



**European Association for
Public Administration
Accreditation**

EAPAA Accreditation Committee Summary Evaluation

Master of Public Administration (English MPA) programme of the Department of Public Administration and Management, College of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences (FSPAC), Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

Summary evaluation with respect to the request for accreditation of the Master of Public Administration (English MPA), College of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences (FSPAC), Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

In consideration of the Self-Evaluation Report of the above programme, the Site Visit Report of 1 September 2021 of the EAPAA Site Visit Team for this programme, and the response of the programme to the draft of the Site Visit Report, the EAPAA Accreditation Committee, at its meeting of 6 September 2022 in Lisbon, Portugal, has evaluated this programme against the EAPAA Accreditation Criteria (version 9, September 2013).

Criteria	Summary evaluation
Mission, objectives and competencies	The mission, educational philosophy, intended learning objects, curriculum, and teaching and studying practises show that the programme belongs clearly to the domain of Public Administration and that the programmes correspond to internationally accepted description of a master's degree. The programme has specified the competences expected from the students understood as knowledge and skills. However, neither the assessed student competencies nor the course descriptions have a systematic approach in defining the intended learning outcomes.
Entry into the programme	Admission goals and standards are in line with the mission and the objectives of the programme. Access to university (undergraduate) education is based on students passing their baccalaureate exam and getting the baccalaureate degree. The entrance requirements are carefully checked, and all candidates are interviewed before admittance. Around 20-25% of the admitted students do not have a bachelor's degree in public administration. The programme has mechanisms to cope with gaps in relevant knowledge. The programme management is encouraged to monitor carefully students' and teachers' experiences as for the effectiveness of the mechanisms to overcome the knowledge gaps of students with no previous studies in public administration in appropriate ways.
Structure of the curriculum	The content of the curriculum of all programmes needs to be in accordance with the qualification profiles defined by the National Frame of Qualifications, while curriculum is determined as to offer maximum chances to students to acquire the specific qualifications. The curriculum is approved by the University Senate while the accordance between curriculum and qualification is an essential

	<p>quality criterion used in the national accreditation process. The goals and teaching practices of the programme's curriculum belong clearly to the domain of Public Administration. The general structure of the MPA with two degrees and four tracks over the four study semesters seems to be reasonable. The placement of courses from the initial to the final stage of the programme supports the learning progress of students. There is a strong emphasis on practice and on the relation with the outside world, which causes that this programme can be characterised as a multidisciplinary programme. The substantive aspects of the curriculum are strongly tailored to the needs of a developing social environment and the didactics strongly emphasise connections to public administration practice.</p>
Content of the curriculum	<p>The curriculum shows a very strong multidisciplinary approach, tailored to the needs of a social environment that shows strong development. The multidisciplinary approach is shown in the strong connections between teaching staff and the outside world, which lead to practice problems and practice insights being embedded in the courses. The programme, however, could use more recent literature on new modes of governance and different perspectives in late modern societies. A vast PA literature is concerned with public administration in such societies, including the new public governance approach. Furthermore, the programme incorporates very limited comparative aspects across regions and time and / or global challenges and issues. Comparative courses that exist focus mainly on within country organizational comparison or Europeanization (EU level). The curriculum includes a number of courses (a quarter of all courses) which have been already covered and offered at bachelor level. This may be challenging in situations where courses are attended by a non-coherent cohort of students.</p>
Didactic approach	<p>The didactics of the programme are strongly tailored to the programme objectives. The placement of courses from the initial to the final stage of the programme supports the learning progress of students. There is a strong emphasis on practice and on the relation with the outside world. The substantive aspects of the curriculum are strongly tailored to the needs of a developing social environment and the didactics strongly emphasise connections to public administration practice. Examination is often done in the form of papers and projects in which the application of knowledge and understanding is important. Most of the workload of the class is conducted during "classes", with little workload left for home preparation in order to accommodate students full time jobs (in addition to study). The faculty applies appropriate didactical concepts and uses interactive teaching methods, utilizing case studies and exercises and links to real life problems from public sector organizations and thus fulfils the objective of the programme to develop applied competencies in analysis, evaluation, strategic development, etc.</p>
Student Assessment	<p>The intended learning outcomes are specified for all courses as "assessed student competences" and partly also in course descriptions. Neither the assessed student competencies nor the course descriptions have a systematic approach in defining the intended learning outcomes. The course grading is based on</p>

	<p>continuous assessment of the students during the semester (several assignment variants are in use, e.g., case studies, project work, group discussions, tests, homework etc.) and additionally a written or oral exam at the end of the course. The programme might find it useful to further specify the intended learning outcomes of knowledge by level, as specified in the so-called Bloom's taxonomy, and apply a more transparent approach to different categorisations of skills. A recommendation would also be to considerably strengthen the application of the thesis grading form to justify the actual grade. Another recommendation would be to consider working towards a stronger differentiation of thesis grades. Furthermore, it can be recommended to apply the four eyes-principle in the grading process, with a second grader (or a committee) independently grading the theses.</p>
Preparation for the labour market	<p>Special emphasis is laid on application of theoretical knowledge to real life events of the practice of public administration and management. The content of courses is changing in response to current changes of administrative and managerial practice. Many teachers have a direct contact with public administration bodies (municipality in particular, but also NGO sector) and practitioners and alumni frequently host as lecturers. There are formal arrangements with respect to internship in place. The programme has signed agreements with public, private, and non-profit organizations for mandatory internship placements (practicum). The mandatory internship length and workload (2 weeks up to 8 hours a day maximum during the first year of the programme) is regulated by law. Obligatory internships are awarded with credits towards the final degree. In addition, opportunities for voluntary internships lasting for 3, 6 or 9 months during the summer and second year of study are in place which is highly valued by both students and employers (more than the intensive but short 2 weeks obligatory practicum).</p>
Results	<p>The theses show that the intended learning outcomes of the programmes have generally been attained. The grading of the theses, however, does not sufficiently reflect the differences between the students as for the extent to which they have indeed reached the required level. The level of learning in most courses reaches not only to knowledge, but also to understanding and application of the acquired knowledge and sometimes also the reflective assessment of what is learned. The interviewed employers were very positive about the qualifications of MPA graduates. They emphasized for instance the positive composition of acquired knowledge and the important role of the internship. Private sector representatives pointed to the ability of graduates to deal with commercial issues but also to speak "the language of public administration". The overall profile of the programme can be seen as broad enough to equip students with a solid public sector knowledge but also with sufficient skills to work in private or non-profit organisations.</p>
Quality monitoring and improvement	<p>The department and the School have built their quality assurance system to work within the overall quality assurance system of the University. The programme management perceives the system working properly. The information flows up and down the channels</p>

