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## Study Regarding the Quality of the International Students' Teaching Environment

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**Abstract:** The paper presents the statistical analysis of the quality of international students' learning environment based on a questionnaire that includes several issues related to the quality of educational process. Thus, besides the general information on the respondents, the following issues are analyzed: the quality of teaching, the quality of students' services and facilities, and the quality management system. All these issues are according to Romanian regulations and the national methodology for quality assurance in higher education. The results are important for improving the teaching environment, because according to them, the university management will plan its future actions, in order to increase the number of international students. This analysis is also important due to the fact that the teaching language for these students is not their native one and the courses and seminars are held abroad, not at the university administrative center. Based on this study, a connection can be made between the quality of educational services offered abroad and the students' satisfaction. This will be the starting point in developing new strategies, if necessary.

**Keywords:** Internationalization, Quality, Teaching environment

### Introduction

Increasing international visibility and the quality of education and research processes by expanding cooperation with relevant institutions in the countries of the European Union and outside the European area is the main objective of internationalization.

The main goals of the internationalization strategy are:

1. Specify the strategic actions regarding the internationalization activity
2. Identify the expected significant results as a result of internationalization
3. Identify the opportunities and risks in implementing the internationalization activity
4. Describe how internationalization contributes to the academic mission and overall strategy
5. Specification of priority actions and resources for internationalization

Since its early days, our university has been an international institution both in its vision and in its actions. Dunarea de Jos University of Galati enhances its place among eminent European research universities and pays particular attention to the construction and development of links with prestigious universities in the world.

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International cooperation is a prerequisite for ensuring the sustainability and quality of teaching and research in a university. The development of an international network of relations allows increasing the mobility of academic staff and students and motivates them to learn foreign languages.

The research cooperation efforts of the university have been expanded and achieved, scientists and scholars of the university being frequent collaborators of famous research journals and participating in numerous international research projects. Numerous international conferences attracting high-value researchers from all over the world are hosted by the university.

Today the uniqueness of our university is the fact that it is the only university in Romania that has a cross-border faculty in the Republic of Moldova with more than 1000 students and a subsidiary of the faculty of medicine and pharmacy in Italy. This type of internationalization calls for strong involvement from the university's management and academic staff. These transnational projects were devoted to great efforts that have been successful for more than ten years. After obtaining a bachelor's or master's degree in this faculty, graduates might become students of master's and doctorate programs in universities in Romania, bringing with them a culture that enriches ours.

In addition to monitoring the UGAL internationalization activity, based on internationalization indicators, we can measure student satisfaction and progress on questionnaires. This will enable us to find out what syncope exists in the process of implementing the internationalization strategy and to take appropriate measures to eliminate them.

Measuring the success of the internationalization strategy has proven to be a challenge for all universities and for our university as well. That's why we decided to evaluate our internationalization strategy after two years to see if it is consistent, meet the planned deadlines and is right. The strategy will be revised and perhaps reformulated or just refined to make it viable for the university interests.

Transnational education refers to the streamlining of individuals, programs, suppliers, curricula, projects, research and services beyond national and regional borders. Transnational education is a dimension of the internationalization activities that are part of the projects cooperation and development, academic mobility programs and initiatives commercial."

Thanks to the tradition in performance so far, the university is expanding its cross-border academic links with other European universities through joint research programs and projects, delivering educational strength to high-quality education standards at European and world level. Our institution has entered into a partnership with the Kore University of Enna and the Proserpina Fund.

Besides the educational offer in languages of international circulation, Dunarea de Jos University of Galati offers study programs in Romanian language in the countries of the European Union. Thus, medical and nursing programs at Enna in Italy were provisionally authorized by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, which is member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the diplomas obtained by graduates being internationally recognized.

Measuring the success of the internationalization strategy has proven to be a challenge for all universities and for our university as well. That's why we decided to evaluate our internationalization strategy after two years to see if it is consistent, meet the planned deadlines and is right. The strategy will be revised and perhaps reformulated or just refined to make it viable for the university interests.

In order to accomplish this goal, we have decided to analyze the quality of international students' learning environment based on a questionnaire that includes several issues related to the quality of educational process. Thus, besides the general information on the respondents, the following issues are analyzed: the quality of teaching, the quality of facilities and students' services, and the quality management system. All these issues are according to Romanian regulations and the national methodology for quality assurance in higher education (Rhoades, G., & Sporn, B., 2002).

