Transilvania University of Brasov

EVALUATION REPORT

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1 Introduction

This Report is the immediate outcome of an evaluation of the Transylvania University of Brasov (UTBv). The evaluation took place in 2011 with visits by the evaluation Team on 17–18 March and 16–18 May.

1.1 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 distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme are:
- A strong emphasis on the self-evaluation phase
- A European and international 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 governance and leadership in that it mainly considers:
- 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, which is not an accreditation process, is guided by four key questions, which are based on a 'fitness for (and of) purpose' approach and which are followed throughout this report:
- 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 Transylvania University of Brasov (UTBv) and its national context

Since the establishment in Brasov of the Forestry Institute in 1948, what is now UTBv developed continuously with the formation of specialised engineering centres and later the creation of, or amalgamation with, centres covering a wide range of fields. It became UTBv in 1991 and is currently the largest higher education institution in the region, with 18 faculties, 23 000 students and more than 800 academic staff. Research is a strategic priority and many of the faculties offer doctoral degree programmes. Life-long learning and distance learning programmes are also offered.

Brasov (population 290 000) and its region (population 2.5 million) are multi cultural, beautifully located in the southern Carpathian mountains, and offer many opportunities, even if communications with the Capital and other regions could benefit greatly from improvements.

UTBv is one of 56 public universities (there are also more than 50 private universities) in Romania. Unlike UTBv, many of these confine themselves to offering a limited range of study programmes (e.g. business management, medicine, dentistry and pharmacy or varieties of technology).

1.3 The Evaluation Team (later Team)

UTBv's self-evaluation report (SER) of 15 February 2011 was sent to the IEP evaluation Team. In between the two visits to UTBv, both in spring 2011, the University efficiently provided the evaluation team with additional information and documentation.

The IEP Evaluation Team consisted of:

> Professor Jürgen KOHLER, former Rector of Greifswald University, Germany (Team chair)
>
> Professor Philippe ROUSSEAU, former Rector of the Charles de Gaulle University – Lille, France
>
> Professor Marián DZIMKO, Former Vice Rector for foreign affairs and public relations, University of Zilina, Slovakia
>
> Ms Laura HOWELL, member of Academic Affairs Committee of European Students' Union (ESU), Postgraduate Campaign Committee of UK National Union of Students, and Student Parliament of Glasgow Caledonian University.
>
> Professor James P GOSLING, former Director of Quality, National University of Ireland – Galway, Ireland (Team coordinator).

1.4   The Self Evaluation process

An eight-person Steering Committee coordinated by the Liaison Person was primarily responsible for the self-evaluation process.

> Professor dr ing Simona LACHE, Vice Rector for Quality Assurance and International Evaluation (Chair and Liaison Person to IEP Team)
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> Professor Mihaela Augusta BALAN (Secretary)
>
> Professor dr ing Maria POPESCU, Director of Quality Assurance Department
>
> Professor dr ing Anca DUTA CAPRA, Director of Management of Educational and Research Projects Department
>
> Professor dr ing Gheorghe SCUTARU, Director of Interdisciplinary Doctoral School
>
> Professor dr ing Anisor NEDELCU, Director of Lifelong Learning Department
>
> Student Cristina ELEKES, student representative
>
> Student Mirabela GOSMAN, student representative

The rector's, vice-rectors' and Chancellor's offices, university registrar, the 18 faculties, central support departments and services all supplied supporting data, information and documentation to the Steering Committee for evaluation and incorporation into the SER and its appendices. The Steering Committee organised information and consultation meetings on different topics in different sectors and at different levels. Participants were invited to disseminate the results of these discussions and related information to the members of the university they represented, and to communicate the resulting feedback to the Steering Committee. This feedback helped shape the SER, especially the later drafts. The Steering Committee expressed appreciation for the strong support they received from the institutional leadership in general, and from the Rector in particular. The Steering Committee's role and authority were underpinned by resolutions in the University Senate.

The Team found that the SER gave a good picture of UTBv, its history, present situation and intentions. Complementary data, documents and draft policy statements were requested, and were supplied before the second visit.

1.5   The evaluation visits

The first visit of the Team to UTBv took place on 17–18 March, and the second visit on 16–18 May, 2011. During both visits, the Team met most, if not all, members of the central administration and many of the faculty deans (some more than once at meetings and roundtable discussions) and a great many staff and students from a diverse range of faculties and research units.

