievements of the LFA:

- The rector, who is also commander, perfectly embodies the duality of the LFA (an academic institution providing military training). He plays a crucial and complex role.
- The true democratic feature at LFA is to be pinpointed. Elections of managerial positions are regular practices.



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- LFA should be credited for the smooth, gentle specific ways of sorting out practical issues. The culture of debate is widely spread across the institution, and includes teachers and students. Numerous questions are informally addressed on the spot and therefore already solved when they come under scrutiny at management level. This way of proceeding functions well thanks to the loyalty of the LFA community. Nobody complained about the lack of interactions or of discussions.
- The role given to the students' representation is vital to the performance of LFA. Students' contributions have been greatly influential in the management and strategy design of LFA. Further cooperation with other student bodies of the region or at national level would however improve the capacity of students to exchange good practices and be ever more connected with the civilian students.

As a conclusion, the team notes the excessive burden imposed by the double subordination. A two-level structure would simplify the management of small institutions like LFA and improve their efficiencies.



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3. Teaching and learning

3.1 A focus on the Bachelor level with a strong vocational dimension

In accordance with the university's mission statement to train high-level commanders, the programmes focus mostly on the Bachelor.

The military training component contributes to the accomplishment of the mission meant to develop fighting, training and military leadership skills, and to deepen competences in a military specialty. At the end of their academic training, the LFA students should be able to assume responsibility as group commander or other similar positions. During their education at LFA, the students continuously develop their intellectual, military, physical, spiritual, ethical and social skills.

The general military training and branch (specialty) initiation is the reference document which sets the optimal framework for the accomplishment of the objectives assumed by LFA in accordance with the assigned mission. The university seeks for the most efficient use of available time, human, material and financial resources, whilst ensuring the beginning of the graduates' professional development during their entire military career.

Education at the LFA pulls together two interrelated concepts: a student-centred pedagogy and a results-driven requirement. Students are the first beneficiaries of the programmes, which are, by nature, vocational.

A student-centred pedagogy

Students are trained as regular academic students and as future military officers capable of operating on the battlefields. As LFA is less engaged in research development due to its long lasting and intrinsic vocational mission, academics at LFA devote most of their time to teaching. Students are taken care of and express a great satisfaction to study at LFA.

As stated in the SER and confirmed by the team, the students enjoy a wide range of pedagogic methods and practices, enabling constructive discussions and work in groups. The LFA teachers invest in student mentoring. Courses take place with small student groups, in which practical activities and student autonomy are favoured. Specificities of students (as per their educational background, their performance level or their character) are treated with attention from the faculty. When a problem occurs, remediation is systematically offered. The selection process at the LFA and the high reputation of the institution prevent students from dropping out, which remains at an insignificant level.

The LFA leaders have been constantly investing in the quality of the equipment and premises.



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Budget cutbacks have never undermined the upgrading of the learning environment. Whilst efforts should be sustained on the computerisation of the education, facilities are of good quality and adapted to the work required (e.g. project-based learning takes place in dedicated rooms, the library has wide opening hours to accommodate students needs during nights or weekends).

Campus life is lively. Students' activities are supported by the university and appreciated by students.

A result-driven approach

The army recruits the LFA graduates and is in a good position to permanently assess the quality of the studies offered at the LFA. The recruiters at the MND have demonstrated an outstanding satisfaction regarding the level of maturity, openness and preparedness of the graduates. The education offered at the LFA allows the MND to fill the military positions with highly qualified graduates. The employers value the LFA graduates for their dual strengths: specialised graduates adaptable to any situation in military settings. The heads of the branch schools, which provide mandatory specialisation to LFA graduates for six months following graduation, are also satisfied with the quality of the LFA education.

The natural destination of students to a military position of civil service creates the conditions for emulation among the LFA teachers to commit to quality improvement. The proximity of the employers constitutes a lever for a constant quality improvement. In the event of incompetence or skills mismatch, the employers immediately inform the LFA staff. Likewise, LFA teachers count on their counterparts to ensure that the programmes, the pedagogy and military training comply with the demands of today. The six-month mandatory period of specialisation is another guarantee to safeguard the relevance of the programmes. Instructors at the branch schools exchange with LFA teachers on their needs. The close connection of the branch schools with the LFA Chief Military of the Training Centre helps LFA to identify the possible weaknesses and contribute to the right balance between theory and practice.