## **Method**

The survey method based on a questionnaire involves a theoretical training, the establishment of an epistemological framework - derived from the theory of the problem under consideration - and the use of a set of

appropriate techniques. Any investigation, however limited by themes and objectives, must have hypotheses and must follow an appropriate theoretical guide.

Qualitative questionnaires are a great way to get in-depth information about certain subjects. These are important tools for getting real feedback. At the same time, they seek to explore people's behavior and focus on what they think.

The questionnaire was focused on the following issues: the quality of teaching, the quality of facilities and students' services, and the management systemquality.

Question sets were formulated for each topic of the questionnaire, and the responses were centralized and statically processed.

The questionnaire was applied to medicine and nursing studentsfrom the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd study years. This analysis is also important due to the fact that the teaching language for these students is not their native one and the courses and seminars are held abroad, not at the university administrative center.

That is why it is important to learn about the quality of teaching, the quality of facilities and the management systemquality.

## **Results and Discussion**

First set of questions is a general one, providing information on the respondents. Thus, 88 students answered the questionnaire. Of these 60 were from the first study year I, 22 from the second and only 6 from the third study year.Of these, about 82% are medical students, and their average age is 21 years.

The respondents were invited to give marks from 1 to 5 to issues regarding their activity, the quality of teaching process, the quality of students' life, the quality of management.

The set of general questions also included some questions aimed at establishing a starting point in the detailed analysis of the other issues covered by the questionnaire. Questions like: what is your position in the hierarchy of the group, do you have a clear vision about your future, are the courses and seminars creative and innovative as well, are the students closed to their teachers, are the specialists delivering quality courses, the university requires high quality standards from its employees and also from its students, are the students restricted by school regulations, is the communication system always opened and available to students were asked and the results reveal the fact that their general opinion on the education system is above average, meaning that this is a good one (fig.1).

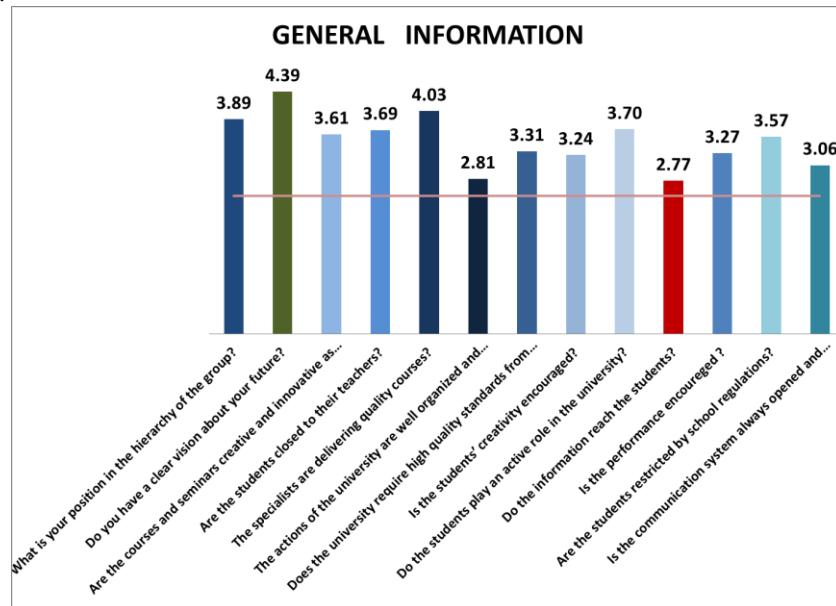


Figure 1. General information on the educational system

The second set of questions was dedicated to the quality of teaching activities. This set comprised 61 questions, the first subset being focusedon timetable for courses and seminars, on the objectiveness of evaluation, the

evaluation type, its calendar and when it is announced, on the teachers' feedback on students' papers, on the students' opinion, on ethics, on the interactivity of courses and seminars (Baytucaeva, A., 2013, Decision 915/2017).

The results (fig.2) reveal the fact that most students are unhappy with the fact that there are frequent changes in the timetable and that they are not announced in time. At the same time, it is found that the attention given by the teachers to their questions and the fact that they are open to a dialogue is closed to the maximum value.