The Chair and members of the evaluation Team thank the Rector Professor dr ing Ion VISA for his welcome and hospitality, and his total commitment and support for the IEP evaluation process. The Team also thanks the vice rectors, the Chancellor, the faculty deans, academic staff, administrators, the Mayor of Brasov, the many supportive external partners and the impressive students involved, for their frank and open engagement.

The Team explicitly recognises the most impressive efficiency, helpfulness and courtesy of the Liaison Person Professor dr ing Simona LACHE, and the hard work and dedication of the members of the Steering Committee and all others who worked with and supported the Team in so many ways.

1.6   Constraints and opportunities

Assessing UTBv necessarily requires contextualisation of UTBv in terms of identification of — mostly external — constraints, some of which may actually be of an ambiguous nature and turn out to be opportunities. The Team identified the following aspects:

Legal constraints: The Team felt that national regulations on curricula and study domains may be an obstacle for UTBv in the development of a clearer profile with respect to the study programmes it offers. In addition, labour law (though the constraints which it imposes may be valid for social reasons) may prevent the university from adapting more quickly to changing needs for different categories and levels of staff. Regulations that define the teaching and research responsibilities of academic staff in leadership positions constrain the development of a fully professional leadership by not allowing sufficient time for the exercise of leadership responsibilities while promoting a division of responsibilities between a larger than otherwise necessary number of personnel. Finally, for all its important and overdue reforms, the length and detail of the new higher education law may act to hamper university autonomy.

Funding and resource-related constraints: The on-going restrictions concerning the hiring of new staff in the public sector have hampered UTBv's capability to modernise more quickly. Moreover, the fragmentation of the university over a number of locations in and around the City acts to limit cooperative and integrative approaches. This situation will be difficult to remedy in the short or medium term due to the costs that would occur. In addition, in some cases the slow pace of the resolution of property restitution claims inhibits modernisation and the development of a coherent strategy for physical development. However, the Team fully recognises that the new 'Genius campus' is a significant step towards remedying such shortcomings with respect to strategic research initiatives.

Government policy and geography: Last, but certainly not least, is the Romanian government's plan to reduce the number of higher education institutions and to introduce a stratified system of 'research-intensive', 'teaching and research' and 'teaching-only' universities. While these measures (undoubtedly motivated by a desire to enhance quality within limited resources) are a challenge, they also represent a tremendous (and internally well recognised) opportunity for UTBv. In addition, the demographic situation in Romania will see a decrease in the number of first-time students. Brasov is also limited by slow surface communications and the lack of an

airport, but counter-balancing this is an impressively strong community spirit and a 'go-ahead ownership attitude' in the region and in UTBv.

1.7   This Report

As is clear from the earlier sections above, this evaluation process concentrates on institutional capacity, governance and strategy — the meta-level of operations. It is also a voluntary process — the IEP Team was invited by UTBv to make two all-too-short visits during which there were many revelatory discussions. However, even with the highly informative SER, it is clear to the Team that informed staff at UTBv know much more about the facts of this University than the Team could learn within the remit and design of the evaluation, though the Team has assessed the evidence in the light of much experience and expertise.

The Team has structured its comments and advice along the line of the four standard IEP questions listed above, which the Team believes to incorporate succinctly the core of institutional quality policy, good governance and fit-for-purpose management. If a good majority of these comments are useful, the process will prove to have been well worthwhile.

2. What is UTBv trying to do (and why)?

Drawing on all of the sources of information available to it, the evaluation Team concludes that three key objectives, concepts or lead ideas underlie all current plans and ambitions at UTBv:

- To develop a single over-arching academic theme within all its faculties and departments, namely *Sustainable Development*
- To be relevant and visible locally, regionally, nationally and globally
- To further develop as a comprehensive research focused, teaching university that encompasses a wide range of academic fields and professions.

However, probably because the current Strategic Plan is now four years old, the full force and logic of these objectives are not fully clear or explicit in the University's statements of vision, mission and objectives. Also, these statements (and perhaps also, as a consequence, the learning objectives of many study programmes) do not refer to the broader development of students with respect to personal skills to do with citizenship, ethics and life in general; rather they concentrate entirely on academic achievement and employability, which is commendable per se but too narrow a perspective.

In addition, although these key or lead objectives are coherent and appear logical at first glance, the question must be posed: Why has UTBv adopted them and are they really suitable to UTBv?

