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*Performance in Research, Performance in Teaching – Quality, Diversity, and
Innovation in Romanian Universities Project*

University of Arts Târgu-Mureş

EVALUATION REPORT

January 2013

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Table of contents

1. Introduction	3
1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme	3
1.2 University of Arts Targu-Mures profile	4
1.3 The evaluation process	5
2. Governance and institutional decision-making	7
2.1 Governance structure	7
2.2 Funding	8
2.3 Staffing	9
2.4 Governance and decision-making — recommendations	10
3. Teaching and learning	12
3.1 Teaching	12
3.2 Students	13
3.3 Teaching and learning — recommendations	14
4. Research	16
Research — recommendation	17
5. Service to society	18
Service to society — recommendations	18
6. Quality Culture	20
Quality Culture — recommendations	20
7. Internationalisation	22
Internationalisation — recommendations	22
8. Conclusion	24
References	25



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1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of the University of Arts Târgu-Mureş, referred to as simply UAT in this report. The evaluation took place in November 2012 and January 2013 for the second visit, in the framework of the project *Performance in Research, Performance in Teaching — Quality, Diversity, and Innovation in Romanian Universities*. This project aims at strengthening core elements of Romanian universities, such as their autonomy and administrative competences, by improving their quality assurance and management proficiency.

The evaluations are taking place within the context of major reforms in the Romanian higher education system, and specifically in accordance with the provisions of the 2011 Law on Education and the various related normative acts.

While the institutional evaluations are taking place in the context of an overall reform, each university is assessed by an independent IEP team, using the IEP methodology described below.

1.1 The Institutional Evaluation Programme

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an independent membership service of the European University Association (EUA) that offers evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture. The IEP is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

The distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme are:

- A strong emphasis on the self-evaluation phase
- A European perspective
- A peer-review approach
- A support to improvement

The focus of the IEP is the institution as a whole and not the individual study programmes or units. It focuses upon:

- Decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management.



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- Relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision-making and strategic management as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms.

The evaluation is guided by four key questions, which are based on a “fitness for (and of) purpose” approach:

- What is the institution trying to do?
- How is the institution trying to do it?
- How does it know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

1.2. University of Arts Târgu-Mureş’ profile

The city of Târgu-Mureş stands in the heart of Transylvania, which was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at one time. An important ethnic Hungarian minority inhabits this region and strongly influences its entire cultural life. In addition, a small but significant Roma minority contributes to the cultural diversity. Historically, the University of Arts Târgu-Mureş (UAT) dates back to 1946, when its precursor, the Cluj Hungarian Conservatory of Music and Dramatic Arts was established. As expressed in the self-evaluation report, “the current structure of the university was formed in the flow and the rhythm of successive mutations produced in university culture since the middle of the last century”. Since UAT’s foundation in 1946, this has meant:

- changes of location between Cluj and Târgu Mureş, and even Bucureşti for the Romanian section for a few years;
- several changes in target population from Hungarian minority to both Hungarian and Romanian ethnic groups;
- changes of overseeing authority from the Ministry of Culture to the Caragiale Institute of Theatre and Cinematographic Art (for one section for a few years), to the Ministry of Education;
- changes of official names, the current name having been assigned in 2009.

Reflecting the regional characteristics, UAT is comprised of two similar faculties, each serving a different linguistic community, Romanian or Hungarian; and by tacit agreement, the academic community elects alternatively Hungarian or Romanian rectors, in line with legal regulations and the university charter. While firmly anchored in its regional environment UAT considers that it also functions at the national level.



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At the national level, legislation has evolved, with several new laws or amendments in the last two decades. Recently, a major change in the law on education took place, with a new detailed Law of National Education, which came into effect in January 2011 and grants more autonomy than before to HEIs. This has direct consequences on the institution governance (see below). In addition, the Bologna Process is being implemented; the country joined the European Union in 2007; Romania is in the midst of a severe economic crisis; and the importance of the international context keeps increasing. On top of these, a new rector has been in place for only a few months, coming to power at a time when a new governance model is being implemented. All these factors add up to a constantly changing environment. However, the leadership expects relative stability in the next four years, allowing some planning for further developments.

With 323 students in the current academic year, UAT appears to be a rather small institution; however, this is within an average range for an institution of arts. UAT offers education in two main domains: theatre arts and music education, with some courses in dance and a new programme on visual media. Noteworthy is the fact that all the programmes offered at UAT have been classified in category A¹, all are accredited, or authorised for the most recent ones — i.e. they have not been in existence long enough for students to have gone through a full cycle yet. Another remarkable feature is the rapid expansion in courses offered and student numbers in the last few years.

The leadership considers that three main opportunities constitute the unique features of UAT:

1. The facilities: UAT has its own full theatre and a smaller “animation” (puppet theatre), the only art institution in Romania, and probably one of the few in Europe, to be so well equipped for theatre production.
2. The quality of the academic staff, as characterised by the leadership: besides its own well-qualified staff, UAT has been able to attract talented teachers from other countries (examples cited: a professor from Chile, another from Lark Theatre in New York).
3. The multiculturalism embodied in the two sections that maintain good relations and collaborate on some projects.

