



Expert Report about the Site Visit

on April 9-11, 2025

External Institutional Evaluation

“Bioterra” University of Bucharest, Romania

AHPGS Akkreditierung gGmbH
Sedanstr. 22
79098 Freiburg
Telefon: 0761/208533-0
E-Mail: ahpgs@ahpgs.de

Table of Contents

1	Introduction to the External Institutional Evaluation.....	3
1.1	Basic information on the Evaluation process	3
1.2	Expert Group	7
2	Expert Report	8
2.1	Site visit	8
2.2	General Information about the HEI.....	9
2.3	Assessment Areas	10
2.3	Conclusion	22
3	Annex 1 Schedule site visit.....	26
4	Annex 2 Complete list of experts involved in the different steps of the evaluation process	29

1 Introduction to the External Institutional Evaluation

1.1 Basic information on the Evaluation process

The main aim of the External Institutional Evaluation in higher education is to enhance the quality of teaching, research and services at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The evaluations emphasize the responsibility of the Universities for quality assurance of their study programs, following the European understanding of institutional autonomy in higher education. Standardized procedures help to objectively assess the performances of the evaluated universities and facilitate international recognition of these Universities and their study programs.

The "Bioterra" University of Bucharest has assigned to the AHPGS the execution of an External Institutional Evaluation, in order to assess the University's internal mechanisms and quality management processes. The proceedings of this evaluation conform to the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG). As agreed upon in the contract between AHPGS and Bioterra University of Bucharest (signed on October 26, 2024), the proceedings for the External Institutional Evaluation are based on the "General Information on Institutional Audit and Quality Assurance Procedures" (Resolution of the Board of AHPGS of February 14, 2013).

The AHPGS is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) since 2009. Since 2004, the AHPGS has been a member of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA). In 2006, the AHPGS joined the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). In 2009, the AHPGS also became a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and since 2012 a member of the Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA). In 2023, the World Federation of Medical Education (WFME) recognized the AHPGS as an agency with recognition status for 10 years.

As an organization, the AHPGS is an independent body.

Any external evaluation criteria applied by the AHPGS are in accordance with criteria and requirements which are based on the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG) as established by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

The criteria address general areas for evaluation when implementing external quality assurance procedures at HEIs. The central focus of the external evaluation procedure is the assessment of the following areas:

Area A. Profile, objectives and strategy of the institution

Area B. Quality assurance and quality management system

Area C. Institutional management and administration

Area D. Educational activities, including study programs

Area E. Infrastructure and functional resources

The External Institutional Evaluation is divided into the following steps:

- **A self-evaluation report** was submitted by the University on December 16, 2024. The following **documents** were provided by the University in addition to the SER:

Annex A01	Strategic Plan 2024-2029
Annex A02	Strategic Plan 2020-2024
Annex A03	Operational Plan 2024
Annex A04	Law 480.2002 (Bioterra University Bucharest)
<i>Annex A05</i>	<i>Law 199.2023 (Higher Education)</i>
<i>Annex A06</i>	<i>ARACIS Methodology</i>
<i>Annex A07</i>	<i>ARACIS Institutional External Evaluation Guide</i>
Annex A08	International Partnerships
Annex A09	Formal Declaration
Annex B01	Quality Management Manual
Annex B02	Quality Assurance Procedures
Annex B03	Quality Assurance Regulations
Annex B04	Evaluation Form Example
Annex B05	Study Programs Assessment Results
Annex C01	Management Personnel
Annex C01.1	Management Staff
Annex C01.2	Management Responsibilities

Annex C01.3	Management Election Methodology
Annex C02	Organizational Chart
Annex C03	Vacancy Positions Methodology
Annex C04	University Code of Ethics
Annex C05	Teaching Career Promotion Methodology
Annex C06	Ethics Commission Report 22/23
Annex C07	Anti-Plagiarism Procedure
Annex C08	University Charter
Annex C09	Internal Orders Regulation
Annex C10	Quality Self-Assessment Report 23-24
Annex D01	Study Programs List
Annex D01.1	Study Program Missions
Annex D02	Educational Plans
Annex D03	Study Qualifications Descriptions
Annex D04	Diploma Supplement
Annex D05	Exam Regulations
Annex D05.1	Student Evaluation and Grading Regulations
Annex D06	Quality Management System Study Programs
Annex D07	Admission Process Methodology
Annex D08	Transferable Credit System Regulation
Annex D09	Scholarship Regulation
Annex D10	Student Orientation Report
Annex D11	Disabled Students Regulations
Annex D12	Scientific Research Strategy 20-24
Annex D13	Scientific Activity List
Annex D14	Research Funding Regulation
Annex D15	Research Activity Report
Annex D16	University Buildings
Annex D17	Facility Spaces
Annex D18	Library, Books, and Publications
Annex E01	Teaching Staff List
Annex E02	Non-Teaching Staff List
Annex E03	Institutional Financial Resources 19-23

Annex E04	External Audit Reports 19-23
Annex E05	Tuition Fees Methodology
Annex E06	Electronic Resources (Software)

* *The documents highlighted in italics were not taken into account in the evaluation.*