Firstly, is the choice of single theme wise? Did UTBv adequately validate its decision? These questions and related matters were in themselves a major topic in the Team's deliberations. Clearly, sustainable development as a single theme has significant advantages:

- It is an easily understood, uniform and potentially uniting concept – the very fact that it is *one* concept permeating the entire university can therefore be seen as a strong point
- It has long-term relevance and importance, locally and globally
- UTBv has core competencies in obviously relevant academic fields such as engineering, silviculture, and other areas related to the human and bio-sciences in general
- Given the wide range of challenges posed by global warming, 'peak oil' and indeed the need to transform entire societies socio-economically (business management and economics, law, political science), as well as individual human behaviour (education), it is

also relevant to a great or lesser extent to (perhaps) all major academic fields, including the humanities and social sciences, education, law and business management.

- It can easily support a wide spectrum of investigations and practical applications with many opportunities for cooperative enterprises locally and internationally, and also for societal development.
- Through benchmarking analyses, UTBv appears to have a clear view of challenges posed by competitors in the same field.

Secondly, is the objective to be 'both locally and globally visible and relevant' realistic for a university which is relatively small (particularly when compared nationally to the higher education and research institutions in Bucharest) and which is situated in a provincial (if renowned and well endowed) city? Could there be a tension between these? Again, a number of points can be made:

- UTBv is correct to promote basic/fundamental research that underpins applied projects intended to lead to concrete products or processes, thus providing a 'full supply chain' leading from basic research to application. This is clearly more ambitious and preferable to aiming only to apply ideas developed elsewhere. UTBv should make sure that this approach to research is supported and nurtured to the fullest extent feasible, since it may well become a distinctive academic hallmark of UTBv. However, such 'vertically' integrated research on a scale that is feasible at UTBv will pose many challenges and may be most important in facilitating cross-talk between linked projects that, while sometimes individually successful may remain stubbornly parallel.
- Global challenges (maximising the contribution of renewable energy sources or minimising CO_2 emissions or energy use) can act as a fruitful source of ideas for innovations that, initially at least, may find their most important applications locally. By taking a global view UTBv can anticipate new demands, thus facilitating and accelerating local development through the promotion of innovation.
- UTBv can pride itself on being one of the leading – if not 'the' leading – institution in Romania in some fields, for example in matters related to forestry and in automotive engineering, and can therefore command a vanguard position by tradition and by merit in these fields.

Thirdly, there is the objective to maintain and further develop UTBv as a comprehensive university. The Team is convinced that this aspiration is a valid one for UTBv.

- It is fully in line with the recent history of the University
- It is also in line with the structures of many of the most renowned institutions in the world. Opportunities for interdisciplinarity in teaching and research are enhanced and students have opportunities to interact with experts and students from greatly different fields, thereby supporting the broader but often very important aspects both of a good education in traditional terms, and in improved employability due to interdisciplinary competencies.
- As emphasised above, rather than 'pulling against' the implementation of a good single theme for teaching and research, a spectrum of academic fields (including economic, legal, social and medical elements) enhances opportunities. It does so also by acting as a buffer against changes in student preferences with respect to academic fields.
- A wide diversity of offerings to students combined with fidelity to a strong over-arching academic theme will require the incorporation into many study programmes of specific modules and the adjustment of the content or balance of some/many others.

As was clear from discussions, while UTBv is committed to its single theme, research projects and teaching elements with no discernable links to sustainable development are allowed. In this the

University is correct, and it indicates an important awareness of the broad conception of a university and of the value of individual scholarly endeavours. Moreover, UTBv realises correctly that, though there is considerable value in establishing its specific profile as described, it must make provision for credible teaching and learning in the core approaches to the wide range of academic fields to which it is committed.

In addition, the Team urges care with respect to aspirations to be ranked by one agency or another. While an awareness of UTBv's performance (and changes in performance) with respect to some of the measures employed may be very useful, the 'accuracy' of these schemes with respect to individual institutions is notoriously poor.

Finally, between the 'grand mission and vision' of UTBV as an institution and its concrete and routine operations, UTBv also has what may be called 'operational mission and vision'. In terms of teaching and learning, the Team understands these to be:

- Ensuring 'quality' throughout the learning experience
- Reconceptualising the learning experience throughout its study programmes, e.g. in particular by re-focussing study programmes and making the topic 'sustainable development' a feature permeating all curricula as much as possible
- Making research a priority not only for the sake of institutional visibility but also as a tangible experience in the learning process.

In terms of research, these are:
- Encouraging basic research with a view to taking it forward to applications; i.e., developing a holistic view of research as both fundamental and applicable
- Supporting the development of substantial non-science projects under the lead concept of sustainable development.

