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Institutional Evaluation Programme

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

The ‘Politehnica’ University of Timișoara

EVALUATION REPORT

November 2012

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1. Introduction

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

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

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

1.1. The Institutional Evaluation Programme

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

The distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme are:

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

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

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



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

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

1.2. The 'Politehnica' University of Timișoara and the national context

The 'Politehnica' University of Timișoara (PUT), established in 1920, is located in the western region of Romania, in the town of Timișoara, which has approximately 300000 inhabitants. Several foreign companies, mostly from the other EU countries, have established branches in Timișoara because of the small production costs, the convenient location close to the border with Hungary and Serbia, and the highly educated labour force, especially the graduates of the PUT. The unemployment rate in Timișoara is very low.

The operational environment of higher education in Romania has experienced many changes in recent years. The new education law, which came into force in 2011, granted universities more autonomy, whilst renewing the governance and organisational structures of universities. The leadership of Romanian universities has changed since the new law. Additionally, all Romanian universities have been rated into three categories: advanced research and teaching-based universities; teaching and scientific research-based universities or teaching and art-based universities; and teaching-based universities. All study programmes have been also evaluated and assigned into categories from A to E based on their resources and performance. The rating of universities and study programmes may in the future have some implications for the funding of universities as well, but the details of this are yet to be decided. The PUT is categorised into advanced research and teaching based universities, and all its study programmes are ranked in the three highest categories.

Due to the economic climate, university funding has experienced severe cuts in recent years: most notably, university salaries were cut by 25 per cent in 2010; research funding was also cut. In 2012 the European Union also suspended some of the structural fund programmes in Romania due to some alleged financial irregularities, which resulted in further financial constraints for universities. Additional instability to the operational environment of the universities has been caused by the minister responsible for higher education changing several times within a very short period of time. The country is facing another parliamentary election in December 2012.

1.3. The self-evaluation process

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by a self-evaluation team appointed by the rector of the university, Prof. Viorel Aurel Serban. The general coordination of the self-evaluation process was ensured by the vice-rector Prof. Corneliu Davidescu.

The self-evaluation team was chaired by:

- Prof. Toma L. Dragomir (Automation and Applied Informatics Department) – Director of the General Directorate of Quality Assurance.

The other members of the team were:

- Prof. Marius Crisan (Department of Computer and Software Engineering) – Quality Assurance Director at the Faculty of Automation and Computers;
- Dr. Mirela Pop (Department of Communication and Foreign Languages) – Vice-dean of the Faculty of Communication Sciences;
- Prof. Mircea Popa – Vice-rector of PUT in charge of the educational issues;
- Prof. Dan Lasca (Head of the Applied Electronics Department);
- Dr. Mugurel Gabriel Dragomir (Head of the Department for Teaching Staff Training);
- Prof. Valeriu Dolga (Department of Mechatronics) – member of the PUT Senate;
- Mr Cristian Vladimir Telescu (General Administrative Directorate) – PUT Technical Director;
- Mr Vasile Rușeț - Director of the PUT Entrepreneurship Department;
- Dr. Daniel Hădărugă (Department of Applied Chemistry and Organic-Natural Compound Engineering) – member of the PUT Senate;
- Dr. Liviu Cădariu-Brăiloiu (Department of Mathematics) – member of the PUT Senate;
- and
- Mr Norbert Kazamer (student) – member of the Administrative Council of PUT.

The self-evaluation report was prepared based on a series of questionnaires sent to the different constituents of the university community, and the final report is available on the university website. Although the IEP team was left with many open questions after reading the self-evaluation report and its appendices, the two evaluation visits as well as the additional material requested by the team and expediently supplied by the university gave the team a good understanding of the university and its strengths and challenges.

1.4 The evaluation team



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The self-evaluation report of the 'Politehnica' University of Timișoara, together with the appendices, was sent to the evaluation team (hereafter the team) on 21 May 2012. The visits of the team to the 'Politehnica' University of Timișoara took place on 14 and 15 June 2012 and from 31 October to 2 November 2012 respectively. In between the visits the university provided the evaluation team with some additional documentation.

The evaluation team consisted of:

- Professor Carles Solà - former Rector, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain, chair
- Professor Marian Dzimko – Vice-rector, University of Žilina, Slovakia
- Professor Christos Nikolaou – former Rector, University of Crete, Greece
- Ms Asnate Kazoka – student, Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology, Riga Technical University, Latvia
- Dr Terhi Nokkala – Research fellow, University of Jyväskylä, Finland, team coordinator

The team thanks the rector and his team, the self-evaluation team, and the entire university community for their warm welcome and hospitality during the two visits. This made the team's task not only easy, but also enjoyable. We would like to extend out thanks to the external stakeholders of the university, as well as the interpreters and UEFISCDI contact person who greatly facilitated our work.



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2. Governance and institutional decision-making

2.1 Norms, values, mission, goals: What is the institution trying to do?

The mission of the 'Politehnica' University of Timișoara is presented in the University Charter, as follows:

- "a) to generate and transfer knowledge to society through advanced scientific research, development and innovation by disseminating the results through publication and/or implementation;
- b) to provide superior training both at university-level within the Bologna paradigm, on all three cycles (bachelor, master, doctoral studies), or within a specially-regulated system, and at postgraduate level, in accordance with the concept of lifelong learning, in order to enhance one's personal development, employability and to meet the competences required by the social environment;
- c) to contribute by setting directions for social development at a local, regional, national and international level;
- d) to foster, promote and defend some fundamental values crystallized during the evolution of humanity: freedom of thought, speech and action, equity, truth, fairness, honesty, fairness, dignity and honor".