- The AHPGS has reviewed the presented documentation and its compliance with the University's strategies and objectives. The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS has nominated **the expert group**. On March 13, 2025, the complete documentation submitted by the University was forwarded to the nominated expert group who has reviewed the documents based on the aforementioned criteria as well as substantive aspects. By the end of March 2025, the expert group has produced a document-based written evaluation of the institution, to determine particular strengths and weaknesses, and to identify any open questions regarding the higher education institution in writing. The experts' statements based on these evaluations were used for the preparation of the site visit at the University.
- The site visit took place on April 9-11, 2025, according to a previously agreed-upon schedule (*see Annex 1*). Representatives from the central office of the AHPGS accompanied the expert group during the meeting. Prior to the meeting with the University, the expert group met on April 9, 2025, for the initial discussion and briefing by the AHPGS. They discussed the submitted application documents (self-evaluation report and appendix) and the results of the written evaluations, as well as any procedure-related questions and foreseeable issues. Furthermore, the group finalized the plan for the meeting with the University members. During the site visit, the experts had transparent, productive and in-depth discussions with the representatives of the University management, faculty representatives, program representatives, as well as with a group of students currently enrolled at the University. Furthermore, the experts assessed the study facilities and the equipment in teaching laboratories. They discussed a comprehensive spectrum of education-related issues with representatives of the University. Moreover, the consistency of the submitted documentation was verified. Additional aspects were also reviewed, open questions were identified and additional information/documentation was requested from the University.
- The site visit sought to **finalize the External Institutional Evaluation** and to conduct the procedure of program accreditation affiliated to the Faculty of Law. In this way, the experts can **take samples from the program accreditation of Bachelor study programs** in order to get an impression of the study programs and hence the portfolio of the University. That is why the expert group consists of

experts responsible for the External Institutional Evaluation (EIE) as well as experts responsible for the Program Accreditation (PA). On these grounds, the experts can also examine more closely further aspects of the institution, such as planned and current study programs, infrastructure, organizational and management structure.

- Following the visit, the expert group has produced an **Expert Report**; it sums up the key aspects and preliminary outcomes of the visits and the reviewed documents. The summary concludes the **strengths and weaknesses of the institution and also encompasses a list of recommendations** for further development of the University. The University has the opportunity to comment on the Expert Report.

1.2 Expert Group

The following experts who participated in the site visit were appointed by the accreditation commission of the AHPGS for the External Institutional Evaluation process:

Silvio Christoffel

University of Lucerne, Switzerland

Student of the Master's program "Philosophy, Politics and Economics"

Prof. Dr. Dr. Ralf Evers

Fliedner University of Applied Sciences Düsseldorf, Germany

Rector and managing director of the Fliedner University of Applied Sciences Düsseldorf
Former President of the Rectors' Conference of Ecclesiastical Universities of Applied Sciences in Germany

Prof. Dr. Ursula Fasselt

Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, Germany

Professor of Social and Administrative Law, European Law and Human Rights at Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, Germany
Former Dean of the Department of Social Work and Health

Prof. Dr. Dr. Thomas Gergen

Saarland University, Germany

Professor of Law at Saarland University, Germany
Director Research Unit IP: Basics & applications

Co-director of the European Institute for Knowledge and Value Management, Luxembourg

Prof. Dr. Marion Halfmann

Bonn-Rhine-Sieg University of Applied Sciences, Germany

President of the Bonn-Rhine-Sieg University of Applied Sciences, Germany

Former Professor of Business Administration, Marketing and Sales at Niederrhein University of Applied Sciences, Moenchengladbach, Germany

Dr. Pauline Grys

Heidelberg Institute of Global Health (HIGH), Heidelberg University, Germany

Post-graduate Teaching Coordinator and Quality Assurance Manager, Teaching Unit, Heidelberg Institute of Global Health (HIGH), Heidelberg University

Team leader or partner in various university collaboration projects with Higher Education Institutions in the African Region, Central Asia and East Asia

Prof. Dr. Carolin Sutter

SRH University of Applied Sciences Heidelberg, Germany

Professor of Business Law at the SRH University of Applied Sciences, Heidelberg

Head of the Business Law Program/ Academic Director Learning Innovation Center

Former Dean of the Faculty of Social and Legal Sciences/ Former Vice President for Studies and Executive Education

2 Expert Report

2.1 Site visit

The site visits took place at Bioterra University of Bucharest. Bioterra University is a private university and was initially part of the Bioterra University Foundation Bucharest, which was legally established in 1994. The University was first accredited in 2002.

During the site visit on April 9-11, 2025, the expert group had talks with the management of the University, the Board of Directors, the deans of all faculties and the students and graduates. Additionally, there were talks with the Faculty of Law and the teaching staff of the faculty.

Topics were the governance of the University; its profile, strategy, staff, resources of the departments and faculties, the study programs, the significance and organization of quality assurance and support offers. Further topics were the strategy of the faculty, leadership and organizational culture, conditions and resources for teaching as well as research, working conditions at the faculty and professional qualifications and personal development.

The expert group was given a tour of the faculties, e.g. working premises of students and staff, library, offices etc.

2.2 General Information about the HEI

“Bioterra” University of Bucharest (BUB) is a private University that was accredited in 2002 by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) by Law no. 480/2002, published in the Official Gazette no. 512/2002. The University was initially part of the “Bioterra” University Foundation Bucharest which was legally established in 1994 following the initiative of leading personalities of the didactic and scientific life in applied bioengineering, economic engineering, rural tourism, industry food, phytosanitary and zoo veterinary control of food, law and legislation.

Currently, the University has four faculties: the Faculty of Agrotourism Management, the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Food Control and Expertise, and the Faculty of General Medical Assistance.

The University offers four Bachelor programs, which include “Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agritourism”, “Law”, “Food Control and Expertise”, and “General Medical Assistance”.