3. How is UTBv trying to do it?

Imagining a vision and a mission for a university and listing strategic objectives to be achieved are essential, but these tasks may be relatively easy compared to the relentless work necessary to achieve them. This first 'How' question concerns the translation of vision and mission into more detailed action plans as well as the related tools or procedures that must be devised, implemented and operated. Of course, this whole area is related closely to the achievement of large-scale change (even 'institutional transformation'), which is discussed further in Section 6 below.

The current strategic and operational plans of UTBv have merit and the advantage of a single focus, but in some ways they are largely a listing of numerous items, many without the assignment of convincing responsibility and timelines. While it is probable that the Team did not see all of the ways in which specified items are being implemented centrally and throughout the faculties, there was no clear operational agenda with specified individual commitments at various levels, and too much seemed to be targeted for implementation in parallel without visible prioritisation. Neither was the delegation of action lines within the University structure always explicit or clear.

A coherent, balanced and effective internal organisational structure is a major advantage when plans are to be implemented. In universities, this is related to:

- The numbers and sizes of faculties, institutes and their component units, and
- The relative roles of academic and professional administrative staff.

However, these factors are also central to the objectives of the plans themselves or implicit in the key objectives of UTBv and also will be discussed further below in Section 6.

3.1 Concerning teaching and learning

Internationally and especially in Europe, a small number of key generic learning objectives for students are stressed increasingly. (For example, the Council of Europe definition of educational objectives as included in the Bologna Process in its London Communiqué of 2007.) These are also explicit in the new Romanian *Law of National Education* (New Law) (Article 2.3 and elsewhere). For universities they may be summarised as follows:

- Employability, including professionalism and good attitudes to work
- Developing research competence, including critical and analytical thinking
- Personal development, including openness to lifelong learning
- Citizenship, including active participation in, and voluntary contributions to society.

To these, UTBv has added another in the form of its single theme for both teaching and research:

- An awareness of the importance and relevance of sustainable development, particularly with respect to individual academic or professional domains.

UTBv has come a long way in recent years in implementing Bologna reforms, in developing coherent sets of study programmes (training lines) and in consolidating student recruitment and economic viability. However, the Team received 'mixed messages' on the degree to which the theme of sustainable development and the other broad generic themes mentioned above are realised or implemented in its study programmes. This is not unrelated to the diversification of the methods used to teach (e.g. student-centred learning, problem-based learning, competence development and orientation) and to assess student learning and skills.

In some faculties, in individual training lines and study programmes, much is probably already being done in these respects, but a lot more is needed — de facto, or at least more explicitly —, including:

- Incorporation of sustainable development and other generic themes (where relevant) throughout all study programmes, starting with learning objectives at all levels, from programmes to modules, and including student assignments and projects
- Additional carefully designed and monitored teaching modules focused on one or more generic theme(s) and taken by many students on cognate or disparate programmes, as appropriate. Great care should be taken to ensure such elements are regarded by staff and students as relevant and equally important as specialist modules
- Innovative teaching materials and methods, and
- Appropriate assessment methods that fully test intended learning outcomes and desired competencies.

In addition, UTBv wants to, and should, make research a tangible experience at all levels, adequate to each level. However, 'research-competent bachelor graduates' is a difficult goal, particularly within a three year study programme and with a wide range of student abilities and backgrounds. Still, the development of critical and analytical thinking cannot begin too early; just like a general awareness of how facts are acquired, assessed and analysed, it should be encouraged at all levels. Lectures on their work by active researchers, and suitable student assignments and projects also make valuable contributions. UTBv is better placed than many universities in this respect in that its 'B-M-D training lines' should facilitate such 'filtering down' and it appears to be happening already in some faculties. The real challenge is to ensure that this

competence is real and substantial, and (as with other key competencies) is evident to those who work closely with UTBv graduates. This raises the question of the role of the separate research 'departments' in teaching 'research awareness' in bachelor programmes including whether certain (counter-) measures may be necessary in some cases to ensure the desired links and benefits.

Internationalisation is an aspect of itself that UTBv clearly wishes to develop. Related matters were clearly evident to the Team: many academic staff (and some students) have obtained qualifications or studied abroad, there are many international bi- and multi-party agreements, and competencies in English, French, German and other languages are widespread among staff and students. External business partners are also very well connected internationally. However, although some new ones are being developed (e.g. Eco-furniture design), there are few international study programmes (e.g. American Studies). Overall, perhaps largely because of under-investment in support structures, internationalisation at UTBv could profit from stronger strategic focussing, to enhance further both research and teaching capacities. Internationalised teaching, in particular, benefits from coherent choices of partners particularly in the development of joint study programmes.