¹ This is important for funding purposes “the evaluation results, reflected by the classification of universities and ranking of study programmes, as well as the ranking of RDI institutions become the basis for the new institutional funding from the public budget, in order to better reward good performance and encourage competition.” Laura Roman, on <http://www.metrisnet.eu/metris/index.cfm/report/findByStructureAndCountry/38/72> accessed 27/03/13. All programmes have been ranked, category A being highest.



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1.3. The evaluation process

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by an ad hoc team composed of 12 members, including the deans of the two faculties, several department heads, professors or lecturers and three students. The composition of the team ensured fair representation of both linguistic groups. Different sub-teams, often Romanian/Hungarian pairs, focused on various aspects of the report, according to each pair members' domain of expertise.

The members of the self-evaluation group found that the process offered the opportunity to revise some of the institution's basic documents. They felt that the time allotted to preparing the report was rather short, but otherwise did not experience any particular difficulty.

The report attempts to cover the most important issues for UAT, but its structure does not quite follow the IEP guidelines. The appendices are available only in Romanian, most are also posted on the university website; for these two reasons they were not sent to the IEP team. The report does include a summarised but thorough SWOT analysis. However, after the first visit, it became obvious that the self-evaluation report does not fully reflect the extent of UAT's involvement in the community, its international relations, or the level of its accomplishments.

The self-evaluation report (SER) was sent to the evaluation team in October 2012. The visits of the evaluation team to UAT took place from 14 to 16 November 2012 and from 20 to 23 January 2013, respectively. In between the visits, UAT provided the evaluation team with some additional documentation.

The evaluation team (hereafter the team) consisted of:

- Finn Junge-Jensen, former Rector, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark, team chair
- Francisco Beja, Director, ESMAE – Performing Arts School of Porto Polytechnic, Portugal
- Tanel Sits, student and Policy Officer, Federation of Estonian Student Unions, Estonia
- Jacqueline Smith, former OECD analyst, France, team coordinator, France

The team thanks the Rector, Prof. Crisan, his colleagues and students for their gracious hospitality and their willingness to contribute freely to the discussions and to share their experience. Special thanks go to the liaison person, Eugen Pasareanu, who gave the team so much of his time and was very helpful.



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2. Governance and institutional decision-making

2.1 Governance structure

Besides the usual goal for higher education institutions of providing the best possible training for their future graduates, UAT aims to ensure the improvement of specialists in arts, to promote creativity activities in this field and to become an example of how multiculturalism works and what it can achieve. The SER presents the mission and this evaluation report comments on how these aims are concretised. The team had the occasion to see a theatre production involving students and teachers from both sections as well as few professionals from outside the institution, which illustrates collaboration between the two sections and with the institution's wider environment.

The strategic plan 2012-2016, posted on the website, lists 11 strategic objectives, with didactic objectives, and implementation targets for that period. The accompanying operational plan — also available on the website — includes a breakdown of specific implementations, regrouped in five domains. While this operational plan represents a useful framework to guide future activities, it deserves to be further elaborated. The plan has been in effect for a few months only, therefore it is still too early to evaluate its implementation.

In terms of governance, UAT is of course complying with the expectations of the new law, which means a renewed structure. The Senate, the main decision-making body, comprises 16 members, four students and twelve academics, who all serve in one or several of the ten committees. At first, the organisational chart appears rigidly standard and formal. Actually, it provides an overall framework, but then UAT's small size and collegiality allow more flexible, more relevant functioning; as expressed by one person, in this structure "support from the upper level is unconditional, but to expect strict compliance can be unproductive. You have to leave freedom for creativity". The governance is really collegial, apparently based on cordial, informal relations among all members of the academic community, and encouraged by the increased autonomy granted by the law. In fact, some academics feel that in past years everything was decided from above, meaning from the overseeing authorities, but feel that now there are chances for teachers themselves to initiate projects.

In terms of facilities, even though the situation has well improved according to alumni who graduated several years ago, UAT is still cramped for space, which causes logistic problems at times. The planned renovation of the buildings will alleviate this lack of space; and since UAT has becomes part of the city branding, the state will provide funds to acquire additional facilities.



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Just a decade ago, UAT was very small but started to expand significantly in 2007, in course offerings as well as in student enrolment. The alumni interviewed are impressed by all the improvements in courses available, the didactic approach, the range and high level of projects. UAT is still rather small, with related difficulties (see staffing, below). There is a strong pull towards further expansion, and many ideas about fields where this could happen, but at the same time a need to consolidate the recent growth. The leadership will need to make sure that these two potentially conflicting tendencies are reconciled, or at least prioritised. At any rate, at the moment, quantitative expansion, which would require hiring more staff, is not possible. Therefore, UAT intends to concentrate on qualitative improvement, such as developing international relations, further encouraging multiculturalism, and working on image and branding. The leadership plans a wide spectrum of expansion, the Senate will prioritise and expect that at least some of these priorities will be realised, several are already well underway and there are plans to establish a Transylvanian Institute.