2.2 Governance or activities: How is the institution trying to do it?

Governance structures

The 'Politehnica' University of Timișoara is currently in the process of change. Its highest decision-making body is the senate, comprising elected representatives of staff from departments and students (students hold 25% of the seats). The role of an elected member of the senate is not compatible with holding a position in the university as a rector, vice-rector, dean, vice-dean or head of department. The day-to-day management of the university is the responsibility of the administrative council, which comprises the rector, vice-rectors and the deans of all faculties. The new legislation and the new university charter brought a new governance structure and a new division of tasks between the faculties and the departments. Although the departments are at the same level as faculties in the internal hierarchy of the university, and responsible for many day to day issues the heads of departments are currently not members of the administrative council, or of the senate. Instead, the university has declared the intention to mitigate the potential problems arising from this duality of structure by establishing commissions (under the administrative council), which bring together deans and heads of departments.



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The 'Politehnica' University of Timișoara has recently elected a new rector, who already served as a vice-rector for two terms. The rector has selected his own team of vice-rectors and the university has also completed the selection processes for all the deans and vice-deans to the faculties.

Faculty governance is the responsibility of the deans, vice-deans and faculty councils, comprising elected members from the departments (who could also be heads of departments) and 25% of students. Additionally, the faculties have boards for each specialisation (study programme) coordinated by the faculty. There are separate boards at bachelor and master level programmes. The boards comprise staff, students and external members. The departments also have a departmental council, which comprise elected membership of the academic staff in the given department. The departmental councils do not contain students.

Funding

The university receives its basic funding from the state based on the number of state-funded study places, which are allocated to study programmes. The basic funding is allocated using a formula in which approximately 70% is based on student numbers multiplied by cost coefficients related to the differential costs of various study programmes and approximately 30% is based on a series of performance indicators. As a university classified in the category of advanced research and teaching universities, the PUT may also be able to enjoy higher funding in the future. The basic funding covers the educational costs such as salaries and education-related operational costs, whilst research costs are covered by research grants and contracts.

Additionally the university is able to take a certain amount of fee-paying students, which are also allocated to study programmes according to their quality and capacity. The overall student numbers are, however, capped by the national accreditation. Annual tuition is approved by ARACIS who determine the number of state-funded students as well as the maximum number of fee-paying students for each study programme.

National regulations determine both the minimum and maximum salary in each staff category. An individual's salary depends on their seniority as well as the number of courses and students taught. The research active staff may get a bonus of up to 20% of their salary as a reward for high research production.

Despite the significant budget cuts in basic funding, the university has managed to maintain stable overall expenditure over the past few years. The team recognises however, that in the long run the stalling education and research budgets may constitute significant challenges to the university.

2.3 Monitoring: How does the institution know it works?

As the division of tasks between faculties and departments, as well as the governance structure comprising senate and the administrative council are new developments, the



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university has so far not been able to accumulate much experience of how they function. The team observes that the tools and procedures to check the functioning of the new structures and task divisions are not yet in place.

2.4 Strategic management and capacity for change: How does the institution change in order to improve?

The team thinks the university has a series of strengths and weaknesses related to its governance and funding, impacting on its capacity to change.

Strengths

- The new governance structures, mandated by the recent education law in 2011 are already in place and operational, and all the holders of executive positions have been selected.
- The new governance structures provide more autonomy and responsibility of departments, giving them a significant clearly stated role in teaching and research. Additionally, the departments are financially independent and the heads of departments are budget holders.

Weaknesses

- The team sees a potential challenge in that under the new governance structure, the departments are at the same level of hierarchy as the faculties, but unlike the deans who are members in the administrative council, the heads of departments are not members in the university's decision-making bodies. However, the university has already recognised this potential challenge and has decided to establish councils to bring together deans and heads of departments to advise on the institutional decision-making.
- The team noticed few potential challenges in terms of the university's human resources. Firstly, the team was told that Romania has a tradition of limited national and academic mobility, and the university hires most of its staff amongst its own graduates. Secondly, due to the limited financial resources, the university has few opportunities to compete for top class international staff. Finally, the team notes a significant gender imbalance especially in the higher ranks of academic positions. Of 125 full professors, only 16 are women.

Recommendations

To improve the university's capacity for change, the team offers the following recommendations:



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- The team warmly supports the university's plan to establish the committees comprising deans and heads of departments. The team further recommends that the senate and the administrative council take a close look and collect experience, benefits and potential problems of the new structures, to see whether they are optimal at the moment, and take corrective action if any problems are identified. The faculties and departments currently have close and consensual ties, which should not be lost in the process.
- The team recommends that the university encourages female academic careers to redress the current gender imbalance. Potential steps may include, for e.g. targeting female academics with recruitment campaigns, providing mentoring or organising day-care facilities for children.