Human resources are self-evidently the key to the success and future development of a university. While effective recruitment is vitally important, supporting existing staff to contribute better is more important in the short and medium terms. The Team learned that UTBv does support continuous professional development for teaching and administrative staff, but feel that there is considerable scope for doing more in order to contribute even better to all of the developments and innovations discussed here.

A single Doctoral School for UTBv is a good initiative, as a unified system is suited to the enhancement of inter-disciplinarity and to the effective and economic provision of training and support across the university, particularly where ('generic') competencies related to research are concerned. The Team learned from the doctoral students of the modules provided by the School on research methods and relevant generic skills. Effective doctoral schools also ensure the careful monitoring of students' progress to facilitate success (or improved supervision, early adjustments to projects, or student transfer or exit).

Distance/lifelong learning is an issue which UTBv focuses on for a number of valid reasons. It helps to ensure the continued relevance of the workforce in the region and supports economic development, thus confirming UTBv as an important partner in its environment. From an institutional perspective, expected demographic trends make it imperative for UTBv to diversify its student intake by developing these activities as much as possible. The Team encourages UTBv to continue along this line, and even strengthen its efforts in view of the demographic challenges.

3.2 Concerning research and knowledge transfer

The Institute of Research and Development (PRO-DD) and the 'Genius' research campus, that is due to open later this year, represents UTBv's strategic commitment to the development of high quality research that is both regionally relevant and globally significant. While some research-active academic staff continue to work independently of the Institute, those associated with it benefit from its range of supports; from the preparation of grant applications to the administration of projects. A single research centre:

- Is consistent with UTBv's commitment to a single unifying theme
- Supports the development of large research teams
- Helps inter-disciplinarity, and

- by concentrating investments and resources, ensures higher quality resources and equipment; not least by reducing unnecessary duplications.

However, a balance should be maintained between this concentration of resources and the acceptance that other productive (or potentially productive) researchers may wish to join or remain outside the institute. UTBv should develop a clearly communicated policy as to what qualifies for being included in the PRO-DD and/or the 'Genius' campus, and how inclusion in these may be terminated in order to maintain fully active units. This is important because many research projects have a limited 'life cycle' as far as significant innovation and outputs are concerned. For those not included, there could be a clearer message as to how they may be supported institutionally.

At the time of the evaluation visits, PRO-DD had 19 constituent research departments/ units/teams, but the number has fluctuated over the three years since the foundation of the Institute and is much less than the 144 research 'groups' identified as preparations were made to set up PRO-DD. The Team was initially concerned with the term 'research department', fearing that it implied a greater degree of permanence than is desirable, given the fluidity of research supports, capabilities and outputs. However, PRO-DD and its constituent units do appear to represent a good mix of continuity and flexibility; UTBv should indeed make sure that this continues.

UTBv also has a new Technology and Business Incubator (PRO-Energ) to supplement PRO-DD and is to be praised on the establishment of this range of complementary structures, supports and facilities (PRO-DD, Genius Campus, PRO-Energ). If well managed and resourced these will facilitate the attainment of UTBv's objectives with respect to basic/fundamental and applied research, the development of new services and products, enhanced regional developments, and significant international recognition.

As with teaching, talented human resources are the key to success, and so young researchers must be formed, trained, encouraged, and rewarded for exceptional productivity; not least in order to retain them. In addition, UTBv should, as it has tried to as much as possible in recent years, maximise the use of any additional freedom allowed by the new law on higher education to raise the quality of new academic appointments and to make specialist appointments when needed. At the same time there is a need to ensure institutionally that persons combining quality in research and in research-based-teaching are identified and supported, and that both staff selection and development provide talented people with aptitudes for both tasks.

Finally, the advances that UTBv has made over the last five years or so are very impressive; a huge amount of work has been done but (as many at UTBv said repeatedly) much needs 'sharpening' and 'bedding down'. The new law will help, but time is needed to understand the limits of what will be permitted and encouraged, and what will be supported with extra resources.

4. How does UTBv know that it works?

The processes by which UTBv seeks to understand how well it is operating and to what extent it is achieving its current objectives correspond to a large extent to what is understood by 'Quality Assurance'. The processes themselves are well illustrated by the diagram 'The Map of Processes' in Appendix 23 of the SER, in which the fundamental operational processes are indicated as 'Education' and 'Research'.