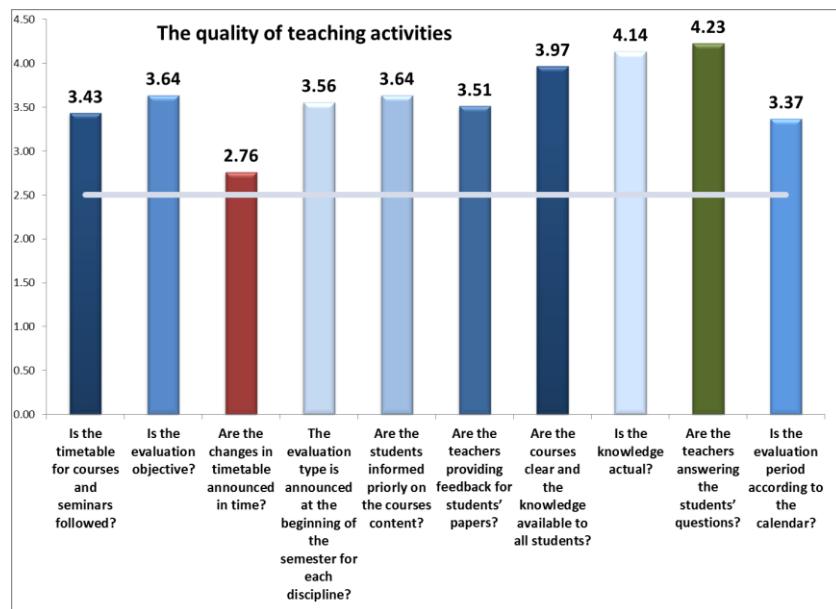


Figure 2. The quality of teaching activities- subset 1

The second subset was focused on the assessment of teachers' involvement in teaching activities, the assessment of case studies and simulation in teaching activities, the assessment of student involvement in teaching activities, the assessment of modern methods of teaching, the assessment of teachers' responses to the reactions and interventions of students (Baytucaeva, A., 2013).

The results (fig.3) reveal the fact that the students have a very good opinion on the interactivity of courses, the use of modern teaching methods, the availability of teachers, the efficient use of teaching time, and the respect for ethics and academic conduct. Less appreciated are the opinions of the students, but also their involvement in the didactic activities. No question in this subset received a score below average, which is a positive thing.

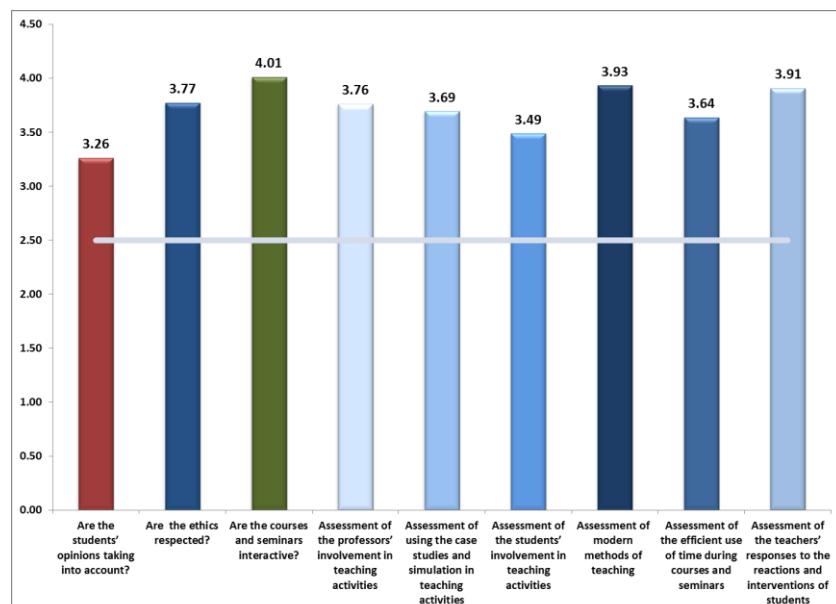


Figure 3. The quality of teaching activities- subset 2

The third subset of questions refers to student assessment, the valuation methods used, to the extent that grades reflect students' re-evaluation skills, how teachers adapt to the cognitive needs of students, the way in which the students' learning rhythm is taken into account, to the complementarity of the lessons.

The questions in this subset received small scores very close to the average (fig. 4). This shows that assessment methods are not adapted to students, that they do not take into account the students' learning rhythm, and may not be objective. The evaluation needs to be rethought and the evaluation criteria should be changed. The study of medicine is difficult, and the requirements of the assessment are in line with the importance of the profession of medical doctor. Students' opinions may be slightly subjective in relation to the topic, in the light of the grades they have received.

