



**European Association for
Public Administration
Accreditation**

27 July 2011

EAPAA Accreditation Committee Evaluation Report

**Master in Public Administration 'Public Sector management', 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	According to its mission statement the mission of the "Public Sector Management" programme is to provide 'specialised training in the field of administrative sciences/public administration to first cycle/Bachelor degree graduates, as well as to public employees, in accordance with the complex problems of the Romanian public sector and with their developments and trends at European level'. Programme applying for accreditation is clearly in the field of public administration/management.
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	Public Sector Management M.A. programme has been offered since 2002 as a 1.5 years full-time education programme, with 6 cohorts of graduates. In 2005/2006 programmes has been transformed into 2 years 120 ECTS programme designed according to the Bologna principles and 1 series of graduates.
2.4 Programme variants and locations	The master programme Public Sector Management is 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 the 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 monitored by the specialised software Moodle and remote tutoring system for the students has been implemented. The assessment of the students for both variants of

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	studies is organised in the same way and according to the same standards.
4 Category of accreditation	Public administration master level programmes (1 or 2 years)
5. Standards	
5.1 Domain of public administration Score: Good	<p>The programme is clearly focused on education and training for public administration careers, hence it is in PA 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 achieved through relatively balanced mix of subjects from law, public management, economics, public policy to the information technology. The programme contains four modules designed in a way that they provide a coherent block of knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Public Sector, • The Management of Public Organisations, • Techniques of Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis, and • Applicability and Practice. <p>Programme applying for accreditation falls under Public Administration Domain, the criterion is fulfilled.</p>
5.2 Mission of the programme Score: Adequate	<p>The programme applying for the accreditation has been introduced in 2002 and later on has undergone several changes which resulted in the current form of the programme. SER is stating that “the mission of the “Public Sector Management” programme is to provide specialised training in the field of administrative sciences/public administration to first cycle/Bachelor degree graduates, as well as to public employees, in accordance with the complex problems of the Romanian public sector and with their developments and trends at European level.” From the mission statement, three important dimensions of the programme are - deducted: teaching dimension, materialised in the design and transmission of the specialty knowledge, research dimension and the applicability ensured by the specific research internship/practice activities. From, the mission also a set of objectives has been defined. SVT came to the impression that there is a visible process of constant improvements of the programme more or less in line with the mission statement. However it is hard to say if is this process is actually guided by the mission itself down through objectives, programme development, implementation and constant evaluation or it is more a bottom up process which means that programme development is basically driven by the human resources available at the school. Anyway SVT came to the conclusion that the research dimension of the programme is still the weakest point of this programme developing process.</p> <p>SVT concluded that the programme states clearly its educational philosophy and mission and have mechanisms in place and dedicated staff to transfer it into realistic objectives and programme outcomes.</p>
5.3 Level Score: Adequate	<p>Programme applying for accreditation has been in 2005-2006 redesigned according to the Bologna Model into a two year second cycle programme with 120 ECTS credits. Formally the programme corresponds to the generally, internationally accepted descriptions of the qualifications of an academic bachelor. However the SVT concluded that there is still a lot of</p>

	<p>space for improvements. The SVT studying available documentation came to the conclusion that orientation towards research oriented teaching and use of research methods which are common in PA field and expected to be widely used at this level of study is getting more profound, however still not at the level quite normal at European master programmes. 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.</p> <p>SVT concluded that criterion is fulfilled.</p>
<p>5.4 Practise and internships Score: Good</p>	<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 in 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 the 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 fourth semester students spend one day per week (6 hours) at a hosting public institution. Students are required to write reports which are evaluated by the special commission.</p> <p>SVT finds FPA is 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. Criterion is fulfilled.</p>
<p>5.5.1 Curriculum Content</p>	
<p>5.5.1.1 Core components Score: Good</p>	<p>The curriculum is designed to include core disciplines, amounting to 60% of the total number of disciplines (Table 10), and ensuring the development of knowledge competences, functional-acting competences in the public sector, provide the teaching of the basic concepts regarding the bases of the public sector, the normative bases of the administrative law of goods, approaches to public organizations and NGOs, benchmarking and economic analysis in the public sector, as well as elements of research methodology and practice.</p> <p>The core components in each semester are: Semester 1: Bases of the Public Sector, Administrative Law of Goods, Management of Non-profit Organizations, Strategies for e-Government; Semester 2: Organization and Human Resource Management, Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods of the Public Sector ; Semester 3: Comparative Analysis in the Public Sector, Project of Applied Research; Semester 4: Economic Analysis of Public Decisions, Practice.</p> <p>SVT finds it reasonably well balanced. However, there does perhaps need to be more emphasis on quantitative and qualitative research methods and there should be evidence of this in the dissertation. This is not an abstract point valid only for researchers. An ability to be able to interpret data is fundamental to being able to evaluate performance and trends and also to</p>