The LFA proposes several options for pursuing studies at the LFA. In addition to the three Bachelor programmes, three Master programmes in the field of "Military Sciences and Information" are now available. The Bachelor study programmes and specialised courses address the needs of the Romanian Land Forces and other beneficiaries in the national defence, public order and national security system. The Master programmes meet both the needs of the MND and the abovementioned beneficiaries as well as other possible civilian employees.

3.2 Updated programmes anchored in the real world

The short-term strategy of the LFA aims at training students at Bachelor and Master levels,



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firstly for the needs of the MND and other beneficiaries in the field of defence, public order and national security, and secondly to meet the local and regional needs by opening up the programmes to civilian students.

As the world and the requirements of society change, the programmes are constantly being revamped and adapted. The inclusion of Romania in NATO has had a dramatic effect on the curriculum and on the skills required. The internationalisation of troops operating in the most strategic positions worldwide calls for new skills to be taught (e.g., intercultural awareness, leadership capabilities in an international setting, good command of English, etc.)

LFA is keen to think about the students as responsible citizens in the society at large and not only limited to the battlefield. The university leaders have a clear vision of the necessary adaptability of their graduates so that they can behave properly in military or civilian life. They have great awareness that the duration of a professional career in the military is limited to a number of years whilst the life expectancy is expending. They predict that a large number of graduates will undertake alternative occupations in the civilian world.

Besides, the demand of society regarding the army's role has changed worldwide and this includes Romania. Military are less requested to go to war and more required to better protect the society against new dangers, including natural disasters, terrorism, new types of crimes (human trafficking, drugs trade, cyber-criminality). Thus, the training being offered needs to take these changes into account whilst ensuring the classic mission of the military. The diversification of university specialisations started in 2002-2003 and reflects the necessity to answer the operational needs developed during peacetime or in mission, according to the changes occurring in the Euro-Atlantic military space and based on the European Qualification Framework (EQF). For instance, in order to meet the challenges of the modern battlefield, the organisation management specialisation offers graduates the managerial competences necessary to lead military structures.

To conclude, the team considers that LFA has embedded the Bologna degree structures with close attention and made consistent changes in the curricula as well as the organisation of the studies and the pedagogic aptitudes of the teaching staff. The delineation between the Bachelor and Master levels appears quite clear, as underlined in the ARACIS report. Likewise, credits should be given to the LFA leaders to enforce the concept of learning outcomes. In addition, the notion of transferable skills as a characteristic of 21st-century job requirements makes perfect sense at the LFA. Teachers know why they teach in a specific way and students know what they will get out of the three years spent at the LFA.

3.3 Highly dedicated teachers operating with disciplined, committed students

The recruitment, selection and the promotion of the academic and administrative staff are undertaken in accordance with the framework of the national legislation (Education Law No.



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1/2011, Labour Code), and specific military regulations. For example, the military teaching staff must meet the standards imposed by both MERYS and MND.

LFA has long been prompting teachers to pursue doctoral studies. Today, most of the academic staff have PhDs. Part-time teachers, often retired LFA teachers, are keen to share their senior and professional experience with the students. Their engagement sustains the identity, memory and institutional culture of LFA Sibiu.

Civilian teachers exemplify the harnessing of the programmes into the societal life. Civilian teachers harmoniously complement the military instruction provided to students. Military and civilian teachers endeavour to fill in the societal gap between the two worlds and contribute to mutual understanding. Furthermore, civilians compensate the lack of teaching competences in some fields that military teachers might not sufficiently master.

The selection of students is strict. Students know why they wish to enrol at the LFA. They comply with the discipline and the rules that are inherent to military life. The student body is highly homogeneous in terms of profiles and expectations regarding the studies and future careers. Students share the identity, values and mission statement of LFA and value the combination of academic education, vocational training and physical activities.