	<p>that are part of the multi-layered system. The key process is to monitor, evaluate and review the implementation of the programme annually. The main actors of the process are the programme's track coordinators (4), faculty and department management, teachers, and students. Student and staff interviews provided evidence that feedback mechanisms have led to changes in the implementation of the programme. The university provides training on teaching methods and part of the staff has certificate on this training. The department and programme management are encouraged to promote prospects of conducting staff surveys at appropriate organisational levels of the university to ensure that even more attention is paid to staff's views and experiences in improving the performance of study programmes.</p>
Faculty	<p>There is an identifiable faculty nucleus with a strong shared orientation towards the maintenance and continuous improvement of the programme and the way the programme is embedded in the university and the outside world. There is a clear linkage of responsibilities from individual teachers to programme management, to department management, to faculty and university management. The number of faculty is fully adequate to accommodate the number of students – recognising also the teaching load in the Bachelor programme. The site visit team does not have any strong concerns about the pedagogical skills and competences of the faculty. The course descriptions show that most of the teachers are using multiple teaching concepts and activating didactical tools, including indigenous case studies, simulations, etc. Most of the faculty members have a PhD in field closely related to public administration. Most faculty members have previous training in a wider set of fields, mostly in the social sciences. With respect to substantive knowledge and understanding of public administration-issues, the staff is well qualified. It would be advisable that the programme supports and stimulates staff to engage in basic and advanced teaching qualification programmes, especially as the digitalization creates new opportunities for effective teaching and learning.</p>
Diversity	<p>The cultural diversity of the staff is very limited, which represents the relatively limited cultural diversity of Romanian society. A stronger representation of the Roma group would be ideal but is dependent of many local challenges. The Hungarian minority in Romania is represented in higher education in dedicated teaching programmes. The accredited master's programme is an English-language programme, which as such allows a diverse composition of staff and students. The gender balance of the staff is skewed to some extent.</p>
Responsibility and autonomy	<p>The MPA has four track coordinators, one for each track of the programme. Track coordinator does not belong to the university roster as a formal position. The track coordinator has many responsibilities at programme level and works together closely with the department chair. The site visit team would encourage the School and the Department to reconsider the pros and cons of introducing the formal position of track coordinator, as this might ensure that the merits and achievements earned in this position are taken into consideration better in future career development of track coordinators, if there will be changes in the university and school</p>

	<p>management. Department has in practice considerable autonomy over the curriculum, appointment and promotion of faculty members, admission, and some financial matters, although formal rules of the university allocate the authority to the School Council, dean and dean's managerial teams in formally significant matters. This is possible because of the culture of delegation and collegial management. The School's finances are relatively strong, as it has been successful in generating revenues. Due to financial autonomy of the School (only 23% of revenues go to university), it can support the development of degree programmes well.</p>
Supportive services and facilities	<p>The programme's materials facilities are adequate, and they were actually being renovated during the site visit – utilizing the 'corona window' when studying and teaching were based on remote connections. The library services are adequate, and students have sufficient access to digital publications as well as relevant software that they can use in their studies. However, there were no dedicated rooms for students' teamwork, but the need for them is not so critical for MA-students who work full-time and have not much time for in-person meetings. Although there are no strongly developed career orientation services at the programme level, the University provides some centralised services. However, students seem to appreciate the informal input from the teachers when they want to advance their career. Moreover, orientation to student careers and to the outside world is strongly integrated in the teaching. In most of the courses relations to practitioners are integrated and practitioners are strongly involved in the programme.</p>
Research basis	<p>All members of core faculty hold a PhD, mostly from Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj, although most of them have been visiting scholars or have a master's degree from foreign university. Almost half of this group has a PhD in Sociology, several others in Management, Economics and Finance, several in Law, some in Political Science, Administrative Sciences and Journalism. The freshly graduated PhDs continue to work as Post Docs and later as teachers at the same Department they have graduated from, which does not help to increase the diversity, teaching style, focus etc. of the whole programme. The staff is actively involved in public administration research activities. The staff's teaching obligations are defined through a system of 'normalised teaching hours,' varying on the basis of staff hierarchy (lecturer, associate professor, professor, dean), which could be more flexible not to create too strong challenges to major involvement in larger research projects.</p>
Internationalisation	<p>Most of the staff have been visiting scholars or have a master's and/or PhD degree from foreign university, attend international conferences on regular basis, and take part in international research collaboration. The collaboration with international partners (especially US universities) has played a major role in developing the curriculum of the study tracks of the programme over the years. The curriculum includes international literature, but it needs to be partly updated. The teaching language is English and graduates have competences for international employment.</p>