

The Assessment Decision of the EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education

12/10/2015

A proposal to the Minister of Education of the Republic of Moldova to ACCREDIT

the Master's study programme "Customs Law and Customs Activity" of the State University of Moldova FOR 3 YEARS

Acting in accordance with the authorization granted by the § 10 (4) of the Universities Act and sections 3.7.1 and 3.7.3 of the Statutes of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA) and based on section 33.4 of the document "Requirements and Procedure for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Moldova", the EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education shall state the following.

1. On February 23, 2015, the Director of EKKA approved by her order the following composition of the

Assessment Committee:

Urmas Volens – Chair	Head of SORAINEN Real Estate and Construction Team, Estonia
Mihai Floroiu	Professor, "Dunarea de Jos", University of Galati, Romania
Ingeborg Mottl	Associate Professor, University of Salzburg, Austria
René Värk	Associate Professor, Estonian National Defense College, University of Tartu, Estonia
Joosep Raudsepp	Student, Tallinn University, Estonia

2. The Assessment Visit to the State University of Moldova took place on May 21, 2015.
3. The Assessment Committee sent the preliminary report to EKKA on July 10, 2015. The Assessment Committee received the comments of the State University of Moldova on July 20, 2015 and approved the final version of the component assessments on September 7, 2015.
4. The Secretary of the Council forwarded the assessment report containing the component assessments to the members of the EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education on September 24. The assessment report forms an integral part of the assessment decision. The report will be made available on the EKKA website.
5. **The component assessments were as follows:**

Study programme and its development	Conforms to requirements
Teaching and learning	Partially conforms to requirements
Teaching staff	Partially conforms to requirements
Students	Partially conforms to requirements
Resources	Partially conforms to requirements

6. The EKKA Quality Assessment Council discussed the assessment report along with the comments of State University of Moldova and other relevant materials at its session on October 12, 2015 with the participation of 9 Council members. The Council decided to point out the following strengths and areas of improvement of the Master's study programme "Customs Law and Customs Activity":

6.1.

Study programme and its development	Conforms to requirements
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Strengths

- Development structure ensures sustainability and continuous development of the study programme.
- The academic staff is well aware of the objectives of the study programme and of their role in achieving these objectives.
- Graduates acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in the labour market.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- In order to optimize the use of academic resources (e.g avoid teaching several subjects with the same/overlapping content on different curricula) and allow for a better sharing of both area-specific and interdisciplinary know-how, it is highly recommended to increase the cooperation between the master of law programmes in MSU regarding both the content and conduct of studies.
- It is advisable to implement a clear system of gathering and taking into account the feedback from all the important stakeholders.
- It is recommended to consider the possibility to increase the proportion of elective courses in the curriculum. It would provide more choices to students, but also increase the amount of credits that could be transferred after the end of academic mobility, and therefore make academic mobility more attractive to the students.
- It is advisable to pay more attention to developing the students' English language skills and also offer the students some special course(s) on the methodology of legal research.

6.2.

Teaching and learning	Partially conforms to requirements
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Strengths

- Teaching staff is active in publishing teaching materials for their courses.
- Internship is well organised and the university guarantees the students a place of internship due to specific agreements and/or good cooperation with many companies.
- The ratio between the students and teaching staff is favourable.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- The Department should have a clear procedure to engage the students, alumni and employers in the teaching and learning development process.
- A very limited number of foreign legal literature (journal articles and books) is used during the studies. Syllabi should include foreign legal literature in addition to literature in Romanian and Russian. Library should acquire, some well-known up-to-date textbooks on European Union customs law in English.
- In order to achieve the necessary learning outcomes, all the internships should be conducted in the field of customs law.
- Although a necessary regulation is in place for the recognition of prior learning, it is not implemented in practice. The recognition of prior learning and work experience needs to be applied, i.a. in order to make academic mobility more attractive.
- No evidence was found whether the students receive personal feedback regarding their performance at different assessments in order to support student development. It is recommended to provide students with personal feedback regarding their performance at different assessments in order to support student development.

- The involvement of students in research projects is insufficient. It is recommended to involve master students in broader research and development activities.

6.3.