All students are disciplined and avid learners; few drop out (0.37% in 2011/2012 at Bachelor level). Remediation is provided to under-performing students. The students' assessment is rather formative and never punitive, with the objective to lead them to success. Students value their excellent learning environment. Psychological and spiritual guidance is available to those who need it, and prevent distress that might arise especially with first-year students. They benefit from careful health surveillance.

The heavy workload was highlighted, but the return on investment is high and until now, guaranteed since they all take on a leadership occupation upon graduation.

The team considers that all conditions are met to offer an excellent education. Should the students' profiles diversify in the future, LFA should pay attention to the range of expectations that might expand. Attitudes vis-à-vis military-specific characteristics might also differ.

3.4 An education anchored in today's world

Students are prompted to bring new ideas with a view to improving the relevance and the effectiveness of their education. They are not considered as passive actors absorbing knowledge. They are prone to presenting projects that their teachers value should they serve the LFA's mission. Due to their level of maturity and sense of duties, teachers find it easier to explore new types of pedagogic theories and practices (more interactive, placing the student at the centre of the questioning, allowing them to find out the appropriate solution to a



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problem raised).

The students are confident in the quality of their military instruction whether during their studies or upon graduation from the branch schools. Similarly, the students are highly sensitive to the quality of their academic training. They are keen to develop skills and gain knowledge outside the military domain. Some are eager to compete with civilian students (e.g. on project contests) or to present their work and research findings to a civilian audience.



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4. Research

The scientific research activity at LFA operates according to the plans of scientific research, development and innovation at the level of the academy, the faculties, the centre for military training, the departments and the Bachelor and Master programmes of studies. These plans contain projects and research themes: national defence, national and international security, leadership, digital image processing, advanced logistics technologies, impact of electromagnetic fields on living organisms, decisional tools in the military and social fields, intercultural education, warfare, peace support operations, Euro-Atlantic integration, terrorism, etc.

So far, LFA implemented research programmes within MND's National Plan of Research, Development and Innovation (NPRDI) and the Sectorial Plan of Research, Development and Innovation (SPRDI).

LFA houses a publication service. Occasionally, articles authored by LFA teachers are published in regional scientific journals.

The team recognises the well-equipped laboratories. It noted that the entire scientific research infrastructure results from research projects grants won through competition (as sole beneficiary or in collaboration with other partner institutions). These endeavours to obtain external research funds demonstrate the high level of responsiveness of LFA to diversify its resource streams.

The team notes that whilst the laboratories are used for educational and research purposes, they are not used to their full capacity. New opportunities should be opened, especially to local businesses that might not be able to build up internal R&D or to acquire R&D skills.

LFA is developing applied, practical research as well as project-based studies. Building up fundamental research should not be a strategic option and publications should not drive the career of the LFA teachers. Publishing is rather a plus than an obligation. The appropriate positioning of LFA in respect of applied research and project-based education is key, as the academy is unable to compete with research-intensive universities. Rather, it should develop niches and applied areas of research, in partnership with local enterprises. Research is likely to keep teachers skills and knowledge up-to-date and, therefore, has an instrumental function. New contracts should then be gained through this new channel.

The team considers that there is great potential for regional cooperation with other universities. The inclusion of LFA into the regional higher education area is a first step towards new types of scientific collaborations, within regional clusters. LFA is strongly



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encouraged to seek regional collaborations and to enhance relations with local authorities in this respect. The issue for LFA is not to become a research competitor of the region, as its research capacities are too weak compared to traditional universities. The very issue for the LFA is to become an effective research driver in a competitive region, paving the way to a regional, consistent research strategy.



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5. Service to society

LFA Sibiu is a long-standing and reliable partner of the local community, since its foundation 160 years ago.

As examples: events are organised in the city or on the campus, and are all well attended; LFA is a key partner to local public services (e.g. the police, the hospital, the memorial cemeteries), associations like the Red Cross or local firms connected to armament and defence; the LFA incubator allows retired teachers and those who quit the army (due to earlier restructuration of the national defence system) to develop business locally and thus benefit the regional economy; LFA assists the authorities in advent of exceptional circumstances, like snowstorms, including beyond the Sibiu region.