Moreover, three Master programs are offered: “Investigation of Acts of Terrorism and Public Security”, “Performing Management in Public Food, Agritourism and Consumer Protection”, and “Inspection, Expertise and Legislation on Food Safety, Environmental Protection and Consumer Protection”.

For the academic year 2023/2024, there are a total of 2,738 students enrolled at BUB, 2,118 students are studying in Bucharest, including 230 students in a Master’s degree, and 653 students study at the Buzau branch.

2.3 Assessment Areas

Area A. Profile, objectives and strategy of the institution

The HEI has established a clear profile and its mission and strategy are congruent to it. It developed a corresponding strategic plan and formulated short, medium and long-term development plans. It set future-oriented goals and developed feasible strategies for implementing these. The objectives formulated by the HEI can be traced back to its overall strategy and development plans, which are internally and externally oriented. All personnel – teaching and non-teaching – and groups of students are actively involved in the HEI's strategy. They are aware of and work towards achieving the goals established by the HEI. External stakeholders also participate in the HEI's strategy. Institutional autonomy is a key value within the HEI. Academic freedom, diversity, research, teaching and corporate responsibility are encouraged within the institution.

Evaluation

Bioterra University of Bucharest is a private, community-based University with strong links to the local labor market and the local authorities. The institution appears to be a modern University and presents a clear vision (as outlined in the “University Charter”) as well as a mission and strategy, which are operationalized in the strategic plan 2024-2029 and the annual operational plan.

The University’s strategic objectives focus on sustainable development through efficient financial management, expanding funding sources, and offering services to third parties. The University aims to maintain all study programs by securing necessary human and financial resources, supported by over 35 years of experience.

Improving the quality of education is a key goal, aligned with national and international standards. Strategic partnerships with domestic and international institutions will focus on research, academic collaboration, and student and faculty mobility.

The University plans to access national and international programs to enhance education and research, promote a performance-based staff policy, and uphold academic autonomy. It encourages student internships through external collaborations and aims to establish research consortia with universities from countries like Canada, France, Germany, Italy, and Egypt.

Bioterra follows a student-centered approach, with regular consultations to address student needs. According to the Strategic Plan (Annex A01), attracting European funds is seen as vital for infrastructure development and strengthening the University's international presence.

From the experts' point of view, the strategic plan for the period 2024-2029 appears to be too large and unsorted. Strategic priorities should be stated as clear as possible in order to be measurable. These priorities should also be determined according to the strengths of the University and include short-, middle-, and long-term goals. Educational provisions and research might be clustered around these strategic priorities. Specific features and competitive advantages of the University should be emphasized in order to create a distinct identity among the students as well as the staff. The experts note that the previous mission slogan "Sustainability" disappeared from the strategic plan.

In discussions with the University management on site, the experts inquired about the developments and adjustments since the previous Institutional Evaluation in 2019. The University states that in recent years, for example, it has invested in its facilities to improve the conditions for student-centered teaching as well as for learning.

According to the University, Internationalization is a clear priority, and it should be used in order to increase the attractiveness of the Bioterra University of Bucharest for an audience outside of Romania. The University has developed academic cooperations within the last years. Upon request, the University explains that there are currently no incoming or outgoing students. However, there is a low level of mobility among the teaching staff. The University currently offers several English study programs, which are attractive for Romanian students, but no international students are enrolled. The experts advise the University to reconsider its internationalization strategy and decide whether it wants to position itself internationally. At the same time, the University shall maintain its strength to act as a community-rooted University with strong links to the local and regional stakeholders.

In its five-year strategy, the University places an emphasis on qualitative improvement. The participation of internal and external stakeholders, as described in the strategy, is perceptible, yet should be strengthened. The University pursues a participatory approach in which all personnel (teaching, non-teaching, students) are aware of and work towards achieving the goals established by the University.

The University offers a range of study programs. It is the only private university accredited in Romania to promote faculties and specializations in the field of agri-food. Staff

and students and external stakeholders, such as potential employers for graduates, are actively involved in the strategic developments. The University has established a hierarchical system that guarantees systematic planning both on the level of the faculties as well as on the institutional level as a whole.

However, the experts suggest that the University revisits and prioritizes the strategic goals and proposed actions, concentrating on the key competences of the University stakeholders and the changing regional and especially financial environment. Those changes stem from a decrease in student numbers in the study programs due to demographic changes. It should also be assured that the measures outlined in the strategy plan are successfully implemented.

The Bioterra University of Bucharest has a strong focus in the field of agri-food, with local, national and international goals. From the experts' perspective, this profile should be interfacing with the domains of medicine, computer sciences and law. Collaborations among the faculties should be established. Nevertheless, the main target group of the University is visible in the profile. Next to the student clientele in the areas of agri-food and law, the University tries to address a new audience.

In general, the experts acknowledge the University's research plan. They urge the University, however, to ensure the implementation of the research strategies. In the expert's opinion, the strength of the University lies in applied research, which should be further strengthen. From the experts' point of view, improving the national and international visibility is a necessary step as stipulated in the research strategy. However, it remains unclear at this stage what the priorities in the overall goals of the University and in research are.