The discussions on what is meant by 'quality' at a 'round table' meeting during the Team's second visit to UTBv were rewarding. Three important aspects were raised by the participants:

- Compliance

- Fitness for purpose, and
- Customer satisfaction.

These are also explicit or implied in the draft Statement of UTBv's Quality Concept (Appendix C_30 in volume of Additional Information and Documents). However, both at the meeting and in the document, the greatest emphasis was on 'compliance' in one form or the other. In the Team's opinion, while compliance with external national requirements is essential, the key to the achievement of UTBv's ambitious objectives (in particular in order to make it distinct as an outstanding institution) lies more in making UTBv 'fit for purpose'; for example, by constantly asking whether or not activities in teaching and research serve to meet designated institutional ambitions. In doing that, satisfying 'customers' will naturally come in during the identification of valid 'purposes', and the design (or revision) of programmes in teaching and research/transfer to meet these purposes. All of this implies a necessity for UTBv to define better and 'sharpen' its philosophy of quality on one hand, and to build a more comprehensive and coherent system of quality assurance.

4.1 Quality assurance of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning may be assured and improved by two kinds of processes:

- Those that come after the teaching/learning activity and which usually monitor the competence or satisfaction of the learner; these may be referred to as being '*ex-post*'.
- Those that happen 'before the event' or '*ex-ante*'.

The most common *ex-post* quality procedures are surveys of students' satisfaction with:

- A single teacher
- A multi component course
- A full study programme, or with
- Their experience of the university as a whole.

The Team heard from both teachers and students that student response rates to surveys, which are apparently mainly concerned with student satisfaction with individual teachers, are invariably low ("a rather weak involvement ... is still registered", SER, page 20). Consequently, these survey results apparently have been of limited practical use. Explanations offered by both groups included poor timing of surveys — these take place too long after the relevant teaching is completed —, and a general disinterest in such procedures that may reflect attitudes in society in general. Corrective measures being considered include improvement of timing, surveying only representative groups and provision of quick feedback. Clearly, care should continue to be taken to ensure random sampling and anonymity. Obviously graduates, teachers and other stakeholders may also be surveyed. Little university-wide data on graduate 'destination' and on professional success or of stakeholder expectations or satisfaction was available. However, the Faculty of Silviculture has surveyed its graduates. More should and can be done here throughout the entire university.

Student representatives can also act as conduits of feedback on teaching and broader issues and the Team met groups from individual faculties as well as student members of management bodies. Such feedback is essential and can be invaluable. Students gave some examples where it was effective in bringing about improvements, even when the issue had to be passed up to be considered by higher level bodies. However, such feedback is not systematic and important issues can be missed or easily ignored. As with satisfaction surveys, this may be highly relevant with respect to areas or aspects where all those concerned are personally 'happy', although certain strategic objectives (e.g. developing a focus on research competences in teaching bachelor

students) have not been achieved. In other words, from a subjective point of view, certain types of failure are not felt as detrimental by those concerned. Also 'problems prevented' are better than 'problems solved', even if solved quickly.

Another category of *ex-post* quality monitoring depends on the collection and interpretation of data on resources and other inputs, and on student performance and promotion or non-completion. Data on staff to student ratios and on student 'drop-out' rates and completion times were supplied as appendices (15 to 17) to the SER. These are used in decision making when programmes become non-viable for funding reasons.

Where broader issues are identified (e.g. Silviculture found that three quarters of graduates are employed in areas – though many of these are to do with woodland – other than the state or government positions for which the programme is tailored), it is important that mechanisms exist and are used to make appropriate changes (e.g. the introduction of modules for Silviculture students to prepare them more succinctly for various fields in the private sector). Similarly, high drop-out levels should trigger investigations of relevant wider issues as well as of local issues. For example and as mentioned above, facilitating students in making better subject and programme choices; exploring with candidate students questions such as: 'Is this the right study programme for me?'

Ex-ante measures to promote quality include all that might be done to prepare in advance for any activity or procedure. They include selection, training and approval measures of all kinds in all sectors of the University. Such measures may be initiated and implemented at all levels, and personal initiatives with respect to individual duties are the most important in many respects. Other 'bottom-up' measures, driven within teams, departments or faculties, may be formal (e.g. the development of new programmes, or planning for the next semester) or entirely informal. Such approaches constitute a 'quality culture'.

