



**European Association for
Public Administration
Accreditation**

19 July 2011

EAPAA Accreditation Committee Evaluation Report

Bachelor in Public Administration, Faculty of Public Administration, National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest, Romania

Evaluation Report with respect to the request for accreditation of 7 July 2010.

In consideration of the Self-Evaluation Report of the above programme of 14 April 2011, the Site Visit Report of 3 June 2011 of the EAPAA Site Visit Team for this programme, and the response of the programme of 20 July 2011 to the draft of the Site Visit Report, the EAPAA Accreditation Committee, at its meeting of 6 September 2011 in Bucharest, Romania, has evaluated this programme against the EAPAA Accreditation Criteria (version 7, September 2009).

1. Accreditation Criteria

2. Applicability/Eligibility	
2.1 Domain	The Bachelor degree programme is structured in two specializations "Public administration" and "European administration". The second specialization has been recently introduced in the Romanian educational system and represents an extension of studies over the specific problems of public administration, by developments in this field at European level. As it has been stated during the SV in 2008 the programme to be accredited is clearly within the field of public administration. Since the structure of the programme has been considerably changed towards multi-discipline study the position of the programme has been strengthened within the field.
2.2 Geography	Romania is a member of the Council of Europe, therefore the programme falls within the jurisdiction of EAPAA.
2.3 Programme longevity	Until now, within the evaluated programme, there have been promoted 12(twelve) series of graduates for "Public administration" specialization, and 4(four) series of graduates for "European administration" specialization. Since 2005 till present, six series completed the form of distance education. The programme meets the criterion.
2.4 Programme variants and locations	Bachelor programme is designed in two tracks i.e. Public Administration and European Administration, both are delivered in two variants, as a full time education and as a distance learning education. Both variants are offered and delivered only from Bucharest. Both variants of the programme are from substantive point of view the same and delivered by the same academic staff. Students enrolled in distance learning study receive approximately 30% of contact hours comparing to full time students. Distance learning study is supported and

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	monitored by the specialised software Moodle and remote tutoring system for the students has been implemented. The assessment of the students in both variants of studies is organised in the same way and according to the same standards.
4 Category of accreditation	The NSPSPA Faculty of Public Administration is applying for the accreditation of its first cycle 3 year Bachelor Public Administration Programme with two specializations, Public Administration and European Administration.
5. Standards	
5.1 Domain of public administration Score: Adequate	As it has been stated at the first accreditation three years ago the programme is clearly focused on education and training for public administration careers hence it is in the PA domain. One of the main weaknesses of the programme pointed out three years ago was its multidisciplinary orientation. Namely according to administrative tradition in Romania law was the most important field of study for public servants and consequently law subjects are dominating in PA programmes. Following the recommendations of the EAPAA AC in 2008 visible progress has been made in terms of multi-disciplinary orientation. The Programme belongs clearly within public administration domain. It has been designed to provide the necessary knowledge and skills for all who would like to pursue professional careers in PA. Multi-disciplinary character of the programme is now clearly visible however SVT still sees space for improvements in terms of horizontal integration of the subjects and interdisciplinary approach to analysis of the problems.
5.2 Mission of the programme Score: Adequate	Mission statement was subject to strong criticism during the site visit in 2008. the mission statement which was changed to: »The Bachelor programme in Public Administration, for both mentioned specializations has the mission to achieve the basic education in public administration in consensus with the national and European needs of the development of public administration and civil service as well as with the missions of other public administration programmes developed by European universities.« On the basis of the new mission statement more precise programme focus has been developed: »The philosophy of the programme is based on the future of national public administration in the context of Romania's membership to the European Union and the training of a body of civil servants and public contractual personnel capable of working in national and European institutions and authorities of public administration. The interface between the national and European administrative levels may be assured by training a group of specialists, young people trained in the spirit of national and European values, whose competences, skills and attitudes shaped inside the bachelor programme of public administration, respectively European administration should respond to the present requests and challenges of the social, political, economic and administrative evolution of the systems. « SVT concluded that measures have been taken to make mission statement more realistic and also to reshape the programme in line with the mission statement. Of course some more time will be needed in order to see the