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3. Teaching and learning

3.1 Norms, values, mission, goals: What is the institution trying to do?

According to the mission statement of the university regarding teaching and learning, the PUT aims:

“to provide superior training both at university-level within the Bologna paradigm, on all three cycles (bachelor, master, doctoral studies), or within a specially-regulated system, and at postgraduate level, in accordance with the concept of lifelong learning, in order to enhance one’s personal development, employability and to meet the competences required by the social environment;”

The university aims to be an attractive study destination and a significant contributor to the economic life and labour market in the western region of Romania. The university wants to increase its visibility and popularity amongst prospective students, and trains experts to the needs of the companies in the region. The university also strives to develop a new potential student market in providing supplementary training and lifelong learning to the employees of the companies.

3.2 Governance or activities: How is the institution trying to do it?

The PUT has a long history as a significant education provider in the area. Previously its recruiting base used to be national, but due to many new educational institutions being established around the country, the recruiting base is nowadays primarily regional, i.e. 65% of the western region, 35% of the rest of the country, and the university faces tough competition from the other universities in the area.

The PUT has implemented the three-tier degree structure, comprising an approximately four- to six-year bachelor degree, a two-year master degree and a three-year doctoral degree. In the academic year 2012-2013, the university offers 51 degree programmes at bachelor level, 56 at master level and 12 at doctoral level. The university has limited autonomy in establishing new degree programmes. The establishment of new bachelor programmes is decided on the national level, after a cumbersome procedure, whereas the university can independently decide on the establishment of new masters’ programmes, provided that it has an accredited research centre in the relevant areas. The national regulations also determine some part of the curriculum, such as the proposition of an internship period to be included in each year of the studies.

In the new governance structure, faculties are responsible for the management and quality assurance of degree programmes, whilst departments provide educational services,



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essentially teaching, to those degree programmes. The dean's task is to contract the departments to provide particular elements of the curriculum. The head of department, however, is responsible for assigning the individual teachers and practical laboratory activities. In cases where the teacher is not performing well, the dean may ask the head of the department to assign another person to the task, but the ultimate decision on these assignments lies with the head of the department. The university has established a board of specialisation for each of the study programmes, in which external representatives of the local industries are also present.

The basic funding allocated to study programmes is intended to cover the costs of teaching. It is given directly to the departments on the basis of the same funding criteria used by the ministry for allocating funding to the university.

The university has successful collaboration with local companies concerning teaching and learning. In addition to the industry representatives being present on the boards of specialisations, they offer internships to PUT students. The university is aiming to consolidate several shorter internship periods into longer, two-month internships to be undertaken at a later stage of studies. This could lead to students also selecting Master's thesis or PhD thesis topics related to the given company. The university currently also has two tailored training programmes for local companies. The team was told that extending these to more companies was also another important aim for the university.

The university seems to enjoy a very high reputation amongst both students and the external partners of the university. Many students met by the team mentioned that they came to study at PUT specifically because of its good reputation and employment prospects, as well as the services provided for students. The students were in general happy with the quality of education, employment prospects of the graduates, the services received from the university, the independence of the student organisations as well as the impact of the student feedback to teachers. They hoped for improvements such as faster internet connections, more practical training, better medical services on campus and more dormitory places, as there are sometimes as many as six students sharing a dormitory room. The large number of students per room, however, came about upon the suggestion of the student union, who recommended the university to accept all students coming from outside Timișoara who applied for a place in the dormitory, even though this means overcrowding. The students vote on this decision every year.

3.3 Monitoring: How does the institution know it works?

The university has several mechanisms of keeping in touch with the local industry and their needs. In addition to making use of the alumni of the institution who now work for the local companies, the boards of specialisations are an important mechanism for the university to ensure the relevance of its degrees.

The university does not have a clear, dedicated structure for tracking the long-term employment of its graduates. However, it has a long-established tradition of organising meetings for the alumni of the institution, which provides a channel for the university to get information about the employment of its graduates.

3.4 Strategic management and capacity for change: How does the institution change in order to improve?

The team feels that the university has already taken several steps towards achieving its mission and goals in the field of education, and its capacity for change is good. The team observed the following specific strengths:

- According to the university, all the study programmes of the PUT are ranked in the three highest categories, which testifies to the overall high quality of education and educational facilities of the university. In recent years the university has made significant investments in the facilities, such as building a new library, soon to be completed.
- The university and the region both have a long tradition in technical education. This has attracted several national and foreign companies to operate in the region, which means that the PUT graduates are in great demand, and many students are recruited whilst they are still studying.
- The university has implemented the Bologna three-tier structure, which enables a greater potential for mobility of its students and graduates. This potential is still to be fully exploited, but the foundations have been laid.

Similarly, the capacity for change is, in the opinion of the team, impeded by the following weaknesses.

- The dropout rates in some subjects are very high, over 50%, and most of the dropouts occur in the first and second year of the studies. It is the team's understanding that this is partly due to the insufficient basis students have acquired in mathematics and physics when they come to the university.
- Although the university gets information about graduate employment six months after graduation, there is no long-term systematic tracking of graduate employment. Instead some faculties organise alumni meetings in five-year intervals, which provide the university with some information about the graduates' later employment.