The constructive relationships with the three other higher education institutions located in the region and the openness and expected support to local society's needs anchor the institution into Sibiu's university life. The cooperation with the public and private universities looks as a promising avenue for common activities and equipment sharing (e.g. with the excellent sports facilities of Sibiu). As an illustration, all universities of Sibiu had a common opening ceremony for the academic year 2012-2013, within the project "Sibiu Smart" managed by the local authorities. LFA Sibiu together with ULBS University had a common final course ceremony for the students completing their final year of studies.

The team recognises that this connection to civilian life allows LFA to provide relevant, open education and to bridge military and civilian life. It sustains the outstanding reputation of the institution in the regional and national setting.

The team thinks this connection should permit further development in:

- Lifelong learning: the vast range of programmes offered at the LFA is likely to serve the population's skills needs (e.g. in business management).
- Applied research: there are possibilities to fulfil the R&D expectations of local, small and medium-size enterprises, which might not have the possibility to build up internal research. The LFA provides both remarkable teachers who have scientific skills and updated equipment.



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6. Quality culture

The quality assurance (QA) culture is a strong asset at LFA Sibiu. Teachers, administrative staff and students take quality seriously and understand the value of quality assurance provisions so as to sustain and constantly improve the quality. In order to nurture the recognised reputation of LFA in the national and in regional community, the leaders always call their practices into question and have instilled a culture on the quality of education, research and management of the institution. Debates take place constantly at LFA, and not only within the decision-making structures.

At LFA Sibiu, the main structures involved in the quality management are the Commission for Evaluation and Quality Assurance, the Commission for Internal Managerial Control and the Senate's permanent commission no. 3 – Evaluation, educational quality control, ethics and professional deontology. The objectives of these commissions are to collect relevant data, identify possible drawbacks that might negatively impact upon quality assurance, and conceive and implement preventive or corrective measures.

The team especially values the connections of LFA with the military and civilian employers so as to keep the education up-to-date and relevant. Attention is paid to the continuous career development of the graduates, including when they leave the military life. Therefore, programmes focus on transferable skills and employability and include civilian-specific modules. Mixing civilian and military teachers and students also aims at fostering a smooth transition between the two worlds.

Student feedback is common practice. Students express their satisfaction on the impact of the regular programme evaluations. They see changes taking place. The teachers and their superiors systematically discuss the results of the questionnaires. Evaluation of teaching is clearly an improvement tool. Excellent teaching is likely to be rewarded via a faster career progression or bonus.

Despite a developing quality assurance culture at LFA, the Team remains sceptical about the possibility of critical opinions to be voiced. The culture of consensus, which is a valuable asset for any university, might become an impediment when no alternative positions are discussed. LFA is indeed prone to take effective decision as soon as a problem arises. This "implementation culture" may not automatically lead to wise decisions and should leave some room for more intense collaborative reflexion. Time for discussions (including disputed opinions) might be an asset when it comes to defining institution-wide strategies. The team therefore suggests to leaders of the LFA to further consider the range of standpoints across the institution and to stimulate the emulation of ideas.



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The team agrees on the process of internal quality assessment as it allows an extended analysis and outlines the strengths and the weaknesses of all activities taking place at LFA. The team also highlights the relevance of the system of management indicators, subsequent to the strategic plan and part of the contract of management signed by the rector. This capstone document spans the domains, criteria, general and specific metrics performance associated with quality assurance at institutional level. It enables the rector to present the “Report about university status”, annually, which includes all aspects of the university activity. Lastly, the team recognises the involvement of the LFA into the project e-EdU-Quality - System of Quality Management in Higher Education based on e-Tools for Knowledge and Learning, meant to acquire the expertise of other higher education institutions and to disseminate the LFA’s results and accomplishments in quality assurance.

The team recommends to further formalise the current quality assurance system. Its comprehensiveness and complexity hinders a clear vision of what is being achieved and for which purpose. In this respect, the team recommends:

- A chart depicting clearly how quality assurance serves the mission
- A set of codes of practice, quality handbooks, so as to further help the community to build up a coherent quality culture.



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7. Internationalisation

LFA Sibiu aims at becoming a recognised university capable of training youth with globally minded skills. Joining the European Union as well as NATO has been a strong impulse for the internationalisation of LFA. Military operations are currently operated by international teams.