Indeed, as already mentioned above, after the first visit the team felt that visibility is definitely a weak point: the SER does not show all the strengths and all the positive aspects of UAT. The staff and students interviewed commented that UAT is "too modest", that it needs to create a strong attractive image that reflects its talents well; and that should start with the website, a move already planned, and almost completed when the team visited. For the same purpose, some academics would like to become more involved with secondary schools, and plan to develop projects in collaboration with students in other universities e.g. University of Sibiu and Babes Bolyai University of Cluj.

2.2 Funding

Like other higher education institutions in Romania, UAT has two sources of funding: public funding, essentially per capita financing for a maximum number of 267 state-funded students, and 56 fee-paying students during the current academic year. The annual cost of education at UAT is currently RON 19,000/student (approximately EUR 4 300) covered by the state for state-funded students; tuition fees for fee-paying students are RON 3 000 (about EUR 690) at undergraduate level or RON 6 000 (about EUR 1 380) for doctoral students, determined by the Senate and based on what the market can withstand. Thus fees are far from covering the cost of education. Programmes are accredited for, and budget based on, seven state-funded and five fee-paying students per class. Private funding comes mostly from fee-paying students and own funds from contracts and services, e.g. renting out its facilities during summer.



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Different state measures appear conflicting: posts are approved by the Ministry of Education in relation to authorised new programmes; therefore, in theory new staff should be hired, students could be enrolled in these programmes, and the state should fund these posts via student support. However, current instructions from the Ministry of Finance authorise recruiting only for posts that become vacant. In addition, the state funding allocation procedures hinder, if not prevent, proactive budget planning: for year n+1 the institution must submit a budget proposal for a total amount 10% less than the amount allocated in year n. Where to reduce the amount is left to the institution to decide. The real level of funding by the state, based on the budget submitted and the number of students actually enrolled, is determined during the course of year n+1 and not known until late that year, but usually makes up for the reduction so that in the end the total amount is roughly unchanged. Then intra budget flexibility remains limited: fiscal regulations do not allow transfers from one of the four budgetary chapters to another, only minimal transfers within chapters and some carry over from one year to the next. This detailed reporting highlights the difficulty for the institution to establish a realistic and forward looking budget.

Since 2009, the major economic crisis has caused reduction in funding; however UAT has been able to ensure at least the basic funding due to the fact that all its programmes are rated in the top A category. Decrease in funding has occurred but in particular, salaries have been sharply reduced as elsewhere. UAT was able to partially compensate the salary reductions with the use of its own funds, and especially funds from a private foundation that it created in 1999. In the process, a substantial part of the funds have been used up to soften the impact of the government austerity measures but the reserves have been completely depleted. As a consequence, UAT's own funds are very limited. Donations and sponsoring are possible, financial incentives are even included in the law; however, according to some interviewees, these incentives are not important enough to have a significant impact, especially in a context where donations are not part of the culture. For now, the severe budget cuts have led to some projects being halted, or put on hold, for example, a planned collaboration with an institution in Connecticut. Staff members admit that UAT needs help in securing more funding opportunities.

The main challenge for the leadership is how to manage the/with lack of funds. However, minimal flexibility to adapt to unplanned situations exists and UAT has shown to be resourceful in taking advantage of it when necessary, for example, through the use of limited short-term contracts, extending the renting out of facilities, transferring funds across budget envelopes when possible. All higher education institutions need more funds than they receive, but in this case UAT really seems to operate on a shoestring. It is thanks to the leadership and staff that they



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are able to function and bring projects to fruition, but funding shortages hinder or even prevent the implementation of necessary measures.

2.3 Staffing

According to the SER, in 2011-2012, 51 full-time teachers of different levels constitute the academic staff. Tables on the website show that UAT is accredited for 70 posts, thus 19 are still vacant at the moment, and probably will not be filled in the near future because of the freeze imposed by the current national policy on hiring. While this may not be a major problem regarding teachers — until now UAT has even been able to staff the newly authorised programmes — it causes great difficulty for administrative staff: the new programmes could hire academics but not administrative staff, the last recruitment was a sound designer in 2009.

Work overload affects all staff, both academic and administrative, a problem that was reported by several persons during interviews. In turn work overload hinders initiatives that teachers would like to implement. Under these conditions, an upgrading of skills becomes particularly needed but lack of funds prevents implementing internal staff development programmes; only when a project funding includes this category of expense is it possible to set up a programme to upgrade skills. The shortage of administrative staff means that most projects are launched at individual level by the initiators. Only recently has UAT been able to assign one person to long-term projects coordination by releasing some of the workload;

But hiring does occur, although only to replace departing staff. In such cases the UAT policy is to attract the best possible teachers/specialists. Yet no specific hiring measure is in place: UAT relies on individual contacts and word of mouth. This informal approach may work because of the institution's relatively small size and its reputation within the country. However, because of its small size and the rather transient character of some of the programmes offered, the university tries to avoid hiring highly specialised staff; rather, beyond basic qualifications, it considers the range of skills that a candidate offers, for future needs. Perhaps due to the recent expansion and diversification, the need for education management specialists has also emerged.