Recommendations

The team would like to offer the following recommendations:



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- The team recommends that the university take advantage of the new dual structure which is based on faculties being responsible for the study programmes and departments providing teaching services to the faculties, so that the deans can negotiate on equal terms with the heads of departments in order to create new disciplinary fields and study programmes. This in turn may contribute to increasing the attractiveness of the institution in the eyes of prospective students and help the university to compete in the competition for students.
- The university has already established the first few lifelong learning programmes with companies located in the area, and the team recommends the university expand these opportunities. The university may also consider providing lifelong learning courses online, as this may help the university further broaden its customer base.
- To solve the problem of high dropout rates, the team encourages the university to continue its provision of additional teaching in mathematics and physics and to diversify teaching methods in these subjects. Interactive methods may achieve better results than traditional lectures.
- The team also encourages the university to include more practical activities and projects into its study programmes already in the early stages of studies. This may further alleviate the dropout rates.



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4. Research

4.1 Norms, values, mission, goals: What is the institution trying to do?

The mission of the university regarding research states the following:

“to generate and transfer knowledge to society through advanced scientific research, development and innovation by disseminating the results through publication and/or implementation”.

The university has been categorised as a research intensive university following the recent classification by the Romanian Ministry of Education, which increases the possibility for receiving performance-based funding. The PUT wants to further improve its research profile, to increase its international visibility in research and to produce research that is valuable to the region and the companies that operate in it.

4.2 Governance or activities: How is the institution trying to do it?

Departments of the university are responsible for its research. All departments have a research centre, and most staff members have a dual affiliation of belonging to a department and to a research centre. However, not all staff members belong to research centres, and the research centres are composed partially on interdisciplinary basis, comprising members from several different departments, unified on a common research interest. The research centres are aimed at facilitating the establishment of larger research projects. It seems to the team, that the staff members were in general satisfied with this dual structure for research.

The research centres were originally accredited for five years by the national research council, but the accreditation has already run out, and the national council has not repeated the exercise. Therefore the university has decided to accredit the centres by itself. But some interviewees expected there to be a new accreditation at national level in the near future. The accredited research centres in a given field are a precondition for establishing a master's programme in that field.

According to documentation provided by the university, three of the research centres also have a national centre of excellence status. The university established the first interdisciplinary research institute at the university level, in the field of renewable energy, and has the intention to establish more in the future.

Research is mainly funded through external research contracts. The departments, accredited research centres and individuals at higher levels of academic hierarchy are able to apply for external research funds, such as national research grants. However, there have not been any calls open for national research grants in the past three years.

The ability of the university to receive research funds from its collaboration with the companies established in the Timișoara area is limited. As most of the companies located in Timișoara are branches of international companies, they cannot decide on research projects independently, but must refer to the headquarters. Therefore it is difficult to get research funding from the companies. From the perspective of the external stakeholders, one problem with research collaboration is that the companies would often require faster and stricter deadlines in projects than what the university is able to deliver. Establishment of collaboration is largely related to personal contacts, although the representatives thought that it might be useful to have an office to help them establish contacts within the university in case they do not already exist.

The university has taken several steps to incentivise research production. Firstly, research production, especially in the form of research articles published in high impact factor journals, and research contracts and grants attracted by researchers are important criteria for career progression. The research-active individuals also have a possibility to get up to a 20% higher salary as a reward for high research production. Finally, the university has implemented incentive and support schemes for supporting international publishing and participation in leading international conferences, the so called One Million Euros scheme, in the context of which that sum is annually allocated to encourage research production.

4.3 Monitoring: How does the institution know it works?

The university regularly measures the research contracts and output. Individual staff members are required to report their research output annually to the department and central administration.

4.4 Strategic management and capacity for change: How does the institution change in order to improve?

The team would like to highlight the following strengths and weaknesses in the university's research strategy and output.

Strengths

- The university's research strategy is well in line with the national research and innovation strategy of Romania. This should benefit the university especially when the national research grants will be more available than is currently the situation, as the university will be well-placed to respond to the national funding priorities.
- To mitigate the challenges caused by the lack of national funding for basic research, the university has oriented its research output towards applied research relevant to the industries operating in the region and beyond.



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- The university has some high quality, very active research centres which have been able to acquire European framework programme projects and produce high quality basic and applied research.
- The university has established its first interdisciplinary research institute (in renewable energy) and has made plans to establish more interdisciplinary research institutes.
- The university has taken steps to emphasise the quality of research in its human resources strategy, notably promotions. This will boost the university's research quality in the longer term. Similarly, the university has taken steps to facilitate research production through covering the costs of conference participation through the One Million Euros scheme.
- Finally, the university has established a university level doctoral school, which has the potential to allow for a pooling of resources and ensure the quality of supervision.

Weaknesses

- One of the biggest challenges faced by the university in terms of developing its research productivity for the next few years is the current problematic funding of PhD students. Some years ago a large European grant allowed the university to pay competitive salaries to PhD students and to select the best students, but with the grant programme no longer in existence, salaries have been reduced to a non-competitive level and the number of PhD applicants has dropped, leaving the university unable to fill all vacant PhD student positions. The team sees the low numbers of PhD students as a challenge for broadening research production, and is concerned that the problematic funding reduces the ability of the university to select the best students.
- The team fears that in the long term the serious funding situation will also impede the university's research production in other ways. The moratorium on promotions, may, for example, cause the university to lose its best young and prospective academic staff, especially in the face of stiff competition from industry.