	actual outcomes.
5.3 Level Score: Adequate	<p>Programme applying for accreditation has been in 2005-2006 redesigned according to the Bologna Model into a three year programme with 180 ECTS credits. Formally the programme corresponds to the general, internationally accepted descriptions of the qualifications of an academic bachelor. However SVT concluded that there is still a lot of space for improvements. SVT studying available documentation came to an impression that in the last three years attitude towards research oriented methods and tools has been improved but the results still remain to be seen. In the written works SVT has seen, there was still prevailing 'descriptive' approach, critical analysis and reflection is more an exception than an everyday approach and there was very little evidence of use of empirical quantitative research methods at least at some basic level expected at the bachelor level.</p> <p>SVT concluded that in the last three years visible improvements have been implemented and direction of changes is definitely positive however it will take some more time to achieve tangible results. Criterion is fulfilled.</p>
5.4 Practise and internships Score: Adequate	<p>FPA is from the very beginning paying special attention to the practical experience and skills in their teaching methods. This fusion of 'theory' and 'practice' is taking place systematically through two mechanisms. On the one hand among academic staff there are many lecturers who are on high positions in different public administration bodies and they can transfer and combine their practical expertise and experiences with theory and enrich their lectures. On the other hand FPA systematically developed and established a network of institutions which are providing practical placements for the students. According to this provision, practice has become part of the curriculum which means that in the second and forth semester students spend one day per week (6 hours) at hosting public institution. Students are required to write reports which are evaluated by the special commission.</p> <p>SVT finds FPA paying full attention to combining theoretical teaching with development of practical skills. Agreements with PA institutions seem to work and employers seems to be satisfied. Although there is no internships as integral part of the curriculum SVT considers that in a three year programme the implemented solution is appropriate. Criterion is fulfilled.</p>
5.5.1 Curriculum Content	
5.5.1.1 Core components Score: Adequate	<p>We have already noted that the course still does not give enough weight to the disciplines of economics, law, political science, sociology, public finance, informatisation, and public management, as well as the relationship between these fields. Apart from the relative balance between these and the law courses, there is arguably a need for a shift between the core, associate core and elective courses. Although there has been a shift towards research skills, there needs to be still greater shift with an appreciation of both quantitative and qualitative research skills and evidence of these needs to be seen in the dissertations and other written work.</p> <p>SVT concluded that in the last three years visible improvements have been</p>

	implemented and direction of changes is definitely positive. This is good and needs to continue and to be evident in written work. Criterion is fulfilled.
5.5.1.2 Other Components Score: Adequate	It is important to emphasise that the FPA offer both full time and distance learning courses. More information on this is given later in 5.11 and 5.12. The distance learning one operates through both students visiting the Faculty building for actual lectures and virtual communication over the Web. The Faculty appear to devote considerable resources to this, with dedicated staff and servers. The students appeared satisfied with the way it worked. Criterion is fulfilled.
5.5.1.3 Structure and didactics of the programme Score: Adequate	The courses offered by the FPA put emphasis on the description of public administration phenomena and the transfer of factual knowledge. These are important elements of a public administration curriculum. During their studies students have frequent opportunities to interact with public administration in practice. Public Administration is a rapidly evolving field, not least because of a changing, and ever more technical, world. New insights are being generated from research. But many of these are published in English language journals. The students have access to an impressive range of electronic journal sources and data bases. But many of the students do not speak English sufficiently well to take advantage of these. It would be desirable if NSPSA could encourage this to a still greater extent. It is worth emphasizing too that the staff help by writing many Romanian language texts. This is an ever evolving field. The SVT concluded that substantial steps have been made to evolve the material in line with latest research developments and practice elsewhere in Europe. This of course needs to continue. Criterion is fulfilled.
5.5.1.4 Intake Score: Adequate	FPA has constantly every year higher number of candidates than the number of student places approved by the ministry, hence system of selection and ranking of candidates has been installed. According to this system candidates are ranked and divided into two groups. Candidates who qualified for upper part of the list can apply for the free posts while candidates qualified at lower part of the list can apply only on a fee-paying basis. This criterion is satisfied.
5.5.2 Length Score: Complies	The length of the program and study times is consistent with European standards and more than adequate. Programme applying for accreditation is a three year (180 ECTS) programme.
5.5.2 Results Score: Adequate	Subject to the concerns noted above relating to the subject orientation of the course and the continuing need still to move more away from the law side of the course and in particular more emphasis on qualitative and quantitative research methods, this criterion is satisfied. The students and graduates are articulate and knowledgeable and confident in their ability to fit their knowledge to practice. There must be concerns with the high drop out rates on the distance