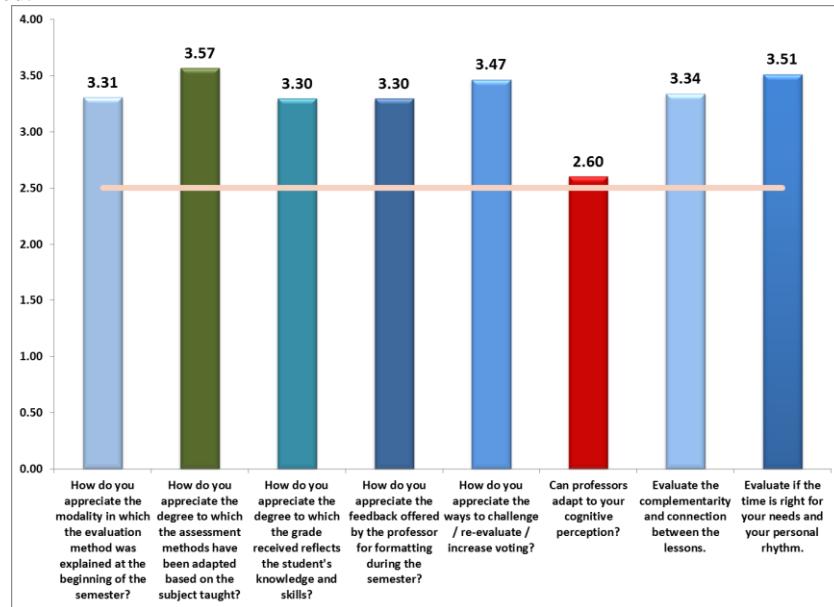


Figure 4. The quality of teaching activities- subset 3

The second set of questionnaires contains questions about the quality of students' services and facilities. The first subset contains the students' assessments regarding the opportunity of a career counseling and guidance center(Decision 915/2017), and the second subset contains the appreciation of the students regarding the quality of the educational rooms.

Students do not consider the existence of a guidance and counseling center very important and do not appreciate the opportunity of a career management. Greater importance would be given to an information center for students (fig.5).

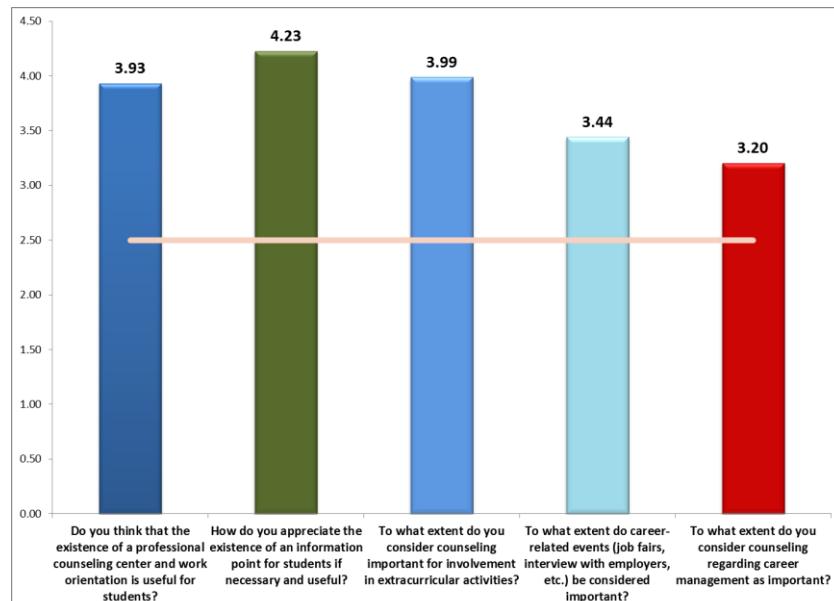


Figure 5. The quality of students' services and facilities - subset 1

From the analysis of the answers given by the students to the second subset of questions, it is observed that the general opinion of the students is that the facilities in the classroom and the laboratory are good and internet access is almost very good (fig.6). They don't have the same opinion about the access to sports and training bases. An explanation might be linked to the fact that training camps are rented and that is why the access is sometimes difficult.