Recommendations

The team would like to suggest the following recommendations to help the university to overcome the challenges and improve its capacity for change.

- The team recommends that the university develops clear procedures for the potential situation in which they detect a drop in research production, as well as procedures for taking remedial action. The university could also make use of various international indicators, such as the SCOPUS database in evaluating its own research production.



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- The team further recommends that the university target consciously high impact factor international journals.
- The team recommends the university to establish an office to facilitate applying for research grants and forge contacts with companies with whom no previous collaboration exists.
- Finally, the team recommends that the university aims higher in terms of European research projects, focusing specifically on the higher prestige 7th Framework Programme projects, the upcoming Horizon 2020 plan of the European Union as well the European Research Council grants. Acquiring funding from these sources would enable the university to pay more competitive salaries and boost its international visibility in the field of research.



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5. Service to society

5.1 Norms, values, mission, goals: What is the institution trying to do?

The mission of the university, regarding service to the society states the following:

“to contribute by setting directions for social development at a local, regional, national and international level;

d) to foster, promote and defend some fundamental values crystallized during the evolution of humanity.”

The university aims to be a significant provider of education, training and applied research that will benefit the companies located in the region.

5.2 Governance or activities: How is the institution trying to do it?

The university has tailored its graduate output and its research to benefit the surrounding society and it is held in great esteem by the external stakeholders whom the team met, who expressed a general opinion that the university is eager to take into account their opinion and requirements. The external partners were satisfied with the level of knowledge and skills of the graduates.

The team was told that many international companies established a branch in Timisoara specifically because of the good experience in hiring PUT graduates. Currently unemployment in Timișoara is very low especially among highly educated people.

. For companies this means that they have to compete for new recruits, and many companies hire students already before their graduation. This may in some cases, however, delay the graduation.

Compulsory internships during the studies form a significant point of interaction between the university and the companies in the region. These internships are a convenient way for the companies to get to know their future recruitment base. However, as acknowledged both by the university and its external stakeholders, the regulations concerning internships are sometimes too rigid and may not result in the best possible results.

5.3 Monitoring: How does the institution know it works?

The abovementioned boards are a significant means through which the university can keep track of the needs and experiences of the local industries.

5.4 Strategic management and capacity for change: How does the institution change in order to improve?

The university seems to have taken significant steps towards reaching its stated goals in terms of the service function.

The team would like to offer the following observations considering the university's strengths and weaknesses in this area.

Strengths

- Specialisation board with external members provides the university with necessary information and flexibility to respond to the changing needs of the future employers of its graduates.
- The university has a clear and significant impact on regional economy and employment, which is also recognised by the surrounding society.
- The university has stable, productive and fruitful collaboration with companies in the region especially in terms of internships and research.

Weaknesses

- The collaboration is occasionally challenged by the fact that many of the companies located in the Timisoara area are branches of international companies who may not have full decision-making powers concerning R&D investments in the area, or have yet recognised the possibility offered by the university to provide tailored lifelong learning courses and programmes to the companies.
- The regulations concerning internships may impede the creation of most expedient forms and timing of the traineeship period. In the longer term this may also impinge on the desire of local companies to provide internship places for the PUT students.

Recommendations

The team would like to offer the following recommendations:

- Having local companies complement the possibilities offered by the branches of international companies may offer a solution to the limited capacity of the local enterprises to make use of the offers of the university. The university is already taking steps to encourage entrepreneurship amongst its students, e.g. by offering business management courses as part of some of its degree programmes. The team therefore recommends that the university work together, particularly with the city of Timisoara to encourage start-up companies and spin offs in the region.
- Establishing internet-based virtual training courses for the employees of the local companies may create new student markets.



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- Furthermore, the team recommends that the university work together with relevant actors and authorities to modify the regulations concerning internships to develop forms that best serve the needs of on the job learning.



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6. Quality culture

6.1 Norms, values, mission, goals: What is the institution trying to do?

The university wants to keep and increase the already highly estimated level of its education and research, and offer high quality services for its students and staff.

6.2 Governance or activities: How is the institution trying to do it?

The quality assurance structure of the university comprises two complementary structures, the quality assurance commission comprising the representatives of faculties and departments, and the quality assurance directorate comprising an academic chair and five administrators, whose task is to monitor the various quality indicators across the university.

Students give feedback after each semester via an online system to remedy the previous situation where the response rate to paper forms was relatively low. The team also understood that teachers receive some feedback on their teaching and that appropriate action is taken if it is negative. The team was not able to conclude whether the aggregates of student feedback are publically available. It is analysed at the central level.

The students are well represented in issues related to the quality assurance in the university. They are involved in the quality assurance bodies both at the levels of the quality assurance commission and the faculty quality assurance bodies. Additionally, in the university senate there is a separate commission for student affairs, which is chaired by one of senate's student representatives.

6.3 Monitoring: How does the institution know it works?

The university has gone through several national level evaluation exercises in the past few years, including the categorisation of the universities into three categories, and the ranking of all degree programmes. This provides the university with a steady base of institutional information about its different processes and outputs.

The university has also established several regulations concerning the various elements of quality culture, and the procedures to tracking the indicators. Research output is monitored based on individual reports of the annual research output.