	learning courses. The reasons may be linked to the economic crisis, but efforts should be made to find out more about this.
5.6 Quality Improvement and Innovation	
5.6.1 Programme accomplishment Score: Adequate	<p>A team for quality assurance is functioning at the Faculty. According to the self-evaluation document, the School has established standards of excellence for all the actors involved in the educational process. The document lists basic elements and aspects of educational process – and states that there are “clear standards as well as benchmarks” for these criteria. The document does not reveal what these standards and benchmarks are in general or for the BA programme in particular. During the site visit, discussions specified the mechanisms. The Faculty has been active in consulting foreign universities, alumni and various public institutions for collecting information about needs and models of improving the programme. Course feed-back questionnaires with closed-end questions are used as a standard measure of collecting student feed-back. The results are published and dealt with in the Faculty Board twice a year based on oral presentation. The self-evaluation material and the site visit did reveal neither any clear set of objectives, nor a schedule for their implementation. It was not easy to find any systematic approach. At the same time, it was obvious that the procedures were sufficient to identify major problems in programme accomplishment.</p> <p>It seems that there is no overarching policy for programme accomplishment where the achievement of concrete objectives, based on the policy, would be assessed against the relevant information, and where written reports about the gaps between targets and accomplishments would be disseminated for the members of Faculty Council and academic as well as administrative staff responsible for the improvement of the programme. The interaction within the staff seems to be relatively active and open, but the approach to collecting, analysing, disseminating and using relevant information about programme accomplishment should be more systematic.</p>
5.6.2 Curriculum Development Score: Adequate	<p>Curriculum development is integrated with processes of programme accomplishment (see above). The programme has close connections to relevant employers who also provide opportunities for students’ work practice during the studies. Questionnaires are sent annually to alumni and “beneficiaries” of the programme and results have been the basis of continuous improvements. However, the composition of beneficiaries is not defined in an informative way. Course feed-back questionnaires with closed-end questions are a crucial element in curriculum development, perhaps stronger than in program accomplishment. The Faculty Board discusses the results and proposals for improvement. No systematic processes of collecting and publishing counter-feedback (teachers’ comments about students’ feed-back) are applied. Students do not seem to be generally aware of the measures taken due to their feed-back in the form of filling in questionnaires. At the same time, students appear to be satisfied with their influence on the development of the curriculum. For example, it was students’ initiatives which lead to the termination of course of statistics a few years ago. The Faculty is currently working on a self-evaluation report for each professor focusing on content, teaching method,</p>