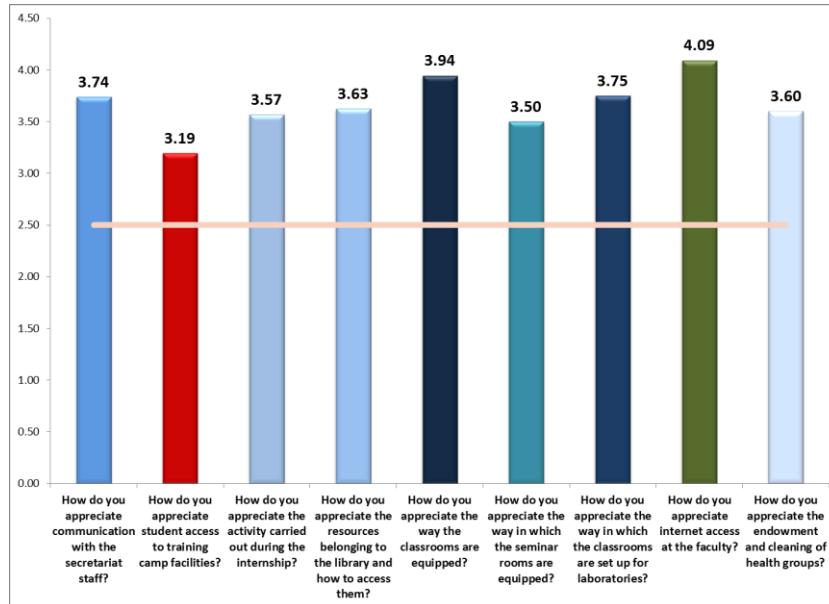


Figure 6. The quality of students' services and facilities - subset 2

The third set of questions concerned the quality management system (Decision 915/2017), but especially the importance that the students attribute to the assessment of the content of the courses, the assessment of the teachers, the moment of the evaluation, the link between the admission examination and the quality assurance, student involvement in research.

Students' responses have shown that they consider the quality of teachers to be important, but the lowest score has obtained the usefulness of student assessment by the students (fig.7). The admission exam is important for quality assurance, but the way it is organized should be rethought.

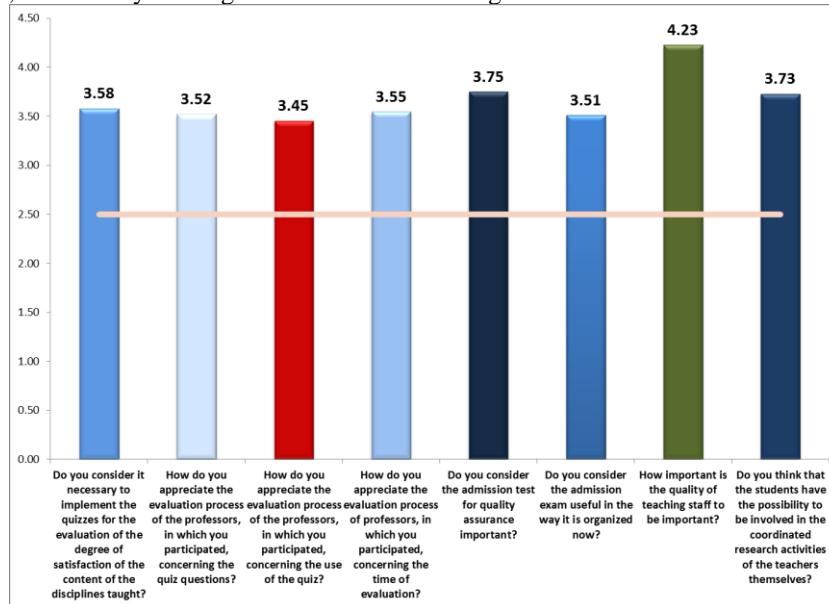


Figure 7. The quality management system

## **Conclusion**

The analysis revealed that there are strong points in organizing a quality education system abroad, with foreign students, but also weak points.

It is clear that foreign students know very well what they want, that the information they receive is actual, that teachers are available, that modern teaching methods are used and that the teaching activities are interactive.

Students feel that information points are required, but they do not apply to professional counseling and guidance. Students also feel that teachers do not adapt to their cognitive perceptions and do not take into account their opinions. The organization of the teaching process is modular, and this can cause difficulties for the students, the amount of information being very large, in a very short time.

These results determine a rethinking of the didactic process in order to adapt to the students' needs and to ensure an output that allows easy insertion into the labor market.

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- \*\*\*Decision no. 915 of 14th December 2017 amending the annex to Government Decision no. 1418/2006 for the approval of the External Evaluation Methodology, the standards, the reference standards and the list of performance indicators of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

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