However, *ex-ante* quality promotion also needs a 'top-down' dimension to ensure that University-wide standards are observed, including ensuring that overarching educational objectives (as mentioned above) are pursued across all sectors, and that all study programmes closely follow the fitness-for-purpose philosophy in terms of:

- Targeted conceptualisation,
- Subsequent implementation,
- Honest monitoring, and
- Adequate improvement.

For example, a new study programme initiated by an individual professor or teacher, and further developed and approved by (a) department(s) and (b) faculty(ies) may seem a perfectly good programme. But have all reasonable opportunities been taken to realise UTBv 's theme of sustainable development throughout the programme? Or (perhaps), are teaching and assessment methods sufficiently diverse to match UTBv's objectives in these respects? In some universities it is professional level staff with expertise in teaching and in generic matters of 'quality' who (necessarily in cooperation with a specific academic committee) make such judgements and then make recommendations to an academic council or senate. Also, it should never be forgotten that ARACIS exists to ensure agreed 'minimum standards' across all universities; these, however, may be quite insufficient in some respects for any particular ambitious university with its aspiration to a specific institutional profile and positioning.

4.2 Quality assurance of research

The assessment of research quality is highly complex not least because there are great differences between academic fields, even within the engineering spectrum. A common danger is over-reliance on research income (inputs) as a key indicator, as opposed to the number and quality of research articles, patents, books, etc. (outputs).

UTBv is to be complimented on the development of specialised software for the evaluation of research activity (FRACS). The effectiveness of FRACS should be regularly and rigorously evaluated and (as already envisaged) enhancements and re-formulations introduced to ensure its vital role. In addition, UTBv's research performance, as it may be seen externally, should be monitored regularly by means of tools used by the 'more relevant' of the ranking agencies.

5. Capacity for change: How does UTBv change in order to improve?

'Change management', whether informal or explicit, is relevant to virtually all human enterprise at this time; but it is particularly relevant to universities, which are seen by society and by governments as essential agents in facilitating change, and (more and more) in driving economic development. The vocabulary of 'change' has kept up; 'step change' is rapid change such as institutional restructuring, and 'transformational change' may be much more radical as when a relatively inconspicuous institution gradually becomes recognised as 'top' or 'best' in one or more respects.

UTBv's ability to change and develop substantially is already proven, and a series of measures and plans already developed in recent years may lead to significant transformational change in the near future:

- Leadership has been strong and focused
- Academic staff come from a variety of academic backgrounds – there is relatively low 'inbreeding'
- There is a strong analysis of the situation of UTBv and identification of valid, relevant strategic objectives
- There is the will and ability to take action accordingly, despite obstacles and some resistance
- There is change management awareness at UTBv
- Ownership of the strategic objectives throughout UTBv has been secured
- Significant improvements in, and diversification of, income have been achieved.

On the other hand, a glance at the organisational chart of UTBv, with its list of 18 faculties, points to 'structural overload' in the form of some faculties which in many other institutions would, as indicated by their names, be considered to be departments, or even subunits of these, within larger faculties. The present faculties also have constituent academic departments, and the 'B-M-D training lines' exist within or across departments or faculties. The Team recognise that UTBv is already addressing this issue, which is consistent with the new law on higher education, and sees that substantial advantage may accrue if restructuring is radical and results in the minimalisation of stratification and compartmentalisation. By this is meant not just the number of faculties but also the number of departments within faculties; in some cases individual departments could be replaced by what might be named 'programme centres', each being project-type associations of staff involved in one or more training lines. The advantages which restructuring the university could bring are the following:

- Further change (e.g. additional innovative/interdisciplinary study programmes) would be much easier to effect as communications within units and between faculties and central management would be facilitated.
- A (much) smaller number of deans could play a greater role in working with and advising the Rector
- Greater flexibility in the allocation and utilisation of resources and the reduction of overlaps in administrative functions
- Cost savings that enable more investments in higher professional administration.

At UTBv management and administration is highly reliant on academic leadership while at the same time the vice rectors, the Chancellor, and even the Rector must carry full teaching loads (even the new law on higher education insists on a continuation of this practice; albeit with a 30% reduction in the requirement). It is international practice that Rectors and many vice rectors — and even presidents/vice presidents of institutional student unions — are full time; even if some choose to continue to give one or a few courses per year.

Although required under the new law, UTBv does not yet have a professional 'chief administrator'. This is a great opportunity, though the person chosen needs to be highly competent as an administrator with insights into academia, but without any expectations as a policy director. In addition, increased professionalisation of senior administration at central and faculty levels can have important advantages and should be tackled coherently.