Teaching staff	Partially conforms to requirements
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Strengths

- Teaching staff are also involved in practical activities in the field of law.
- Good qualification of teaching staff.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- Compared to internationally acceptable standards, the participation of teaching staff in the international research projects and other international scientific activity is insufficient. In order to achieve a more active participation, more resources should be found and allocated to research activities.
- At the Faculty management level a system should be created to support and encourage the members of the full-time teaching staff to regularly develop their knowledge and skills and participate in international mobility and networks. Regular goals for the international cooperation should be set and the achievement of those goals should be measured regularly. It is highly recommended to apply for the EU funding already available to Moldova, e.g the Erasmus + programme.
- There are no foreign visiting professors involved in this programme. The Department should actively seek possibilities for involving visiting professors in the teaching on the study programme.
- There is a lack of a broader staff development plan, including conducting systematic appraisal interviews with the staff and other methods of staff development. It is recommended to establish a comprehensive staff development system that includes all the important elements of staff development.

6.4.

Students	Partially conforms to requirements
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Strengths

- Students' satisfaction with the study programme is high.
- Graduates of the study programme are competitive in the labour market.

Areas of improvement and recommendations

- There is a lack of information among the students regarding counselling services. SUM should establish an effective study counselling system for the students, and also consider

providing them with some kind of a psychological counselling service. Also, students should be better informed about the already existing counselling services SUM is offering, and encouraged to take advantage of such possibilities.

- None of the master students have taken part in mobility programs. The faculty should encourage their master students to participate in academic mobility and to focus on informing them about the mobility opportunities.
- There is a general lack of English language skills among the students. More attention should be paid to developing the students' English language proficiency.
- In order to promote internationalization processes, the University should consider updating and revising their webpage's content in English.
- The programme lack a systematic approach towards academic fraud. In many cases the discovery of academic fraud lies upon academic staff. It is recommended to adapt a unified and more systematic approach towards preventing plagiarism and actively seek opportunities how to teach students about anti-plagiarism and academic ethics.
- The faculty should seek ways how to strengthen and formalise their ties with graduates.
- The causes for dropping out should be formally collected and analysed on the Faculty level.
- Neither SER nor the additional documents provided detailed data on the employment rate of the graduates. It is recommended that the data regarding the employment of graduates should be collected be more regularly and systematically.

6.5.

Resources	Partially conforms to requirements
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Strengths

- The classrooms are equipped sufficiently and the equipment is renewed periodically.
- The use of *Moodle* platform providing the students information regarding the courses online.

Areas of Improvement and recommendations

- The literature in the field is inadequate and needs fundamental strategic re-planning. The University should pay attention to the modern sources of information when replenishing the library, investing in international academic databases, training the librarians, teaching staff and students of being able and motivated to use the resources. The library needs major investment, especially regarding field specific legal literature in English, French or German.
- The students and academic staff are not aware of international databases and therefore not motivated to use the few available. Also the librarians need training to give advice to the students on how to access electronic academic materials. It is recommended to

increase the awareness of students and academic staff of international databases and motivate them to use the few available.

- The existing ICT solutions should be further developed in order to guarantee the existing resources to be fully utilised and to take the usage of modern technologies to the next level.

- 7. According to section 33.4 of the document "Requirements and Procedure for Accreditation of Study Programmes in Moldova", if three or four of the component assessments by an assessment committee are "partially conforms to requirements", the Quality Assessment Council shall decide to make a proposal to the Minister of Education to accredit the study programme for a period of three years.

- 8. Taking into account the component assessments referred to in clause 5, as well as the strengths and areas of improvement of the study programme,

the Council **DECIDED**

To make a proposal to the Minister of Education of the Republic of Moldova to accredit the Master's study programme "Customs Law and Customs Activity" of the State University of Moldova for a period of three years.

The decision was adopted by 9 votes in favour and 0 votes against.

9. Contestation:

- 9.1. Evaluation proceedings conducted by EKKA may be disputed if the proceedings do not comply with the procedure provided for in this document. The challenge is filed with the Management Board of the Archimedes Foundation within 30 working days after the person filing the challenge became or should have become aware of the contested finding.

- 9.2. The assessment decision by the EKKA Quality Assessment Council may be disputed after adoption of the corresponding administrative decision by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova.

Tõnu Meidla
Chair of the Council

Hillar Bauman
Secretary of the Council