From the experts' point of view, institutional autonomy is a core value within this higher education institution. A "Code of Ethics of Bioterra University" is established. The aspect of diversity and students' rights regarding disabilities and chronic illnesses are also regulated by the "Regulation on Students with physical disabilities and chronic diseases". The University states that students with physical disabilities are ensured access to all University premises. In addition, the University provides space tailored to their needs so they can carry out academic, social, and cultural activities

Area B. Quality assurance and quality management system

The HEI develops a quality management system and has clearly-defined objectives. It implements policies and procedures for quality assurance and promotes a quality assurance culture. This follows a quality control loop (PDCA Cycle). Tasks are responsibly divided among the bodies and personnel at the HEI. The quality assurance mechanisms are designed to accomplish the set objectives. Effectiveness is constantly monitored and enhancement is sought. Internal quality assurance includes evaluation mechanisms that are run regularly and cover all areas of activity within the HEI. The evaluation results are documented and made public. Internal steering processes are identifiable and aim at sustained improvement. The HEI continuously develops plans for improving the quality management system, which is integrated into the HEI's strategic plan. It works at different organizational levels and involves all the HEI's staff.

Evaluation

The University has built an internal quality assurance system with clearly defined objectives. The system has been implemented and structures, responsibilities and procedures are in place. Furthermore, the University has established a "Regulation on the Evaluation and Quality Assurance of Education" which regulates the quality assurance of education, with predilection on teaching and learning, learning environment and relevant links with research in the University.

The University is run by the Senate, based on the "University Charter". The Department for Quality Assurance (mandatory by Romanian law) collaborates with all departments and faculties within the University. The faculties are headed by the Council, composed of representatives of the teaching staff and students. The faculty management is assured by the dean of the faculty. Each faculty has an evaluation commission, members of which have to be reapproved annually through the faculty council. Additionally, each faculty provides internal reports as requested per Romanian law.

The University also has a "Quality Assurance Manual" at its disposal. It presents the quality policy and makes reference to the procedures of the quality assurance system. Furthermore, it describes interactions between the system processes and presents the structure of documentation used within the quality management system. The Quality Manual is structured according to ISO 9001–2015. A management information system

is built up and profits from a recently modernized IT-structure. Evaluation questionnaires like student evaluation of teaching staff, student evaluation of courses, evaluation of the learning environment, peer evaluation, evaluation by the Department Director are used.

The experts noticed that the internal quality system of the Bioterra University of Bucharest is based on ISO norms. It does not follow a Total-Quality-Management approach. On the longer run, this may result in a disadvantage as it tends to lead to a quite bureaucratic system of internal control and regulation, thus reducing flexibility. The experts emphasize the importance of an Internal Quality Assurance System (IQS) that is as lean as possible to ensure long-term acceptance and sustainability. With this viewpoint, the IQS System should be periodically reviewed and improved.

Furthermore, the experts recommend the University to systematically close the Quality Assurance feedback-loops in order to inform all stakeholder about the results, to publish the evaluation results, to build up an encompassing Management Information System and to use this information not merely to control but also to steer the University. In this regard, the University should also consistently use the results when adjusting the strategy. The branch in Buzau follows the same quality assurance system.

The experts want to draw the University's attention to the development of key figures. Otherwise, the analysis of trends is hardly possible. As far as the experts can discern, there is need for action regarding several programs due to small numbers of students. The same limitations (critical mass of students not reached) have also been reported from Master programs. The University reacted to these developments by pausing some study programs. A minimum number of students should be set for running a program.

The expert panel suggests that the portfolio should not be expanded. Instead, it should be streamlined and focused on subject areas in high demand. Moreover, the University's unique characteristic should find expression in the study programs. In order to match the overarching goal of internationalization and increase the number of students, English study programs should be implemented and collaborations with international universities should be developed.

Area C. Institutional management and administration

The HEI's organizational structure demonstrates a clear and transparent division of responsibilities, duties and authorities. External stakeholders, students and other

relevant parties are involved in the administrative and decision-making processes and the organizational structure responds to the strategy and objectives set by the HEI. The HEI regulates the division of tasks and responsibilities, which are unambiguous and transparent. Members of the HEI are aware of their tasks and responsibilities. Information systems are developed for monitoring and evaluating the effective management of the study programs and all other activities within the HEI. The qualification and experience of the personnel are adequate to ensure the proper operation of the HEI and the appropriateness of HEI employees.

Evaluation

The structures of the University have been established in a way that allows the University to reach its intended goals in education, research and services (depicted in the document “Personal and management responsibilities”). The various stakeholder groups (internal and external) participate in the decision-making process (for example, the University Senate or the Faculty Council consists of 25% student representatives and 75% teaching and research staff). Transparent regulations apply to all steps of the educational process. Nonetheless, over-structuration appears to be a threat (e.g. too many commissions and redundancies). Nevertheless, responsibilities and tasks of various bodies should be made more visible.

From the experts’ point of view, the collaboration with other universities in Romania and abroad can be enhanced. The documentation provided by the University gave sufficient insight into existing cooperations. During the site visit, the experts explored the desirability and feasibility of establishing intra-university cooperations (e.g. interdisciplinary modules and study programs). Thus, the interaction between faculties should be improved and strengthened. In this regard, the University is encouraged to develop and discuss concrete plans.

The academic organization of the Bioterra University of Bucharest is clearly defined on a hierarchical basis and shown in the organizational chart. However, it should be made clear how these structures are put into practice and how the structure and strategy of the University are coordinated („structure follows strategy”) and who has the final say (also in the academic area). That is why it appears to be reasonable to revisit the structure in light of a lean strategic structure. In the experts’ opinion, the University should have a replacement strategy in case of the dropping out of the University management. Also, the deans should be given more responsibilities and increase their own presence

within the management. Furthermore, the expert group recommends reconsidering the frequency of Senate meetings to be as sufficient as possible for the high number of tasks and competences.