Considering how important individual reputation (even fame) is, UAT would need to attract more well-known artists from abroad but is not able to do so because of a lack of financial resources. For the moment, the only available option would be short-term visiting professors.



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2.4 Governance and decision-making — recommendations

In view of UAT's characteristics, as described above, the team can offer the following recommendations to address the situation of scarcity and strengthen the institution's functioning.

- The institution needs to **select some key point indicators** in relation to the strategic plan and follow up annually. This means further elaborating an annual operational plan, prioritising and highlighting the key point indicators, setting for each a time frame of implementation and intermediate indicators for each. An annual progress report should address directly the implementation of the operational plan's various steps.
- UAT needs to **develop and strengthen visibility**, both internally and externally. The internal newsletter, the intranet system, the annual progress report, the exchange of views, should reinforce communication and awareness within the institution. Communication towards the external environment should be expanded and a few key characteristics strongly highlighted, particularly a "unique point" for better branding. The newly-designed website, due to become active a few weeks after the team's visit, is a major step toward this goal.
- UAT has a number of assets, but it seems that it struggles almost alone to overcome many hurdles. It needs to find more opportunities to **exchange views with similar national and international institutions**. In this way, it may find useful suggestions, whilst also offering some to other institutions. In addition, it will be more influential through group actions. For this purpose it is essential to join national and international associations of art higher education institutions. Membership in ASITEJ and UNIMA are positive first steps, but these concern art for children; it should be completed with membership in an all-encompassing art association.
- **Fund raising efforts** could be further developed through several channels: contacting organisations involved in supporting cultural activities, within Romania and beyond, exploring opportunities for grants. For these efforts to be effective, UAT should define and highlight its specific profile; besides it would be appropriate to call on the assistance of alumni. These efforts will require major time investment at first, but may bring significant return.
- Another action may generate important return: **establishing a central innovation fund** to support strategic prioritised activities by setting aside some funds, however small, and trying to extend the foundation's action.



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Teaching and learning

3.1 Teaching

As mentioned above, the rather small number of students at the university is within a normal range for this type of institution. Classes are also small, usually 12 students or less, and there is a favourable staff/student ratio.

Students choose to apply to UAT for different reasons, often because of the institution's reputation and especially the reputation of individual professors. While this may be a common phenomenon anywhere for any type of studies, it is prevalent for art schools; attracting well-known specialists therefore becomes particularly important for UAT (see "staffing" above). Another attraction is the fact that UAT is the only art institution in Romania to offer certain courses, such as drama writing, or audio-visual multimedia communication in Hungarian — it is planned to establish the latter in the Romanian faculty as well. In spite of these attractive factors, all students interviewed stated that UAT's image remains too discreet, that much more should be done for to promote it. Therefore these unique features should be strongly highlighted when refining the institution's profile.

The admission process is based first on auditions. According to some students the selection process is "more serious" at UAT than elsewhere, which reinforces the positive reputation. The number of applicants varies from year to year, but UAT does not enrol students who are not clearly qualified for this type of studies.

In terms of facilities, as mentioned above UAT offers rare opportunities with its two theatres equipped for performances. However, even though the situation has improved according to former students, classroom space remains insufficient, causing logistic problems at times. The library appears reasonably well supplied; it should extend the availability of documentation by joining a network of libraries and databases, as UAT intends to do. According to interviewees, there is a consortium of theatre libraries, but the technical conditions to link them electronically are not yet available.

Teaching involves theory connected to a great deal of practice, where collective work is often the main approach. In fact teachers consider that they are educating a "generation" — i.e. a class, or a cohort — rather than individuals. Teachers also see a recent trend from a pedagogy of teaching through failures to one based on success, and a shift of paradigm from education based on teacher/student relation to that of knowledge creation. Perhaps an impact of the Bologna Process is that courses are now designed around learning outcomes: as one teacher stated, they



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start from the competences to be acquired and backtrack to build the relevant course. In that respect the *Sectoral Qualifications Framework for the Creative & Performing Disciplines*, may provide “a common set of statements about expected achievement levels for students in any and all of the disciplines represented: the visual arts, the performing arts, music and architecture”.²

The next step would be to involve students in all aspects of theatre productions, including, for example, sound and staging; however, for now very strict rules do not allow students to be hired for technical work in theatre. Teachers aim to stimulate the students’ creativity — especially in play writing — but a major challenge is how to nurture innate creativity while respecting the regulations.

On the one hand, the classes’ small size and the nature of this education allow very informal, positive relationships to develop: students view their teachers as mentors, and teachers view the students as partners. Another advantage of the small size and the positive atmosphere is that they give UAT the capacity to adapt to changes in the environment. On the other hand, it limits possibilities to a certain extent, such as when the designing programme, which had been authorised, could not be developed for lack of relevant staff.