- A chief administrator (carefully selected and with a tight job description) will free the Rector from routine concerns relating to processes, allowing him/her to concentrate on policies
- Promotions or appointments to higher professional roles at the centre or in the faculties should bring significant efficiencies, free academic staff time and provide career opportunities for skilled existing administrators
- The six vice rectorates and the chancellery, especially their portfolios and roles will naturally require revision, perhaps with a significant reduction in number.

The Team had the opportunity during its first visit to meet with a range of external partners of UTBv including the Mayor of Brasov and senior managers from local industry or from branches of international companies located nearby. During the second visit, two representatives of local businesses participated with University senior management in a 90-minute 'roundtable' discussion on planning the future of UTBv. It is clear that UTBv may benefit greatly from increased and perhaps more formal and regular methods to involve its external partners – and distinguished alumni – in advising on very important decisions and in strategic planning. This could take the form of an advisory board that meets once or twice per year; a board made up of members who are truly interested, committed and willing to engage themselves substantially on behalf of UTBv's societal positioning, and its institutional as well as conceptual development. External inputs at faculty or programme levels may also be very useful and may allow statements such as 'Designed with employer input' to be associated with study programmes.

For UTBv the participation in, or leading of, 'consortia', can have many advantages. With respect to internationalisation, membership of consortia would support increasing UTBv's research and teaching potential, in making the university more visible and more attractive. In the Centre Development Region 7 (R007) (perhaps including where appropriate contiguous counties to the south and east) structured consortia could provide a context for UTBv taking on leadership roles in regional associations with industry, the community and other players in the field of higher education. From the roundtable discussions, it is clear that UTBv is already committed to this approach and the Team encourages it to continue, in line with a consistent strategic policy.

6. Recommendations

Complementing the many comments and suggestions made above, the Evaluation Team recommends that:

1. The University's next strategic plan (2013–2018), with its statements of vision, mission and key objectives, reflect the changed legal context and the significant advances already achieved by UTBv. However, the new plan will benefit if it is shorter, more quantitative and more insistent on delegated as well as 'central' actions, all with finite and realistic timelines.

2. UTBv reassess the blend of bottom-up and top-down strategies in planning and in developing teaching, research and transfer in order to ensure effectiveness in the coherent definition and implementation of its strategic objectives.

3. UTBv see its challenge in reducing the present very large number of faculties as a prerequisite to achieving large improvements in communications, management and decision making, all of which may be crucial in the achievement of its greatest ambitions.

4. Both University and faculty administration be made more 'professional' by the enhancement of administrative roles in support of more efficient and effective academic leadership.

5. UTBv consider measures for a consistent, strategic and organisational involvement of external stakeholders, e.g. through establishing formalised cooperative structures.

6. The combination of research and teaching competences of UTBv's academic staff be ensured in processes for staff selection, development and management.

7. UTBv place much greater emphasis on key generic learning objectives for all of its study programmes including citizenship, research competence (including for bachelor programmes), professionalism and those related to sustainable development; and enhance or create the facilities (including for staff development and training) necessary to achieve this.

8. UTBv ensure that its concept of a full 'supply chain' leading from basic research to application be fully developed and established in as many areas as possible.

9. UTBv maintain flexibility in the structures and supports it has to enhance research, in order to maintain high levels of ongoing or incipient output in all its research units.

10. Internationalisation at UTBv be given the resources and strategic emphasis that its importance deserves.

11. The revision and development of UTBv's quality assurance activities be continued to ensure the achievement of comprehensive, balanced and sufficient systems (both *ex-ante* and *ex-post*) for the improvement and assessment of teaching, research and administration.

12. UTBv, via all channels open to it, lobby the government to allow rectors (and a small number of vice rectors) of large universities become more effective and professional by abolishing the absolute requirement that they continue to carry a substantial teaching load.

7. Envoi

UTBv prepared well for this evaluation, through its Rector, Liaison Person, Steering Committee, management, staff and its talented students. The University has shown itself to be proactive and capable of big changes, and open to new ideas. It is led and staffed by committed, skilled people who are ambitious for its development as an important regional resource and a significant global contributor to sustainable development. The Team appreciated the qualities of all concerned, which provided a special richness to the knowledge gathered in the course of the evaluation, and believe that these same qualities will ensure UTBv's success in its ambitions. The Team wish UTBv well and hope that the analysis presented in this Report will prove useful to the future development of UTBv.