The university has also occasionally organised internal audits for addressing specific elements of the university's functions, such as administrative services. These audit commissions have comprised internal and external representatives, and once their evaluation is carried out, they give a report with recommendations to the senate and administrative council.



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6.4 Strategic management and capacity for change: How does the institution change in order to improve?

In principle, the university has all the tools to develop its quality culture further. The team sees the fact that the university has all quality assurance structures already in place as a great strength of the university. This will allow the university to further develop in terms of its quality culture. Student involvement in quality assurance is also well established at all levels. The team identifies, however, a potential danger of overly bureaucratic quality assurance regulations and procedures, which may unnecessarily burden the staff, and take focus away from genuine quality improvement.

Recommendations

The team would, therefore, make the following recommendations.

- The team recommends that the university strengthens the overall holistic notion of quality culture, which does not focus solely on monitoring the output quality but cultivating a shared, integrated understanding of quality in all university activities, including administration and services. The European Standards and Guidelines pertaining to quality assurance may be of help in this, as well as the extensive work done by the European University Association on quality culture.
- We recommend that the university streamlines the quality assurance system making it part of the everyday activity and avoid burdening the university personnel with additional requests for feedback and data. This means, for example, using data already available in existing information systems and databases instead of repeating data collection when information is already available.
- Finally, the team recommends that the university takes steps to make the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance* familiar and followed not only with those working with quality assurance in central administration, but also at the grass roots level of the university.



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7. Internationalisation

7.1 Norms, values, mission, goals: What is the institution trying to do?

Being one of the advanced research and teaching based universities in Romania, the PUT wants to increase its international visibility in research and education, and thus complement its strong local commitment. The university wants, for example, to extend programmes taught in foreign languages to all faculties in order to facilitate the employment of PUT's graduates in multinational companies and to attract foreign students.

7.2 Governance or activities: How is the institution trying to do it?

The team was told that low national and international mobility is a common problem in all Romanian higher education institutions. For cultural reasons, e.g. due the different historical paths of the western and eastern part of the country, there is traditionally little mobility between the different parts of the country, which means the university recruits most of its students and staff from the region. This trend has increased because of the economic crisis; incoming international staff mobility is limited, for example by the financial situation, which does not allow the university to pay internationally competitive salaries.

The university offers a number of internationalisation opportunities for its students and staff, for example exchange opportunities through European programmes such as Erasmus and CEEPUS mobility programmes. The university also has some company sponsored scholarships available, as well as a few double degree programmes with European universities. However, the actual mobility figures are small, and mobility is unbalanced, as there would be more Romanian students wishing to study abroad than foreign students wishing to study in Romania. There are also national programmes, which offer possibilities for students from ethnic Romanian minorities from other countries in the region to complete degrees in Romania.

Student mobility may be affected by the course requirements in the different stages of the degree programmes. In terms of the organisation of curriculum, the second year comprises a lot of basic courses which are available almost everywhere and would be easy to include as part of the degree, yet students are reluctant to go at this stage. During the third year more students are willing to go, but are beginning to take specialised courses, which may not be available everywhere. There may have also been individual cases whereby returning students have encountered problems regarding the recognition of credits completed abroad.

The team understands that the majority of the international research collaboration contracts are based on European structural funds and INTERREG projects, which are oriented towards

development work. Additionally, the university has some research collaboration agreements with foreign companies.

7.3 Monitoring: How does the institution know it works?

The university monitors the amount of international collaborative research publications and student mobility.

7.4 Strategic management and capacity for change: How does the institution change in order to improve?

The team would like to offer the following observations concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the university in terms of internationalisation.

Strengths

- The team has observed a good command of English, notably amongst students. This will enable the university to build a stronger international profile: students are able to study abroad or receive lectures in English in the home institution.
- The university seems to be making good use of various mobility funding opportunities (Erasmus, CEEPUS, national) and bilateral agreements.

Weaknesses

- Despite these strengths, the fact remains that the overall student and staff mobility is too low. The number of international staff is also low, which will limit the university's international visibility and competitiveness.

Recommendations

- The team recommends that the university strives to make better use of European funding opportunities for staff mobility and international staff, such as the Marie Curie programme, as well as the available national funding opportunities.
- The university should also take steps to promote mobility opportunities for students, and consider establishing incentives for mobile students.
-

8. Conclusion

The team would like to offer the opinion that despite the challenges arising mainly from the financial stringency and the volatile regulatory environments, the 'Politehnica' University of Timisoara is a well-performing university, highly reputed by the surrounding society. The university is committed to continuous improvement and is therefore well placed to respond to the current and future challenges, especially when the national operational environment eventually stabilises and improves as is hoped. Furthermore, the university has amply demonstrated its capacity to overcome difficulties, such as budgetary restrictions.

The overall strengths of the university are the following:

- The university is classified in the category of advanced research and teaching university.
- It has a good reputation amongst prospective and current students and external stakeholders.
- It has maintained a stable budget despite national cuts.
- There is a strongly shared identity amongst the university community.

The main overall challenges seen by the team are the following:

- Maintaining consistent output and quality in the current financial situation.
- Improving international visibility
- Moratorium on staff promotions
- Attracting and keeping the best PhD students

The team would like to take this opportunity to thank the university once again for the evaluation and to wish the university a great deal of success in achieving its goals.