	<p>level of understanding and attractiveness of the course of the professor. This is an innovative attempt to improve teaching.</p> <p>The mechanisms of curriculum development could be more systematic and transparent. However, the practices, even to some extent fragmented, are sufficient to maintain the culture of continuous improvement of the programme. It is obvious that the Faculty has been successful in creating a atmosphere of continuous improvement.</p>
5.6.3 External Reviews Score: Adequate	<p>The programme has been reviewed by Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and its predecessor several times. One of the recommendations has been to obtain an optimum ratio between the different categories of disciplines (legal 30 %, managerial 30 %, and social and humanistic 30 %). This recommendation, initiating from 2002, has been constantly modified to as to become more compatible with the similar European programmes. The self-evaluation report does not focus on any other recommendations and their implementation. The previous accreditation of EAPAA has led to numerous measures which were in line with the decision of EAPAA AC and which contributed to further development of improvements of the programme.</p> <p>With the exception of EAPAA accreditation, the Faculty does not make the recommendations of external evaluations and their influence on the development of the programme sufficiently transparent. The comparison of the recommendations to various internal and external sources of initiatives of programme development would show more comprehensive approach to improve the programme.</p>
5.7 Student Assessment Score: Adequate	<p>The programme assesses systematically the individual performance of its students. The general structure of the system of written and oral tests and forms of global and continuous assessment is well-developed and carefully planned. However, the connection between the objectives of the courses and the ways of examining are sometimes difficult to find. This is partly because of the course objectives are not always expressed as learning outcomes related to knowledge, skills and capacities of students. The ways of examining are often versatile, giving, in principle, space for the assessment of various learning outcomes. The interviews during the site visit showed that students may have feedback from their learning also informally, which broadens the review and mutual understanding of the achievement of the learning outcomes. Fair assessment is essential in all education system. Students may complain formally for the marks given by teachers, but it seems that teachers actively respond if questions about the bases of grades arise.</p> <p>Currently the FPA has a balance between written exams, course work and oral exams. The dissertation is an important component of the degree and a brief analysis of about 50 students suggested the dissertation marks were substantially higher than the other marks, bringing up the average for most students. There was some concern that in a few cases, the same method of examining was not offered to distance learning students as full time ones.</p> <p><i>There should be complete consistency.</i></p>
5.8 Programme Jurisdiction	<p>The programme under evaluation is the main programme of the Faculty of Public Administration. The Faculty is entitled to design and organise its own</p>

<p>Score: Good</p>	<p>educational programmes. The Faculty Board is a collegial body with the mission of coordinating the academic, administrative, and social activities developed in the faculty and in its campus. The Faculty board, with 15 members, of which three are students designated by the students' organisation, is led by the Dean.</p> <p>According to the self-evaluation, the direct responsibility regarding the administration of the programme belongs to the Dean of the Faculty who also coordinates the programme and who also has the responsibility of the programme manager. In addition, there are five mentors, one for the students of the first year, two for the students of the second year (one for each specialisation area: public administration, European administration), and two for the third year, again one for each specialisation.</p> <p>The site visit discussions specified the content and nature of programme jurisdiction. Mentors' role seemed to be important as a mediator between the academic staff and students. However, the tasks and the required competences of the mentors were not specified in the self-evaluation.</p> <p>There is clearly a system of program jurisdiction which is working relatively well. The system of mentors and its relation to chairs and the Dean should be made more transparent.</p>
<p>5.9.1 Faculty nucleus Score: Good</p>	<p>The teaching body involved in organizing and developing the programme under evaluation is formed out of 51 members of the teaching staff and 12 doctoral students. Forty-seven members of the teaching staff are employed in the Faculty of Public Administration, in other faculties of NSPSPA and 4 belong to other institutions. If we take that there are approximately 50 full time academic staff at FPA then we come to the staff – student ratio approx 1: 40-50.</p> <p>36 staff are identified as course leaders. 11 of these are professors, 7 are senior lecturers, 14 are lecturers and 4 are assistants. Full time university staff are supplemented by, in some cases, high profile individuals from outside NSPSPA. There were ten such practitioners. Compared to this there appears to be less use of foreign specialists. There does appear to be relatively little contact on the teaching side with academics from outside Romania.</p> <p>There are a substantial number of staff, supplemented by outside practitioners. They are stressing research, but this tends to be focused on a relatively few individuals. But progress is being made.</p>
<p>5.9.2 Faculty qualifications Score: Adequate</p>	<p>The majority, some 72.5%, of the core faculty who teach on the program hold a PhD and the rest are working towards completion of this qualification. The core Faculty are composed as follows: 12 Professors, 7 Senior lecturers, 13 Lecturers, 19 Assistants. This is a reasonable number of professors. Of those with a Phd 13 have one in law and 10 in economics. The rest are fairly evenly spread apart from European Studies and Political sciences where there is just one each. But once more it needs to be emphasized that these are formal qualifications. Academics need to publish and they need to publish in international journals. The staff are indeed encouraged to do so, both from actions by the government of Romania which is emphasizing University research, and the Faculty itself. However from the CVs it can be concluded that publications of academic staff take</p>