	be able to understand many documents and reports coming out of the EU and OECD for example. There is also an argument for more emphasis on IT.
5.5.1.2 Other Components Score: Good	<p>The elective components are:</p> <p>Semester 2: Strategic Management, Public Marketing, Principles and Tactics of Negotiation,</p> <p>Semester 3: Accounting and Audit of Public Institutions, Public Policy Analysis for Managers, Quality Management in the Public Sector</p> <p>Semester 4: Project Management for Public Sector Investments, Public Finance Management, Consultancy, Design and Evaluation of Programmes for the Public Sector</p> <p>Finally, every training module contains supplementary disciplines in the fields of communication, European resources for financing the public sector (both semester 1), the practice of public acquisitions and best practices in the development of the public sector: the public – private partnership (both semester 2). Due to the inclusion in the programme of a significant number of elective disciplines, the participants in the programme can create their own sectoral specialisation directions.</p> <p>There is always room for improvement, but the curriculum is in the main well balanced and relevant to its subject.</p>
5.5.1.3 Structure and didactics of the programme Score: Adequate	<p>The bulk of the teaching we saw appeared to be done well, but done in a traditional manner. Although available in some cases little use was being made of the web and the overhead projectors. Once the move into the new building is complete, it is important that staff adapt their lecturing style of delivery to take full advantage of the advanced facilities provided. The varied methods of assessment do currently help engage the student. The programme is eminently doable in terms of the time at their disposal. The students have access to 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, possibly by providing English language facilities which the students can access in their spare time. It is worth emphasizing too that the staff helps by writing many Romanian language texts.</p> <p>The teaching methodology is currently limited perhaps by the classroom facilities and tends to be fairly traditional. The move to the new building is an opportunity. The staff are also doing their best to overcome problems raised by many key resources being available in English.</p>
5.5.1.4 Intake Score: Good	<p>Admittance to the programme comes from both students who completed the bachelors at NSPSA and students from other backgrounds. Given the emphasis on law in the NSPSA bachelors, this may create problems. But the students appear satisfied with the course and their work is of a satisfactory standard. FPA has constantly every year seen 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. It would be an interesting analysis to see how these two groups of students performed. Finally again it should be emphasised</p>

	<p>that there are differences between the distance learning and full time students, both in terms of their qualifications and the methods of teaching. Both sets appear satisfied and care is taken with the distance learning to ensure efficient and adequate provision, although as pointed out elsewhere, the high dropout rate on distance learning needs to be monitored. Overall, however, the teaching content appear good on all programmes.</p> <p>This criterion is satisfied.</p>
5.5.2 Length Score: Complies	The length of the program (130 ECTS) and study times is consistent with European standards.
5.5.2 Results Score: Good	<p>There is considerable evidence that the final qualifications of the programme are fit for purpose. The primary evidence for this came through interviews with graduates from the programme and senior figures amongst those who employ them. In several cases these senior figures were graduates of the programme. All spoke highly of the programme and how it had aided their work and their career – this being true for distance learning students most of whom were studying the programme whilst employed, as well as full time students. However, a programme such as this should also perhaps provide for needs which employers do not currently perceive as needs. In this way the programme can act as a agent of change. For example greater emphasis on ability to quantitatively and qualitatively analyse data plus research skills can facilitate the monitoring of public administration.</p> <p>The figures on student attrition on the full time courses, the numbers are reasonable, apart from in 2008, which may be a reflection of the economic crisis. However, the drop out rates on the distance learning courses are substantially higher. The high figures in 2007/8 may again in part reflect the economic crisis. Given the greater staff student ratio on this course, NSPSA might well consider attempting to ask each student who drops out the reason (for both full-time and distance learning programmes). Dependent upon the answers, NSPSA might consider devoting more resources to the distance learning programme.</p> <p>To a large extent this aspect is satisfied and well satisfied.</p>
5.6 Quality Improvement and Innovation	
5.6.1 Programme accomplishment Score: Adequate	<p>On the level of the School, there is the Commission for Quality Assessment and Assurance (CQAA), the role of which is to activate the internal evaluation of the academic programmes of the School with the consultative support of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS). According to the self-evaluation document, the School's quality assurance system is based on the strategy for quality assurance, aiming at the quality of educational services. 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 MA programme in</p>

	<p>particular.</p> <p>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 team of quality assurance at the Faculty turned out to be a pair of academic staff: a professor and an assistant (no student members). They prepare the report for the Faculty Board. However, written reports of the feedback and the suggested measures for improving programme accomplishment are not disseminated for the members of Board. 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. In the Romanian context, any major plans for improvement include a lot of preparation in order to meet the requirements of national accreditation procedures. This may create challenges for planning the processes of improving the programme. 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>
<p>5.6.2 Curriculum Development Score: Good</p>	<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.</p> <p>The mechanisms of curriculum development could be more systematic and transparent. However, the practices, although 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>
<p>5.6.3 External Reviews Score: Adequate</p>	<p>The Faculty does not make the recommendations of the external evaluation and its 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 should show more comprehensive approach to improve the programme.</p>
<p>5.7 Student Assessment</p>	<p>The programme assesses systematically the individual performance of its students. The general structure of the system of written and oral tests and</p>