Teachers appreciate the autonomy granted to initiate new projects and to develop new ideas without rigid requirements to apply a predefined model. Thus they can launch experimental approaches or programmes: for example, this environment led to creating a playwriting course which has now gained notoriety and has become an attractive specialty for UAT. The communications programme and English-language seminars are other examples, and more were mentioned.

The leadership and the academic staff aim to develop multiculturalism in their field. To do so, they are developing projects that involve both the Romanian and Hungarian sections; they succeeded well in the production of the cantata *Carmina Burana* in which dancers, actors, directors, took part; the production has been invited abroad and will be presented in international events. For the same purpose, UAT would like to organise more seminars in English, a “neutral ground” language for the two linguistic groups, and one that would allow the involvement of foreign students or teachers. The playwright course was organised with the support of both sections.

² <http://www.elia-artschools.org/Documents/sectoral-qualifications-framework-for-the-creative-performing-disciplines?id=77>



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In addition, while the team was visiting, UAT was trying to establish a dual degree with Trinity College, Ireland, however the process is complicated because of differences in the respective national legal requirements.

3.2 Students

The students interviewed all expressed their appreciation of the training they receive at UAT, but they find that the load — learning and practice — is quite heavy; in the first two or three years, “sleep becomes a problem!” This may be a reason, but not the only one, for why there is no student union at UAT. There have been attempts at establishing a union, but the students cannot find the time to be involved; in addition they do not feel the need for one because any issue can be easily brought to their teachers’ attention. While the absence of a student union obviously has no negative consequence on their daily life at UAT, it limits the opportunities for contacts with other students, in Romania or elsewhere, and for participating in the study or resolution of broader issues.

A number of students continue on to a Master’s programme after the initial three-year degree, some of them coming from other institutions, attracted by UAT’s reputation and the specific programmes offered. As an indication of the level of training at UAT, and of the institution’s modesty about its accomplishments, the team learned almost incidentally of international prizes won by recent graduates — a student won “The Imison Award 2012 for Best Script by a New Writer” awarded by BBC Radio Drama Awards, another a prize in Hungary for acting.

Most students already take part in productions with the several theatres in Targu Mures. Such involvements serve as internships, connect the students with the reality of work in the arts, and give them the contacts they will need to enter the job market at the end of their studies. Not all students will pursue a strictly artistic career, but their training at UAT gives them an appropriate background for other careers, in management — theatres, cultural centres — art therapy, libraries, etc. The importance of personal contacts in this field, through the students themselves or via their teachers, may account for the fact that UAT has no work placement service. In a related point, UAT has no formally established alumni association, but most alumni themselves maintain close contact, several of them now teach at UAT or are working on projects in collaboration with the university.

Obviously a profusion of ideas for new programmes, new courses, new projects are frequently emerging; those implemented during the last few years show that UAT has the capacity to adapt, to bring projects to fruition. In fact, a difficulty at the moment may be the need to rein in and channel this rapid expansion long enough to consolidate the recent additions.



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3.3 Teaching and learning — recommendations

- **Strengthen collaboration between the two faculties.** The current efforts in this direction represent notable change of mentality from earlier times when tension prevailed between Romanian and Hungarian sections of the university, as former students stated. Tension has now been replaced by fruitful collaboration, which will help shape a distinctive profile for Romanian Transylvania. The momentum should be maintained.
- **Use intranet actively in teaching and learning:** as the new electronic platform is implemented, the intranet should be used more extensively for administrative as well as didactic activities and planning. It is hoped that this will alleviate the administrative burden to a certain extent.
- **Consider b-learning for theoretical courses:** using blended learning, with a combination of physical presence courses and e-learning for theoretical courses should release time for teachers and somewhat alleviate the difficulties linked to classroom space.
- **Build up access to international library and resources databases:** the initial steps to access international databases have already been taken. The completion of this process does not depend on UAT alone, but the efforts should be actively pursued.
- **Establish** as soon as possible the audio-visual communication and **multimedia programme in Romanian.**
- Although they probably do not feel the need for one on a daily basis, or do not give the process top priority, the **students would benefit by organising a student union**, as this would give them more opportunities to stay abreast of developments in Europe and to extend their network of useful contacts.



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4. Research

All the persons interviewed agree that PhD studies and research are very important in their field, especially a scientific doctorate. As the leadership expressed it, each PhD is a study of its own, and is considered as “a piece of the puzzle” for the university’s image building. Interviewees acknowledged that actors have not needed a scientific doctorate but other art specialists do, for example, stage directors. The context is changing and actors and practitioners need formal academic recognition, in particular for teaching, which they can now obtain with the recently established professional doctorate.

UAT has initiated the process to establish and start offering professional doctorates, a degree that became available for performers with the recent law on education, and makes it possible now for famous artists to be hired as professors. However, there are some reservations about this degree for fear that the social and professional environment will not accept it at the same level as a scientific degree. Actually, the leadership feels that in spite of its imperfections the new law has had a positive impact as it forced them to look at priorities in research.