The experts point out that the management positions were filled either by general elections or public contest, depending on the case. The students are represented with a 25% share in all management structures except the Board of Directors. The President and the members of the Board of Directors, in case of private universities, are appointed by the founding members.

In addition to the demands regarding the qualification and experience of the personnel, the expert group once again highlights the importance of internationalization (see remarks in Area B and D).

Area D. Educational activities, including study programs

The HEI defines clear goals for each of its study programs, which correspond and relate to the HEI's profile and mission, thus corresponding to the desired qualification level and being thereto comparable on an educational level. Nevertheless, the study programs offered are recognized as unitary due to their particularities. The HEI develops quality management procedures for the planning of teaching and learning processes and the implementation of study programs. The results achieved are continuously monitored and documented. The HEI also provides additional educational programs to cover the continuous training of its personnel and the enhancement of student training in the form of workshops, conferences, internal training or further educational programs. The HEI provides adequate premises for implementing its study programs. The HEI has a library providing adequate learning resources for its study programs. Should the profiles of the study programs require it, the HEI holds additional premises available for practical activities (e.g. laboratories or computer rooms). Admission requirements and student evaluation methods are clear, manageable and publicized. The HEI has established mechanisms relating to student support and advice. The HEI promotes exchange programs and international mobility among its students and teaching personnel. The HEI promotes research and scientific activity. It has developed a strategy which sets corresponding goals. The study programs encompass research-related components, depending on the profile and final

qualification. The HEI has sufficient material, spatial and financial resources to develop its current and planned research activities.

Evaluation

Goals of the various study programs are clearly defined. Learning outcomes and performance indicators for assessing achieved learning outcomes are in place. The University develops quality management procedures for planning teaching and learning process and implementing study programs. The results achieved are continuously monitored and documented. The students have expressed their satisfaction with the study programs and learning environment.

Currently, the University has four faculties: the Faculty of Agrotourism Management, the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Food Control and Expertise, and the Faculty of General Medical Assistance. The University offers four Bachelor programs, which include "Engineering and Management in Public Food and Agritourism", "Law", "Food Control and Expertise", and "General Medical Assistance". Moreover, three Master programs are offered: "Investigation of Acts of Terrorism and Public Security", "Performing Management in Public Food, Agritourism and Consumer Protection", and "Inspection, Expertise and Legislation on Food Safety, Environmental Protection and Consumer Protection". All programs have either already been accredited or are in the process of accreditation.

Based on additional documentation, the study programs were assessed according to the national regulations as well as the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. The programs are set up comparably with those in the European Higher Education Area (ECTS, Diploma supplement etc.). They also include research-related components, depending on the profile and final qualification of the respective study program. A research strategy is described, yet not always followed. However, the experts recommend that the research conducted by the teaching staff is integrated more thoroughly into the study programs.

The University has a library with qualified staff providing learning resources for the study programs. Within the last years, the University also established an electronic library, that students can access from home. From the experts' point of view, more international literature and a database for recent scientific publications should be offered.

Various support mechanisms for students are in place. Student satisfaction appears to be good, according to the reports of students. Admission requirements and student evaluation methods are clear, the information is publicly available.

During the site visit, both the staff situation and the use of continuous education programs for staff were discussed. Regarding the continuous aspect of internationalization, the experts recommend making a C1 proficiency level in English (according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) a requirement for professors teaching in English study programs. Additionally, the University could also think about offering incentives to increase the motivation of the teaching staff to participate in courses for further development.

Furthermore, the University should invest in recruitment efforts, both domestic and abroad. This can be done, for instance, by building up more English courses and also by supporting and assisting the mobility of students and teachers. The visibility of the study programs should be improved by underlining unique features, like the strong emphasis on practical training or the regional impact, which are described as a reason for students to enroll at the University. For future development and better visibility of the study programs, the English website should be updated with information about the study programs and the possibilities to join the University.

The experts have also discussed the process for the recognition of externally achieved credit points. The University recognizes credits obtained in other universities if these comply with the regulations on students' professional activity.

From the experts' point of view, the recognition of credits transferred from other universities (domestic and abroad) should be regulated according to the requirements of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, i.e. the responsibility to demonstrate that an application does not fulfil the relevant requirements lies with the body undertaking the assessment (Art. 3.3 (5)); Each Party shall recognize periods of study completed within the framework of a higher education program in another Party. This recognition shall comprise such periods of study towards the completion of a higher education program in the Party in which recognition is sought, unless substantial differences can be shown between the periods of study completed in another Party and the part of the higher education program which they would replace in the Party in which recognition is sought (Art. 5.1 (1)). The "Regulation of the transferable credit system" (Annex_D08) does provide further information regarding the transfer of credit, but doesn't specify the number of credits that can be transferred or provide students information on how the

process is organized. To guarantee the application of the Lisbon Convention, the document needs to be revised.

Also connected to this is the calculation of credit points. The University applies the ECTS system to calculate and rank students' individual performance on the generalized application of the European Credit Transfer System. The experts note that students often have to earn more credit points than specified in the study program. A Bachelor thesis is usually mandatory, credits are earned but do not count towards the degree but are earned additionally.