	<p>place by en large in national publications, conference papers prevailing while the number of published scientific papers in international journals is rather low and related to more or less two or three professors.</p> <p>The formal qualifications of the Faculty staff are adequate, although perhaps there could be more emphasis on people from disciplines other than economics and law. More staff need to be involved with internationally recognised research activities.</p>
5.9.3 Diversity: gender and minorities Score: Good	<p>Among the Academy's faculty members the percentage of women constitutes 50.9% of the entire Faculty and staff involved in running the MPA program. This is comparable to the ratio at national level. There are also a substantial proportion of women in key leadership positions including the Dean herself. We were informed that Romania does not have any ethnic employment targets, but we believe that the Faculty does include a number of people from ethnic minorities.</p> <p>The criteria are satisfied.</p>
5.10 Admission of Students Score: Adequate	<p>The self-evaluation document describes the admission goals broadly but relatively loosely. The issue of the compatibility of admission tests and the content of educational process as well as the future role of the graduates is stated but not elaborated against admission procedures and requirements. The admission process itself is described adequately. The students of the full-time programme are admitted on the basis of the control test (the coefficient being 75 %) and the average on the bacalaureate exam (25 %). The students of the distant learning programme are admitted on the basis of personal application and the averages obtained in the bacalaureate exam. The nature of the personal application and the required elements of this application are not specified in the self-evaluation document. During the site visit, students of the full-time programme seemed to consider the admission procedure fair enough, as students can choose from many subjects (the subject profiles of Romanian high schools vary). The students of the distant learning programme did not see any reason for changing the current system.</p> <p>The principles and practices of admission are adequate in general terms. The admission goals, policies and standards should be specified better in relation to the mission and objectives of the programme.</p>
5.11 Supportive Services and Facilities Score: adequate	<p>The library focuses on public administration and political science. There is access to the main on-line databases.</p> <p>Support staff at the Academy is professional. The Faculty has an administrator, responsible for the good administration of material resources. The Faculty secretariat is structured in two departments: for full-time education and distance learning education. There are 9 persons employed, with managerial tasks and responsibilities for the programme forms of study. Also the faculty has employed a documentary person and an administrator. The administrative staff appear integrated with and committed to the Department.</p> <p>The students in the programme use 2 laboratories: decision simulation and evaluation, and support technologies. There is also an ECDL laboratory, servers' room, a micro laboratory dedicated to persons with disabilities. There is also a videoconference system, although we saw little evidence of</p>

	<p>it being used in the teaching of this programme. The teaching staff may use the audio-video equipment in order to support the didactic activities. There were also several rooms with PCs which students could freely access. The software includes the Internet, word processing and spreadsheet software as one would expect and also SPSS. However, there was little evidence that these were being used at the time we looked at them. This might have been the time of the year – near exams. Wireless connection was available in the building.</p> <p>The classrooms we saw tended to be fairly basic. The main teaching tool was a board. Most had some sort of overhead projector. In a secondary building we visited, the lecture rooms appeared better, better furnished and with better teaching equipment. From what has been seen of the new building, this will present considerable improvements and in many cases promises to be ‘state of the art’.</p> <p>All staff is provided by basic office place within the building. The available place is limited, but generally sufficient, equipped with basic necessary infrastructure. The main building is an old one and the move to the new building should bring considerable benefits. The self evaluation document notes that for tutorship activities, the spaces are insufficient, there are only 4 rooms ensuring mainly tutorship for distance learning education. In the new building 10 rooms will be dedicated to individual activities of the teaching staff, which will be also used for tutorship.</p> <p>Each faculty achieves its own financial policy in order to ensure the financial results for a good delivery of the didactic process. From the figures it can be seen that the Faculty makes a substantial surplus, although with the help of State support. It is also apparent that the distance learning programme subsidizes the full time programme. The figures suggest that the full time programme by itself is not financially viable. Despite this, more resources, and considerably more per student, are devoted to the full time programme than the distance learning one. Given the substantially higher drop out rates on the distance learning degree, this tends to suggest that resources should be reallocated more to the distance learning programme. Current facilities are not great, but the move to the new building should see considerable improvements, not least in the lecture room facilities. It is important that staff adapt their lecturing styles to take full advantage of these. There is a suggestion perhaps that more resources might be focused on distance learning.</p>
<p>5.12 Student Services Score: Good</p>	<p>NSPSPA offers to students scholarships from both state budget and its own sources.. These include: (i) <i>Merit base scholarships</i>, for students with outstanding results, (ii) <i>Study scholarships</i>, for students with good results and (iii) <i>Social assistance related scholarships</i>.</p> <p>NSPSPA’s Centre for Counselling and Career Advising (CeCOP) advises students in selecting the pathway through their course choice. Since 2007, it has aimed to facilitate the functional relations between the academic community in NSPSPA and other academic communities from Romania and abroad as well as with the stakeholders. CeCOP’s specific activities include the organisation of periodical meetings with alumni and students, human resource managers, employers, annual organisation of a job fair, as well as seminars about the relations between higher education institutions and</p>