The recommendations offered by the team above are summarised here.

Governance

- The team warmly supports the university's plan to establish the councils comprising deans and heads of departments. The team further recommends that the senate and the administrative council take a close look and collect experience, benefits and potential problems of the new structures, to see whether they are optimal at the moment, and take corrective action if any problems are identified. The faculties and departments currently have close and consensual ties, which should not be lost in the process.



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- The team recommends that the university takes steps to encourage more women pursuing academic careers in order to redress the current gender imbalance. Potential steps may include as examples targeting female academics with recruitment campaigns, providing mentoring or organising day care facilities for children.

Teaching and learning

- The team recommends that the university take advantage of the new dual structure based on faculties being responsible for the study programmes and departments providing teaching services to the faculties, which allows for the deans to negotiate on equal terms with the heads of departments in order to create new disciplinary fields and study programmes. This in turn may contribute to increasing the attractiveness of the institution in the eyes of prospective students and help the university to compete for students.
- The university has already established the first few lifelong learning programmes with companies located in the area, and the team recommends the university to expand these opportunities. The university may also consider providing lifelong learning courses online, as this may help the university further broaden its customer base.
- To solve the problem of high dropout rates, the team encourages the university to continue its provision of additional teaching in mathematics and physics and to diversify teaching methods in these subjects. Interactive methods may achieve better results than traditional lectures.
- The team also encourages the university to include more practical activities and projects into its study programmes already in the early stages of studies. This may further alleviate the dropout rates.

Research

- The team recommends that the university develops clear procedures for the potential situation in which they detect a drop in research production, as well as procedures for taking remedial action. The university could also make use of various international indicators, such as the SCOPUS database in evaluating its own research production.
- The team further recommends that the university consciously target high impact factor international journals.
- The team recommends the university to establish an office to facilitate the application of research grants and forge contacts with companies with whom no previous collaboration exists.



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- Finally, the team recommends that the university aims higher in terms of European research projects, focusing specifically on the high prestige 7th Framework Programme projects, the upcoming Horizon 2020 plan of the European unions, as well the European Research Council grants. Acquiring funding from these sources would enable the university to pay more competitive salaries and boost its international visibility in the field of research.

Service to society

- Having local companies complement the possibilities offered by the branches of international companies may offer a solution to the limited capacity of the local enterprises to make use of the offers of the university. The university is already taking steps to encourage entrepreneurship amongst its students, e.g. by offering business management courses as part of some of its degree programmes. The team therefore recommends that the university work together with the city of Timisoara to encourage start up companies and spin offs in the region.
- Establishing internet-based virtual training courses for the employees of the local companies may create new student markets.
- The team recommends that the university work together with relevant actors and authorities to modify the regulations concerning internships to develop forms that best serve the needs of on the job learning.

Quality culture

- The team recommends that the university strengthens the overall holistic notion of quality culture, which does not focus solely on monitoring the output quality but cultivating a shared, integrated understanding of quality in all university activities, including administration and services. The European Standards and Guidelines pertaining to quality assurance may be of help in this, as well as the extensive work done by the European University Association on quality culture.
- We recommend that the university streamlines the quality assurance system making it part of the everyday activity to avoid burdening university personnel with additional requests for feedback and data. This means, for example, using data already available in existing information systems and databases instead of repeating data collection when information is already available.
- Finally, the team recommends that the university takes steps to make the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance familiar and followed not only for those working with quality assurance in central administration, but also at the grass roots level of the university.



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Internationalisation

- The team recommends that the university strives to make better use of European funding opportunities for staff mobility and international staff, such as the Marie Curie programme, as well as the available national funding opportunities.
- The university should also take steps to promote mobility opportunities for students, and consider establishing incentives for mobile students.



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Annex

The team had a possibility to discuss with the following people during the two visits, and would like to thank them for the help and cooperation.

First visit

13.06.2012 (DAY 0) - Dinner

Viorel-Aurel Șerban

Corneliu Davidescu

14.06.2012 (DAY 1) Meeting with the Rector

Viorel-Aurel Șerban

Corneliu Davidescu

14.06.2012 (DAY 1) Meeting with self-evaluation group

Corneliu Davidescu

Toma-Leonida Dragomir

Marius Crisan

Mirela Pop

Mircea Popa

Mugurel Gabriel Dragomir

Valeriu Dolga

Cristian Vladimir Telescu

Vasile Rușeț

Daniel Hădărugă

Liviu Cădariu- Brăiloiu

Norbert Kazamer

14.06.2012 (DAY 1) Visit to Faculties - meetings with deans and vice-deans

Ivan Bogdanov

Marius Otesteanu

Inocențiu ManiuLiviu Bereteu

14.06.2012 (DAY 1) Visit to Faculties - Meeting with academic staff representatives

Alexandru Isar

Dan Stoiciu

Septimiu Mischie

Radu Vasiu

Aurel Gontean



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Dan Lascu
Cornel Balint
Bogdan Marinca
Dănuț Șosodean
Bogdan Radu
Dumitru Țucu
Francisc Popescu
Liviu Marșavina
Gheorghe Drăgănescu
Erwin Lovasz
Iosif Cărăbaș