To ensure fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study etc., as well as to ensure students' progress in their studies while promoting mobility, the amount of workload should be regulated and stipulated in an easily accessible way. The credit points awarded for writing the Bachelor thesis, for instance, constitute an important part of an academic study process and requires a considerable amount of effort and time investment from students. This input should therefore be reflected appropriately in the workload of the study program. This is a standard practice on the international level.

The quality management includes processes for the evaluation and development of study plans, learning processes and learning outcomes. The creation process of new study programs is not clear and should be outlined in more detail. Moreover, before the backdrop of the legal possibilities and concerning the study programs, interfaculty and interdisciplinary approaches should be devised.

Area E. Infrastructure and functional resources

The HEI provides evidence that it has sufficient spatial, material and functional resources available to ensure the proper functioning of all teaching, learning, research and administrative activities. They are adequate in relation to the number of students enrolled and the number of teaching and administrative personnel. The HEI develops plans for constantly enhancing its resources. The HEI has a mechanism for recruiting personnel. There are corresponding regulations in force for recruiting teaching and administrative personnel, which are clear and transparent and promote equality and recognition based on qualification and experience. The duties and responsibilities of the personnel correspond to their qualifications and experience. The personnel is aware of their tasks and contribute to enhancing the HEI's strategy and activities.

The number of personnel employed is adequate for developing all the HEI's current and planned activities. The HEI secures sufficient revenue and its budget is clearly and transparently planned and covers all incurred costs.

Evaluation

The University is financed on a private basis. Tuition fees cover a substantial part of the budget (according to the SER E.3. 88%). The Bioterra University Foundation Bucharest is separate by law from the Bioterra University of Bucharest and have different legal personalities. The University inherits the Foundation's assets, which is involved in academic activities: it provides financial support to the University, the Board of Directors approves the selection of the Rector, and the President of the Foundation is the acting Rector.

Based on the "Financial resources of the institution" provided by the University, the experts determined that, at the moment, the University has sufficient material and spatial resources to develop its current and planned activities. The University has a library providing learning resources concerning its study programs. Both human and financial resources are adequate for reaching the intended objectives of the University. The experts note in discussions with the University, that there is no financial plan for the coming years. The experts highly recommend updating the financial plan.

Furthermore, the student-to-teacher ratio slightly declined in recent years. The number of students slowly increased since 2020 whereas the number of teachers decreased. The experts recommend finding ways to attract teaching staff in different fields of study to improve the student-to-teacher ratio in the long term. Yet, there are clear and rigorous rules on the selection of staff and there are good procedures in place in case vacancies occur.

The students' satisfaction regarding the services offered is visible. The University's infrastructure and equipment is qualitatively heterogeneous. The experts note that the University invested in their material infrastructure since the previous evaluation in 2019.

Being realistic about future outlook, student numbers may fall due to demographic changes. To compensate for the financial losses, new funding sources must be found. The experts recommend that the University income should not solely depend on tuition fees, but that other sources of financial income are sought for. Those could take the shape of joint research projects, a more active involvement on a communal level, such

as the provision of paid services, or the implementation of entrepreneurial activities of the staff.

With regard to the branches, the University has decided to concentrate on Buzau, which is currently the University's only branch. The experts acknowledge the importance for the local labor market and the attractiveness for the students. The University has decided to focus on a few well-run study programs rather than offering a wide range of programs in the branch Buzau. The University should make sure that the branches keep on operating in a self-sustainable way without being financially dependent on the University's Bucharest campus to guarantee the responsibility and quality of the branches in the long term. The expert group deems it necessary for the University to write a business plan.

The University has a mechanism for recruiting personnel. There are corresponding regulations in force for recruiting teaching and administrative personnel, which are clear and transparent and promote equality and recognition based on qualification and experience. The duties and responsibilities of the personnel correspond to their qualifications and experience. Nevertheless, the number of full-time professors appears to be relatively low. There does not seem to be an adequate scope for development of a research culture. This could also be facilitated by a more streamlined and focused research approach.

2.3 Conclusion

In short, as a first step, this expert report gives a preliminary evaluation of the self-evaluation report submitted by the University and the talks between the University representatives and the experts with regard to pre-agreed upon assessment areas. The first meeting within the expert group was aimed at pointing out strengths and weaknesses, and to reach a common level of discussion for further enhancement of the quality of teaching, learning and research within the University. The meeting was also organized with the objective of expediting the external evaluation process and clarifying open questions in order to be able to make a preliminary statement regarding strengths and weaknesses of the Higher Education Institution and to formulate recommendations for the next meeting.

As a second step, this expert report comes to a conclusion of the External Institutional Evaluation after the site visit. It shows the collection of answers to the open questions and completion of all the information necessary in order to evaluate the University's internal mechanisms and quality management processes, coming to a final result in this expert report. As agreed upon, the proceedings of the External Institutional Evaluation conform to the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG) and the procedure is based on the "General Information on Institutional Audit and Quality Assurance Procedures" (Resolution of the Board of AHPGS of February 14, 2013). Accordingly, the expert report sums up the key aspects and preliminary outcomes of the visits and the reviewed documents, and the summary concludes the strengths and weaknesses of the institution. The central focus of the External Institutional Evaluation procedure is the assessment of the areas: A. Profile, objectives and strategy of the institution / Area B. Quality assurance and quality management system / Area C. Institutional management and administration / Area D. Educational activities, including study programs / Area E. Infrastructure and functional resources. The experts were able to assure themselves that the University fulfills the criteria as stipulated in the assessment areas A to E, thus verifying the quality standards of the Higher Education Institution. The criteria address general areas for evaluation when implementing external quality assurance procedures at Higher Education Institutions. However, the assessment of the experts examines, aside from infrastructure and organizational/management structure, further aspects of the institution, such as planned and current study programs.