In 2012-2013, 49 UAT students are preparing a scientific doctorate, a relatively high number in relation to the number of academic staff, but nine of these doctoral students have interrupted their studies. This number has increased in recent years, in part since UAT has entered co-tutelle agreements with professors in other universities, in Romania — Bucharest, Sibiu — and abroad, especially Hungary. While this increasing number bears witness to the valued importance of doctorate degrees prepared at UAT, it also points to a heavier burden for theses supervisors, which could potentially affect the quality of supervision. The list sent to the team shows an interesting choice of subjects for doctoral theses. The majority of articles published appear in *Symbolon*, UAT’s journal; an ambitious project aims to produce the journal, or at least a set of abstracts, in four languages. If concretised, this project may help encourage authors to publish in other languages, an area insufficiently developed at present.

Both a doctoral school and a theatre and creation research centre have been established at UAT. The leadership reported that all the teachers in theatre arts from another university come to UAT doctoral school; thus, there is a belief that UAT sets the trend in research. As the academics stated, research is needed because in arts you cannot dissociate theory and practice, and it is needed to explore interactions between theatre, arts and education, or between arts and sociology, or because it can “improve the perennial aspect” of art. They profess that a doctoral programme can help the Romanian education system by encouraging education in and through arts. One project, conducted in collaboration with Hungary, studies the history of art education in the socialist era; it has attracted the interest of an art



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institution in Cardiff. Another project studies how actors' personalities evolve during their training years.

Not only is UAT developing partnerships with other institutions on its own, but other institutions, academic or professional, have expressed interest in collaborating with the university: e.g. a higher education institution in Cardiff, as mentioned above, and also a local animation theatre whose director would like to set up a puppetry research centre with UAT's participation.

Among expansion projects being planned or implemented, UAT is in the process of establishing an institute to study and stimulate Hungarian theatre literature in Romania-Transylvania, with the hope that a similar institute for Romanian language will be established later.

Research — recommendations

As mentioned in the chapter on teaching and learning, UAT exhibits an abundance of projects and ideas to develop or expand further its research activities; in fact the self-evaluation report lists a number of positive measures to be taken. What could be improved is overall coordination as well as a clear set of priorities. Consequently, the team offers the following recommendations.

- Under the authority of the Senate and with the help of a research advisory committee, **establish a clear priority of research areas** that would contribute to the national and international positioning of UAT.
- **Review the workload of PhD supervisors** so as to reinforce the quality assurance processes for doctoral education.
- **Further strengthen the international relationships** and join more international research projects, which would broaden the European perspective and increase the visibility at the same time.
- Also to both widen viewpoints and increase international visibility **try to publish more frequently in other languages**, especially in English which has become the lingua franca of our times. For that purpose it may be necessary to develop courses in English, to encourage and facilitate periods of time abroad.



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5. Service to society

In the case of UAT, rather than “service to” one may refer to “relations with” society, an almost symbiotic relationship between the academic institution and the region’s cultural organisations.

The leadership and the staff, think that art has its part to play in education and in society via cultural activities. This tenet is concretised through involvement in different situations. PhD students are taking part in the project “Palace for children”, a state-owned after-school institution that runs programmes for children between three and 18. As part of the students’ training, all UAT’s performances are open to the general public. Support from the city remains limited, but audience keeps increasing.

The former students interviewed all commented on the improvements that have occurred since their initial education at UAT in terms of general atmosphere, variety of courses and projects, overall organisation and degree of autonomy. However, they also commented on the need for branding and building a stronger image: “communication and public relations must be improved”.

In line with the university’s emphasis on collaboration between the two linguistic groups, a new festival will be launched in Targu Mures with a focus on bi-cultural art. The Mures county supports and finances cultural activities; the dance section at UAT, the only one in Transylvania the team was told, was established because of the bi-cultural cooperation. In a sense UAT is showing how biculturalism can work, in a region where tensions remain between the various ethnic groups. Another regional partner plans to develop projects in collaboration with UAT around the three concepts of tradition, multiculturalism and community.

Most of these contacts with society are really two-way exchanges which benefit both parties: UAT provides performers and directors to the city’s theatres, and the latter offer working life training opportunities to the students. In addition, several UAT alumni now work professionally in these theatres and some also teach at UAT. Therefore they have an active part in maintaining and developing complex relations between the university and its social environment.

Service to society — recommendations

UAT appears to be already well integrated in its regional environment, with mutual benefits between the institution and society. The following recommendations aim to help further strengthen this integration.



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- Focus on **establishing a clearer brand and profile** nationally, internationally. As stressed by all interviewees, and already mentioned in this report, UAT's image deserves to be better known. For this to happen, national and international contacts must be developed, the university's strengths must be highlighted and a unique strong point needs to be identified.
- **Create an advisory board of stakeholders** with external members who could advise, help develop a unique profile, and increase the visibility.
- The **focus on theatre for children and young people** seems to be one of the distinctive characteristics and strengths of UAT. It could be further emphasised.
- **Facilitate the establishment of alumni organisation:** while alumni are already active in maintaining contacts, such an organisation could contribute to expanding more systematically a network of potential partners.