Access to the platforms of international databases and up-to-date documentation constitutes a solid asset for both students and teachers. Bachelor and Master programmes are opened to national and international students. International conferences take place at the LFA or in Sibiu on a regular basis. The team was also impressed by the teaching staff's and students' high command of English.

The team notes that LFA is keen to strengthen its partnerships with international institutions from the security and defence sectors. Bilateral agreements on student and teacher mobility are expanding within ERASMUS programmes across institutions, for instance with the Land Forces Academy from Wroclaw (Poland) and Theresan Military Academy (Austria). Likewise, international research agreements are being developed. For example, during the academic year 2011-2012, 12 students and four teaching staff from LFA Sibiu participated in an ERASMUS programme with universities from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Portugal and Bulgaria. Invited teachers occasionally lecture at the LFA.

LFA has developed relations within the "European initiative for the exchange of young officers"- Military ERASMUS, whereby military teaching staff are being registered in lecturers' contact database for common educational modules. In accordance with the MND agreements, exchange programmes accommodate a limited number of students, in the field of academic and military training with different institutions such as Saint Cyr Military Academy, The Corps Officers Military Academy (Thessaloniki), West Point Military Academy, and Georgia University (Cultural Understanding and Language Proficiency Programme).

However, the team underlines the gap between the students' international expectations and the lack of possibilities to have a true global experience. Few students enrol in an ERASMUS programme.. Some promising endeavours (e.g. with modules to be taken at the Defence University of Brno, Czech Republic) should be built up and sustained.

The absence of incoming students should also be remediated if LFA wants to become an international campus. The international shift of LFA should entail English-taught courses, and introductory courses in Romanian language and culture for the incoming students unfamiliar with the Romanian context.

In conclusion, the team recognises the many efforts regarding the development of internationalisation (students outgoing mobility, foreign professors invited, enhanced



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working conditions for international students, university exchanges...) in the recent years. The team however considers that there is still a strong need to ensure the implementation of an international strategy. Most of all, the real purpose of internationalisation should be examined: what should be the added value of internationalising the LFA Sibiu? The submission to obtain the Erasmus Charter for the period 2014-2020, sent off to the European Commission, might help the LFA Sibiu explore that key question. .

Pairing international and national students is a likely option. Further collaborations with international institutions are strongly encouraged.



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8. Conclusions

LFA Sibiu is a strong institution, capable of anticipating changes and providing a high quality education to students, not only as preparation for their military career but also for civilian life. The concept of equipping students with competences adapted to the 21st century is clearly embedded by the whole LFA community. Quality of education at Sibiu relies on two pillars (civilian and military education) that have gradually merged to constitute an innovative educational model.

LFA Sibiu has a good research infrastructure, which is used in the educational process and can be valorised for further applied and practical projects. That infrastructure is likely to enable the university to become an effective research-driven institution for the region.

The smooth student-teacher interactions, the limited size of classes and the strong adhesion of the community to the mission statement anchored in the clear-cut development strategy of the LFA provide a propitious setting for excellent education. In that sense, the LFA provides a true university education.

LFA has gone through dramatic changes (shifting from nation-specific area of operations to an interconnected global perspective) whilst being constrained by its double reporting and dwindling public funds. The responsiveness of the institution is remarkable. The sense of ownership of the LFA's present and future is high within the community.

It is time for LFA to believe more in itself, and value its strengths, in order to move forward.

Summary of recommendations

- Launch discussions with the MND and MERYS and small institutions on the likely adaptation and simplification of the current three-level management structure.
- Discuss legal system at national level.
- Discuss if issues could be delegated to faculty/department level.
- Enhance a continuous self-reflective process.
- Pay attention to the diversification of the student body that might be unfamiliar with the military aspects of education at LFA.
- Research strategy to be developed with regional universities, within regional clusters, so as to prevent isolation.
- Develop potentialities for applied research.
- Develop potentialities for lifelong learning.



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- Formalise the quality assurance system.
- Define an international strategy, exploring the real purpose of internationalisation.
- Explore the possibility to open English-taught courses and other forms of “internationalisation at home” provisions.
- Maintain partnerships with international institutions.