	employers. Also CeCOP aims to disseminate information to students about the opportunities to study in Romania and abroad. The students themselves, as well as alumni, appeared satisfied with these procedures.
5.13 Public Relations Score: Good	<p>For the program evaluated, the main means for public relations development are the websites. These two websites are the main interfaces for public relations. Also faculty public relations office was set up and the public relations provided by the faculty secretariat were extended. Another strong point of this part is CeCop, an organism formed under the authority of the NSPSPA Rector, for the promotion of the programs and the professional orientation of the students; CeCop has done a campaign of direct presentations in 50 high school from Bucharest and surrounding cities, and has organized "Open doors" days for the University and for each Faculty. There are also institutional partnerships with the mass media. Information about faculty activities is published in central media publications including advertising materials concerning the evaluated program.</p> <p>During every academic year special university brochure is being published as well as posters and flyers advertising the programs to interested institutions. For the admission period information center and mobile teams are set up for the same period, the goal being the direct interaction with potential students and their parents, guidance and counseling with regards to any issues and question they might have.</p> <p>This criterion is fulfilled.</p>
6 Additional Criteria Score:	None

2. Conclusion

The site visit team concludes:

"SVT established during its short visit that behind the progress and development of all programmes at FPA stands a dedicated and ambitious team which is important message for the future of the programme under evaluation. Namely the programme has been conditionally accredited by EAPAA three years ago and a list of recommendations has been set up at that evaluation. SVT came to the conclusion that the core team at FPA led by the Dean is determined to follow the line of changes and improvements chartered by the EAPAA's AC and also according to their own ambitious goals. Several changes are already visible and many more will probably take place in the future (in particular with the prospect of the new premises which are under construction and are in the final stage) since there is more time required to intertwine them into the every day routine of an educational and research institution.

Stemming from the adapted mission statement the most visible and positive change is related to the pointedly improved multi-disciplinary orientation of the programme. In this respect significant changes have been implemented with regard to the law oriented subjects, the number of them has been significantly reduced and replaced or supplemented by the subjects focusing on politics, public policies, management and research methodologies. The amount of law related courses and topics is still relatively high in comparison to the typical 'western' European or USA programs in public administration but these reflect the administrative culture and tradition in Romania and should be respected. We know that in many so called 'continental' administrative systems in Europe situation and the attitude towards the law is more or less the same.

Next very positive orientation which has been deliberately followed in the last few years was internationalization of the institution and the programmes under the accreditation. FPA is pointedly increasing international activities by the exchange of students and lecturers, increased presence of lecturers at the important international conferences and in internationally recognised publications and on the other hand organisation of scientific conferences at home.

What according to the SVT observations has to remain very strongly on the agenda for the future is further development of multi-disciplinarity, research and innovative use of ICTs.”

Based on the above evaluation of the specific criteria, the EAPAA Accreditation Committee concludes that this programme meets the criteria for accreditation sufficiently, and so the programme can be accredited without restrictions.