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6. Quality Culture

UAT's strategic plan prescribes the principles on which the institution builds quality assurance. These include the existence of an internal quality assurance commission and a definition of its tasks, the establishment of an ethics commission, information transparency, provision for evaluating staff and students' performances and the need for ongoing improvement. These principles concern administrative management as well as teaching. As in other institutions in Romania, there seems to be a special emphasis on ethical conduct dictated in part by the state regulations: Senate members are required to make information about their assets and family interests public. The 2012 operational plan provides some specific measures and indicators and deadlines to check their implementation.

The leadership intends to foster improvements in several areas. They recognise that for the moment quantitative improvements are not possible, neither in staff recruitment nor in facilities expansion; therefore, they intend to concentrate on qualitative improvement. They find inspiration in previous experiences of scarcity — during the pre-1990 regime — to find solutions and continue improving; they stated that “managing scarcity” is a challenge, it is necessary to “work with the tools of the system”, and in the end one becomes more efficient.

With the intention of becoming an example of successful multiculturalism education in the arts, the leadership and staff plan to stimulate the implementation of projects involving members of both faculties, such as the performances that the team had the opportunity to attend. Such projects have already drawn the attention of other foreign institutions.

According to interviewees, one of the strong points which encourages excellence, is the “autonomy in inventing programmes”, the freedom granted to see what works and what does not. Interviewees believe that this open attitude is unique to this institution, and it has therefore become one of its attractive characteristics.

In the collegial fashion that seems to be the governance style at UAT, study plans are discussed at faculty level, and then approved by the Senate. Similarly, the assessment of students' achievements involves several teachers, insuring fair assessment — although this form of assessment may be more common in a performing arts institution: all teachers from a department sit in on a performance set up for the purpose, and grade each student individually; then the teachers discuss together to decide on the final grade.

As also required by law, evaluation of academic staff takes place regularly, including evaluation by students via questionnaires. Some students feel that this process has limited impact; they do not see any change occurring as a consequence. However,



at the same time students praised their teachers: some stated that between 50% and 100% are outstanding; others noted that all of them are excellent. This appreciation matches that of the leadership who tries to recruit highly qualified staff and considers that all current staff is highly qualified.

Quality Culture — recommendations

- In a number of areas, the variety of courses offered, the artistic productions, the pedagogical approaches, the hiring requirements for staff recruitment, UAT demonstrates clear concern for quality which underlies successful achievements. **Selecting international partners for systematic benchmarking** would help the university to pursue along these lines.
- At the moment the communication system, particularly the electronic communication system — intranet and internet — is not sufficiently developed, as mentioned above under *Governance and decision-making*. The team can only encourage UAT to **improve the information and communication system**, for both internal and external audiences, as the institution has indeed started doing.
- The quality system could benefit from a permanent student organisation or committee, that would analyse and aggregate student feedback on a yearly basis and would formulate its input regarding further development at UAT.



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7. Internationalisation

Section IV of the operational plan covers international cooperation, with subsections on increasing it, developing international visibility, attracting new funding, and expanding mobility, especially hosting more foreign students. Some international experience is considered an important element of education. In addition, visibility is an essential dimension of the institution's image; it plays a major part in establishing its reputation and in attracting students or staff.

The development of multi-cultural education is mentioned above, so are the initiatives to create joint programmes with art institutions in the US and in Ireland. Visiting programmes, with short-term courses, have been organised between UAT and art schools, e.g. in the United Kingdom, France and especially Hungary. The aim is to invite as many outsiders as possible to learn about UAT's approach and to send as many UAT's students as possible abroad to increase their training experience.

A programme in English in collaboration with Cardiff is being planned. In fact UAT had intended to host an entire group of students from Cardiff, but the programme could not be set up for both financial and regulatory reasons. A local theatre is involved in an EU project with UAT, an institution in Hungary and another one in Poland. And because of its bilingual structure, UAT has long collaborated with schools in Hungary.

UAT takes part in Erasmus mobility programmes; however, for a number of reasons these are not easy to implement: lack of financial resources, especially for outgoing mobility, language barrier, especially for incoming mobility, and the nature of this field of studies which makes it difficult for actors to study in another language. Staff recognise that eventually it will be necessary to set up a department for teaching in English, or at least some courses in English. From its contacts during the two visits, the team felt that several teachers are fluent enough in English, so from a language viewpoint these courses could soon be organised.

As already mentioned, the SER does not reflect the range of UAT's accomplishments nor does the website. Interviewees themselves, both staff and students, admitted that branding is deficient, that they "are too modest". Yet the team was impressed by the variety of activities and the proactive, one may say entrepreneurial, attitude that prevails in this university. A strong visible profile and clearly defined strategy for internationalisation may be what needs to be fully developed.