To sum up the External Institutional Evaluation, the experts render a generally positive judgement regarding the institutional component of the University. The experts

acknowledge the University's mission and vision. However, from the experts' perspective, the strategic plan should exhibit a clearer order of priority goals as well as more precise descriptions of how and when the University intends to reach these goals within an optimal timeline and in consideration of national and financial possibilities. The strategic plan is in need of revision and should contain opportunities and risks as well as internal strengths and weaknesses. The strategic plan should include measurably formulated strategic goals with key performance indicators with derived action plans. The strategic objectives should be linked to the quality objectives, which should be accompanied by key performance indicators. Furthermore, the experts recommend to involve external stakeholders into the process.

Likewise, the experts recommend a sharpening of the University's profile in order to highlight the University's unique characteristics, like the connection to the local labor market.

In the experts' assessment of the University's quality assurance system, they found that structures are in place and procedures apparent. The university conducts evaluations in education and research. Additionally, results should not merely be used to control but also to steer the University in a direction that is in accordance with the strategic goals.

Both the institutional management and administration are transparently depicted in the University Charter. The experts also welcome the participation of students in the process. However, responsibilities and tasks of the various bodies can be illustrated more comprehensively.

The following recommendations are thus strongly proposed for the University's consideration in order to strengthen and make use of its existing assets, as well as to further enhance the quality of teaching, learning and research and to emphasize the responsibility of the University for quality assurance of its study programs following the European understanding of institutional autonomy in higher education:

Area A

- The University's strategy goals should be streamlined and articulated plainly. A clear list of priorities should be established according to the University's key competences as well as national and financial possibilities.

- The internationalization strategy should be reviewed whether it is in line with the strategy of the University
- Applied research, should be further strengthened.
- Unique features and competitive advantages should be emphasized in order to highlight the University's attractiveness.
- The implementation of the research strategy should occur, thus, improving the national and international visibility.
- It should be evaluated if the Lisbon Recognition Convention is sufficiently considered.

Area B

- Feedback loops should be closed e.g. by publishing evaluation results in order to inform external and internal stakeholders.
- Most relevant aspects should be targeted, e.g. through the development of key figures, and an over-bureaucratization should be avoided.
- The portfolio should not be expanded but instead streamlined and focus on subject areas in high demand. Moreover, the University's unique characteristic should find expression in the study programs.
- - A minimum number of students should be set for running a program.

Area C

- It should be made clear how these structures are put into practice and how the structure and strategy of the University are coordinated („structure follows strategy“) and who finally decides (also in the academic area). For this reason, it is reasonable to revise the structure in light of a lean strategic structure. The University should have a replacement strategy in case of the dropping out of the University management. Responsibilities and tasks of various bodies should be made more visible. The visibility of the University should improve, and a financial strategy should be devised due to decreasing student numbers.
- Cooperation projects among faculties and other universities should be elaborated and linked to the labor market.

Area D

- The University should invest in recruitment efforts both domestic and abroad.

- English language courses for staff (and students) should be introduced in order to attract national and international students.
- The integration of research in the study programs should be pursued.
- Within the realm of legal frameworks, interfaculty and interdisciplinary approaches should be established.

Area E

- Financial strategies should be developed in order to find alternative financial sources by way of, for example, joint research projects, the provision of paid services or entrepreneurial activities of the staff.
- The University should make sure that the branches keep on operating in a self-sustainable way.
- The University should write a business plan.
- The number of full-time professors may be incremented in order to guarantee an adequate scope for the development of a research culture.

3 Annex 1 Schedule site visit

April 09, 2025	Agenda	Participants
07:00 pm	Internal discussion of the expert group	Expert group and representatives of the AHPGS
April 10, 2025	Agenda	Participants
09:00-10:00 am	Internal discussion of the expert group	Expert group and representatives of the AHPGS
10:00-10:30 am	Transfer to the University	
10:30-11:00 am	Official welcoming of the expert group at the University Topics: Getting to know the expert group, explanation of the procedure, preparation of discussions	Expert group and representatives of the AHPGS
11:00-12:00 am	Talks with the management of the University Topics: Governance of the University, profile and strategy of the University, staff, resources of the departments and faculties and the study programs, support offers, gender equality, concerns of disabled students	Rector: Floarea NICOLAE Vice-rectors: Geanina FLORESCU- Vice-Rector for Teaching Activities Marian NICOLAE- Vice-Rector for Quality Assurance in Education and Career Guidance Lucian CHIȚULESCU- Vice-Rector for International Relations Răzvan COȚIANU- Vice-Rector for Research, Development, Innovation and Interinstitutional Relations and the Business Environment
12:00-12:30 pm	Break, internal discussions	
12:30-01:30 pm	Interview with representatives of the Faculty of Law Topics: Significance of the study programs at the faculties; conceptual classification of the study programs; basic information about quality assurance at the colleges; transparency and documentation; development prospects at the colleges (with regard to human resources, equipment and additional study offers, among other things) etc.	Cornel TRANDAFIR-Dean Tudor TĂNĂSESCU- Vice Dean Bogdan MITRIC - Director of public and private law department
parallel meeting institutional evaluation	Interview with the Board of Directors Topics: governance structure; financing of the higher education institution; profile and strategy for the next years; resources	Floarea NICOLAE (President) Lucian CHIȚULESCU (Vicepreșident) Cătălin CHIRIȚĂ (General Administrative Director)