Score: Good	<p>forms of global and continuous assessment is well-developed and carefully planned. MA thesis is defended publicly. However, the connection between the objectives of the courses and the ways of examining is 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 principles of grading MA theses are not transparent enough (there are no published criteria typical for respective grades). The distributions of grades are not published. 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 basis of grades arise.</p> <p>The assessment of students is versatile and the students get also individual feedback in various ways, but the alignment of the ways of examining and the objectives of the courses are not made sufficiently transparent.</p>
5.8 Programme Jurisdiction Score: Good	<p>The programme under evaluation is one of the four MA programmes of the Faculty of Public Administration. According to the self-evaluation document, the entire teaching activity of the faculty is coordinated by the Dean, each programme has a coordinator and each “study formation or a group” has a mentor. 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. 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 four mentors: one for first and second year full-time students respectively and one for the first and second year distant learning students respectively. 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. Some interviewees understood that the responsibility of the programme manager is carried by the Vice-dean, not by the Dean.</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>
5.9.1 Faculty nucleus Score: Adequate	<p>For the “Public Sector Management” M.A. programme, full-time education, the teaching staff involved in the organization and functioning of the programme under evaluation is made up of 23 members. Of them, 20 are employed within the Faculty of Public Administration or within other NSPSA faculties, and 2 in other institutions. The structure of the teaching staff according to the academic title is as follows: 8 professors, 4 senior</p>

	<p>lecturers, 5 lecturers, 6 assistants. For the distance education form of the programme, the course coordinators are the same, but they are complemented by the teaching staff involved in tutoring activities. The total number of the members of the teaching staff involved in the programme is 23. The teaching staff has a similar structure as the full time programme, slightly fewer senior lecturers, slightly more assistants. Full time university staff are supplemented by, in some cases, high profile individuals from outside NSPSA. There were seven such practitioners. Compared to this there appears to be less use of foreign specialists.</p> <p>Taking into account relatively high number of students at the masters level higher number of lecturers would be recommended if more individual and interactive methods of teaching are to be implemented. Criterion is met.</p>
<p>5.9.2 Faculty qualifications Score: Adequate</p>	<p>The majority, some 70.4%, of the core faculty who teach on the program hold a PhD and the rest are working towards completion of this qualification. Of those with a Phd, 12 have one in economics, 3 in law, 2 in administrative sciences and 1 in both techniques and philosophy and sociology. 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 thorough investigation of CVs and bibliographies shows that only a few lecturers are actually publishing their research work in international journals while most of publications (prevalingly conference papers were published in different national publications.</p> <p>The formal qualifications of staff are acceptable, even good. But the research record is dominated by one or two names and would benefit from a wider presence.</p>
<p>5.9.3 Diversity: gender and minorities Score: Good</p>	<p>The percentage of women in the teaching body of the Faculty of Public Administration represents 50.9% and for this Master programme the percentage of women in total teaching staff involved (23) represents 60.86%. 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>This is very good, given that ethnic issues are not an issue in the wider society at an official level.</p>
<p>5.10 Admission of Students Score: Adequate</p>	<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 but not clearly enough. The students of the distant learning programme are admitted on the basis of personal application and interview and the averages obtain in the Bachelor exam. The nature of the personal application and the applicants' required performance in the interview are not specified in the self-evaluation document.</p>

	<p>During the site visit, both students of the full-time and distant learning programme seemed to consider the admission procedure appropriate. 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. The oral presentations and interviews are, in principle, good instruments for measuring the competencies of applicants, as they can demonstrate the motivation of the applicants, but the objectives of these practices should be more transparent. The test of a foreign language is appropriate, but its relation to the mission and programme objectives is left open.</p>
<p>5.11 Supportive Services and Facilities Score: Adequate</p>	<p>The current facilities are spread over several, quite distant sites. The new premises are large - it is a multi storey building - and most if not all teaching should then be housed on the one site.</p> <p>The library has its own staff (3 persons), including staff for lending services, updating the documentation and electronic supervision of the book collections. There is a reading room, and a collection from specialised literature in Romanian and foreign languages. . There is also access to 30 hard copy journals, five in Romanian, the rest in English. There is a focus on public administration and political science. However, critically they have electronic access to JSTOR, THOMSON ISI, EBSCO, SCIENCEDIRECT, SPRINGERLINK, CSA RESEARCH PACK, PROQUEST ACADEMIC RESEARCH LIBERTY, OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE, EMERALD, SCOPUS, APAS EBSCO, JSTOR, Scopus, PCI, LION and MLA.</p> <p>Support staff at the School 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 Faculty.</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 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, wordprocessing 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 are provided with basic office place within the building. The available place is limited, but generally sufficient, equipped with basic necessary infrastructure.</p> <p>From this 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.</p> <p>The physical infrastructure is limited in terms of teaching rooms, office space and library facilities. The move to the new building should offer considerable improvements. In particular library space and facilities are limited. The actual facilities and benefits they give to students are in many ways good.</p>
5.12 Student Services Score: Good	<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.</p> <p>The self evaluation document recognises that the career counselling system and placement in the labour market needs to be improved and through CeCOP will be improved.</p> <p>This criterion is fulfilled.</p>
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

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.