14.06.2012 (DAY 1) Visit to Faculties - Meeting with students

Lovasz Evelyn
Chiosa Monica
Raluca Șip
Ierșila Alexandra
Lucaci Cristina
Borceanu Radu
Ciprian Orhei
Cernăianu Mihai
Robert Kristof
Alexandru Gomotârcean
Alexandru Popa
Alin Totoreanu
Alexandru Moldovan
Edwald Gillich
Lorand Kun
Dumitru Caicaman

14.06.2012 (DAY 1) Meeting with external partners

Florin Berinde - HELLA - ELECTRONICS
Raul Horhat – Cmed
Virgil Ivășchescu - CONTINENTAL AUTOMOTIVE
Lucian Perescu- CONSTRUCTIM
Ilie Vlaicu – AQUATIM

15.06.2012 (DAY 2) Visit to Faculties - meetings with deans and vice-deans

Gheorghe Lucaci
Ioan Borza
Raul Zaharia



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Monica Izvercian

Marian Mocan

15.06.2012 (DAY 2) Visit to Faculties - Meeting with academic staff representatives

Florin Belc

Carmen Grecea

Valeriu Stoian

Sorin Dan

Mihai Grecea

Radu Băncilă

Eugen Man

Constantin Florescu

Anghel Tăroată

Vasile Duran

Nicolae Cociu

George Belgiu

Matei Tămășilă

Gabriela Străuți Negru

Andreea Mihărtescu

Caius Luminosu

15.06.2012 (DAY 2) Visit to Faculties - Meeting with students

Ligia Anda Belc

Vlad Ciobanu

Alexandru Mărginean

Viorel Iuriciuc

Daniel Țole

Simon Pescari

Beatrice Vâlceanu

Roberta Gridan

Daniel Ioaniciu

Larisa Jurji

Diana Rita

Anca Mocan

Brigitta Petcov

Daniel Pau Chirici

Sorin Maistor

Adrian Adam

15.06.2012 (DAY 2) Lunch

Viorel-Aurel Șerban



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Corneliu Davidescu

Second visit

30.10.2012 (DAY 0) -- Meeting with self- evaluation steering group

6 members of self- evaluation group

Corneliu Davidescu

30.10.2012 (DAY 0) - Dinner

Viorel-Aurel Șerban

Corneliu Davidescu

31.10.2012 (DAY 1) Meeting with the rector

Viorel-Aurel Șerban

Corneliu Davidescu

31.10.2012 (DAY 1) Meeting with 3 department heads and 2 deans

Vladimir Cretu

Dan Dubina

Gheorghe Lucaci

Monica Izvercian

Mircea Nicoară

31.10.2012 (DAY 1) Meeting with central office staff members

Marius Otesteanu,

Daniel Dan

Daniel Gh. Andreescu

Lia Dolga

C. Davidescu

Florian Miclea

Teodor Todinca

Toma-Leonida Dragomir

Dumitru Toader,

Doru Păunescu

Corneliu Davidescu

Radu E. Precup,

Vasile Stoicu-Tivadar

Ivan Bogdanov

Carmen Alic

Eugen Ghita



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Richard Herman

31.10.2012 (DAY 1) Meeting with senate

Nicolae Robu,
Carmen Grecea
Florin Drăgan
Valer Dolga
Robert. Kristof

31.10.2012 (DAY 1) Meeting with student delegation and with international researchers and international students

Oana-Andreea Grecea
Radu Mihuț
Alexandrina Golub
Paula Svera
Cedric Nibling
Edgar Daniel David
Bernardo Fernandez Ortigao de Oliveira
Mustapha Cheraquaoui
Valentin Ciupe

01.11.2012 (DAY 2) Visit to a Faculty - meetings with dean and vice-dean

Petru Andea
Argesanu Alin

01.11.2012 (DAY 2) Visit to a Faculty - facilities of the faculty and of associated departments

Petru Andea,
Alexandru Hedes
Flavius D. Surianu

01.11.2012 (DAY 2) Visit to a Faculty - meeting with academic staff representatives

Stefan Kilyeni
Marius Biriescu
Gheorghe Vuc
Sorin Musuroi
Constantin Barbulescu
Marcus Svoboda

01.11.2012 (DAY 2) Visit to a Faculty - research center

Nicolae Munteanu
Ion Boldea



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Ciprian Sorandaru

Ana Popa

Dragos Ursu

Emil Guran

01.11.2012 (DAY 2) *Visit to a Faculty - Meeting with students*

Attila Simo

Dragoş Ursu

Olivera Giurgiev

Georgeta Oprea

Mirela Moga

Izabela Horvath

02.11.2012 (DAY 3) *Concluding meeting*

Viore Serban

02.11.2012 (DAY 3) *Presentation of oral report*

Viorel Serban

Self-evaluation group

Marius Otesteanu

Daniel Dan

Daniel Gh. Andreescu

Lia Dolga

Teodor Todinca

Doru Păunescu

Vladimir Cretu

Radu E. Precup

Gheorghe Lucaci

Carmen Grecea

Ivan Bogdanov

Petru Andea

Attila Simo

Monica Izvercian

Robert. Kristof

Interpreters

Tania Petrovici

Simona Simon

UEFISCDI liaison person

Octavian Popa



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