12:30 – 01:30 pm	of the departments and faculties and the study programs etc.	
01:30-02:30	Light lunch at campus	
02:30-03:30	Interview with teaching staff Topics: Qualification objectives of the study programs (academic qualifications, professional qualifications, etc.); Study program concept (coherent overall concept; conveyance of disciplinary knowledge and interdisciplinary knowledge; conveyance of methodological and generic skills; pedagogical and didactic concept; coherent structure of the study program; defined education goals; feasibility of the study program with regard to the workload, examination system; support offers; design of practically oriented components; situation of the labour market; rules for recognition of credits from other study programs etc.); rights to participate in civic action, potential for personality development; implementation of evaluation outcomes and results, etc.	1. Prof Ph.D Delion Doru Sabin 2. Prof Ph.D Ciongaru Emilian 3. Prof Ph.D Manole Gheorghe 4. Prof Ph.D Mihaila Stefan 5. Prof Ph.D Simion Cristian Ovidiu 6. Assoc. Prof.Ph.D. Muscalu Loredana 7. Assoc. Prof.Ph.D. Stan Simona 8. Lecturer Ph. D.Andrei Marin 9. Lecturer Ph. D.Boboc Stefan Petrut 10. Lecturer Ph. D.Burlacu Georgeta 11. Lecturer Ph. D.Colescu Camelia 12. Lecturer Ph. D.Cojocaru Mariana 13. Lecturer Ph. D.Eremia Florentina 14. Lecturer Ph. D.Jari Gabriel 15. Lecturer Ph. D.Micu Gabriel 16. Lecturer Ph. D.Padure Loredana Alina 17. Lecturer Ph. D.Scarlat Corina 18. Lecturer Ph. D.Ungureanu Gabriel 19. Lecturer Ph. D.Vasile Catalin 20. Lecturer Ph. D.Vlasceanu Gabriela Antoneta
parallel meeting institutional evaluation 02:30 – 03:30 pm	Interview with deans of all faculties (Faculty of Food Control and Expertise, Faculty of Agrotourism Management, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Medical Assistance, Faculty of Agrotourism Management Buzau) Topics: Strategy of the faculties; working conditions at the faculties; resources for teaching and research activities; facilities; staff development; leadership and organizational culture; documentation of quality assurance results and implementation of measures	Deans: Mihaela PÎRVULESCU - Dean of the Faculty of Agrotourism Management Daniela MIHĂILĂ - Dean of the Faculty of Food Control and Expertise Cornel TRANDAFIR- Dean of the Faculty of Law Bogdan STREZA - Dean of the Faculty of General Nursing Constantin MANOLACHE- Dean of the Faculty of Agrotourism Management in Buzau
03:30-04:00	Break, internal discussion	

04:00-05:00 pm	Interview with students and graduates Topics: Experience of the students at the University and in the study programs, academic demands, professional qualifications, and personal development; availability of resources; support (tutorials, mentoring programs, advisory service, etc.); experience with gender equality and disabled students	
05:00-06:00 pm	Visiting the education spaces	
April 11, 2025	Agenda	Participants
08:00-10:00 am	Internal discussions	
10:00-10:30 am	Transfer to the University	
10:30-11:00 am	Facultative talks	
11:00 am	Debriefing with the University	
12:00 pm	Transfer to the airport	

4 Annex 2 Complete list of experts involved in the different steps of the evaluation process

Silvio Christoffel

University of Lucerne, Switzerland

Student of the Master's program "Philosophy, Politics and Economics"

Prof. Dr. Dr. Ralf Evers

Fliedner University of Applied Sciences Düsseldorf, Germany

Rector and managing director of the Fliedner University of Applied Sciences Düsseldorf

Former President of the Rectors' Conference of Ecclesiastical Universities of Applied Sciences in Germany

Prof. Dr. Ursula Fasselt

Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, Germany

Professor of Social and Administrative Law, European Law and Human Rights at Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, Germany

Former Dean of the Department of Social Work and Health

Prof. Dr. Dr. Thomas Gergen

Saarland University, Germany

Professor of Law at Saarland University, Germany

Director Research Unit IP: Basics & applications

Co-director of the European Institute for Knowledge and Value Management, Luxembourg

Prof. Dr. Marion Halfmann

Bonn-Rhine-Sieg University of Applied Sciences, Germany

President of the Bonn-Rhine-Sieg University of Applied Sciences, Germany

Former Professor of Business Administration, Marketing and Sales at Niederrhein University of Applied Sciences, Moenchengladbach, Germany

Dr. Pauline Grys

Heidelberg Institute of Global Health (HIGH), Heidelberg University, Germany

Post-graduate Teaching Coordinator and Quality Assurance Manager, Teaching Unit,
Heidelberg Institute of Global Health (HIGH), Heidelberg University

Team leader or partner in various university collaboration projects with Higher Education
Institutions in the African Region, Central Asia and East Asia

Prof. Dr. Carolin Sutter

SRH University of Applied Sciences Heidelberg, Germany

Professor of Business Law at the SRH University of Applied Sciences, Heidelberg

Head of the Business Law Program/ Academic Director Learning Innovation Center

Former Dean of the Faculty of Social and Legal Sciences/ Former Vice President for
Studies and Executive Education