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Internationalisation — recommendations

- Starting from the embryonic network currently based on the various individual contacts and on the programmes already in place within the institution, UAT needs to **develop a more specific international strategy**, setting priorities and assigning one person to coordinate and implement activities.
- The needed increased visibility should develop with a **strong focus on international branding**.
- UAT already recognises the importance of an international experience for personal and professional development. Therefore it should **facilitate student exchanges more easily**. The team realises that obstacles stand in the way, but suggests that different international programmes, in particular European programmes, could provide some assistance; several resources are listed at the end of this report.
- To enhance international involvement, the team strongly encourages UAT to **develop courses in English** as already envisaged, and to include this measure in the policy development;
- Include in the policy development and **introduce systematic visiting professors programme** possibly on short-term but regular basis.
- To achieve significant presence on the international scene as well as secure more support, **membership in relevant international art schools associations is a must** in addition to the organisations that deal with art for youth and children.



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Conclusion

The University of Arts Târgu-Mureş is a small, dynamic institution that has gone through historically turbulent times, but survived and thrived. Confronted with an unstable environment, legislative constraints and funding restrictions, it has managed to secure its basic needs, and even to continue expanding. In fact UAT will need to ensure that recent expansion is well consolidated.

This art institution has a number of strong features that have built its reputation in the country: high standards of training according to current and former students, with all programmes accredited in top A level category; highly regarded academics; unique facilities for performances; bicultural context; some courses offered at UAT only; an overall convivial atmosphere created by the leadership and an open attitude favourable to creativity.

Lack of visibility appears to be a major weakness. All interviewees commented about it, even the self-evaluation report did not quite reflect the various strong points.

A number of recommendations in different areas appear higher in this report. They can be summarised under the following three headings:

- **Branding:** UAT needs to establish a clear, strong profile, therefore to identify, and highlight, a key point which could become its identity label; to develop this image, all members of the academic community could contribute by “advertising” this institution more forcefully.
- **Funding and public relations:** Exploring all possibilities for additional funding in conjunction with developing a public relations service is a natural extension of branding. UAT is dependent, for a large part, on private funding in a context of economic crisis. Thus, maintaining contacts with stakeholders and society at large becomes even more important.
- **Internationalisation:** UAT already has a number of international relations, essentially through individual contacts. A well-defined overall internationalisation policy could foster a higher degree of coherence, synergy, and possibly more returns. This approach would build up on the efforts of branding and public relations. It also requires a deeper international involvement, via membership in associations of arts institutions. Developing would help widen the possibilities of participation.

From what it has seen and learned during its two visits, the team is confident that the University of Arts Târgu-Mureş is a resourceful institution that will be able to meet the challenges ahead, continue expanding, and gain more international notoriety.



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Resources

- http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/culture/programme/about_culture_en.php
Culture programme at the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. The culture team of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) manages and implements most of the activities of the Culture Programme (2007 – 2013). The aim of the multi-annual programme is to encourage and support cultural cooperation within Europe in order to bring the common European cultural heritage to the fore. The programme proposes funding opportunities to all cultural sections and all categories of cultural operators contributing to the development of cultural cooperation at European level, with a view to encouraging the emergence of European citizenship.
- http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/ip_en.htm
To be explored: Erasmus possibilities – IP INTENSIVE PROJECT part of the Erasmus Programme but with a specific application.
- <http://www.eclap.eu/drupal/?q=node/113965> ECLAP 2013 –
2nd International Conference on Information Technologies for Performing Arts, Media Access and Entertainment Porto, Portugal, 8-10 April 2013. Established by co-funding from the European Commission (ICT-PSP), ECLAP is a Best Practice Network that aims to create a network of experts and media access service for performing arts institutions in Europe, along with an e-library for the performing art.
- www.eepap.org/web/english/eepap.pl Building bridges between Central and Eastern Europe | The EEPAP
The Eastern European Performing Arts Platform (EEPAP) is a project initiated in 2011, by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute as part of the Polish EU Presidency that reached countries such as Slovenia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland, but also numerous non EU countries. The platform focuses on the fields of dance and theatre and is a result of the cooperation between independent experts from Central and Eastern Europe. The platform is made-up of three main pillars: information, education and co-production,
- www.elia-artschools.org/Search&needsclass=1
- www.elia-artschools.org/
ELIA advocates the arts on the European level, creating new opportunities for its members and facilitating the exchange of best practices.
- www.elia-artschools.org/images/products/29/Bologna_Position_Paper.pdf
Towards a European space for higher arts education
- www.elia-artschools.org/News%2Bthe-potential-for-arts-and-design-research-in-europe :
Releasing the Potential for Arts & Design Research in Europe - Proposals for the Future Research Programmes
- www.elia-artschools.org/Documents/position-papers
Tuning performing arts document
- http://on-the-move.org/files/Move-ON_EN_Dec2012.pdf :
“On the Move (<http://on-the-move.org>) is a cultural mobility information network with more than 30 members in over 20 countries across Europe and beyond. Our mission is to encourage and facilitate cross-border mobility and cooperation, contributing to building up a vibrant and shared European cultural space that is strongly connected worldwide.”
- http://www.unideusto.org/tuningeu/images/stories/HUMART/SQF_HUMART_Final_Report_2010-2011.pdf