

## STUDY ON THE PERCEPTION OF THE EMPLOYEES RELATED TO THE TRAINING OF FUTURE GRADUATES

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*At present, taking into consideration the economic situation and the aspects related to the social life, the students need permanent guarantees that the standards of their diplomas are acknowledged by the future employees at a national and international level, and the employees need guarantees that they may choose from well trained future employees. Among the important elements of quality assurance, the feedback of the employers or potential employers – respectively of the business market, represents a strategic element of a competitive and efficient quality assurance system of any university.*

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Higher education is a service offered to society, which has a very strong impact on the personal development of individuals, as “it offers them the chance of being more freestanding, to have increased social mobility, professional and international mobility, increased incomes and increased empowerment”<sup>503</sup>.

The permanent increase of the population who has access to this service (at least at the level of year 2008) has created higher expectations, increased demands of the beneficiaries of these services. Although several young people do not succeed in making the necessary effort to graduate, the profit brought by this kind of education is clear and unanimously recognized in the Romanian society, so that we may uphold that all Romanian competitive universities are engaged in lifelong learning.

At present, taking into consideration the economic situation and the aspects related to the social life, the students need permanent guarantees that the standards of their diplomas are acknowledged by the future employees at a national and international level, and the employees need guarantees that they may choose from well trained future employees.

There is a common belief, presented in the Standards and Guides for Quality Assurance<sup>504</sup>, that the formal policies and procedures, prepared by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) together with the Ministry of Education and the management of universities, offer a framework where each higher education institution may develop and monitor the efficiency of its own system of quality assurance, and thus, the superior quality of the educational services offered. By the development and implementation of its own strategies, policies and quality procedures, the higher education institution engages explicitly to promote quality in all its activities.

Among the important elements of quality assurance, the feedback of the employers or potential employers – respectively of the business market, represents a strategic element of a competitive and efficient quality assurance system of any university.

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<sup>503</sup> POPESCU Sorin, Constatin Brătianu coord., Gabriela Atanasiu, Costache Rusu, Constantin Oprean, Adrian Curaj, Ștefan Buzărnescu, Ioan Pânzaru, Ghidul *calității în învățământul superior*, Editura Universității din București, 2004, pag.7.

<sup>504</sup> [www.aracis.ro](http://www.aracis.ro)

In this context, according to Law no. 258/ 2007<sup>505</sup> on the practical training of pupils and students, Order no. 3955 / 2008 on the approval of the general organization framework of the practical training strategies of the bachelor and master degree programs, of the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, and the Regulation<sup>506</sup> on the professional training of the students of “Dimitrie Cantemir” Christian University, Bucharest, the Faculty of Economic Sciences of Cluj – Napoca has made a study on the perception of the employers related to the training of the students. This study is a preliminary test of the questionnaire which the faculty wants to use in the future in all its collaborations with the practice partners.

Based on an evaluation questionnaire for the interns, prepared at the faculty, the tutors (persons appointed by the practical training partner, who assure the observance of the training conditions and the knowledge of professional abilities planned for the period of the practical training), and the members of the department that prepares the practical training were asked to complete these questionnaires. We have interpreted the answers in this paper.

We have to mention that the staff of our training partners for 2009 – 2010 academic year, for the students of the Economy of Commerce, Tourism and Services are persons from the sales and marketing departments of various companies, performing commercial activities, in Cluj – Napoca:

No.	Practical training partner	Department	Number of employees in the department	Number of interns	Number of processed questionnaires
	Company 1	Sales department	5	3	15
		Marketing department	3	2	6
	Company 2	Sales department	4	4	16
		Marketing department	1	1	1
	Company 3	Sales department	3	3	9
	Company 4	Sales department	4	4	16
<b>Total</b>			<b>20</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>63</b>

The questionnaire includes several questions. The respondent has evaluated each intern practicing in his department, using an evaluation scale from 1 to 5, where 5 means “very well” and 1 means “insufficient”.

#### **Respondents’ answers related to the evaluation indicators of the interns**

Evaluation Indicators	Number of answers					Total
	Very well (5)	Well (4)	Indifferent(3)	Sufficient (2)	Insufficient (1)	
<b><i>Work quality</i></b>						
- understanding	9	29	4	18	3	63
- speed and amount of work performed	11	27	9	9	7	63
- achievement of the tasks given	17	19	5	12	10	63
<b><i>Reasoning</i></b>						
- capacity to make logic and viable decisions	20	25	5	9	4	63
- capacity to act independently or to	21	24	6	9	4	63

<sup>505</sup> [www.edu.ro](http://www.edu.ro)

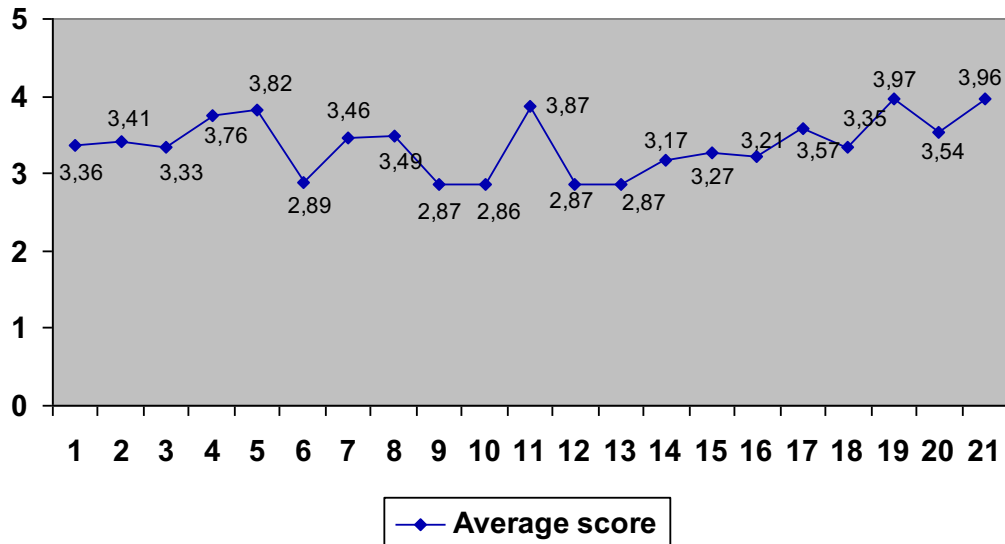
<sup>506</sup> [www.ucdc.ro](http://www.ucdc.ro)

ask for help						
<b><i>Creativity</i></b>						
- capacity to suggest viable alternatives	7	16	9	25	6	63
- capacity to apply efficiently their knowledge and abilities	10	18	28	5	2	
<b><i>Problem solving</i></b>						
- capacity to identify, analyze and solve the problems	18	21	5	12	7	63
- capacity to analyze the impact of decisions before performing them	9	14	6	28	6	63
<b><i>Planning and organization abilities</i></b>						
- capacity to prioritize	6	17	8	26	6	63
- capacity to observe the planned program	21	25	6	10	1	63
- capacity to manage time in an efficient manner	9	14	6	28	6	63
<b><i>Communication and interpersonal abilities</i></b>						
- capacity to express correctly and concise, both orally and in writing	5	19	6	29	4	63
- capacity to be a good listener	11	19	5	26	2	63
- capacity to interact tactfully when he has contact with internal and external staff	12	18	10	21	2	63
- capacity to adapt to the team work, to collaborate to the achievement of the tasks	12	17	6	28	0	63
- punctuality	21	19	5	11	7	63
- capacity to evaluate critically his own activity and to be impartial	15	20	8	13	6	63
- capacity to maintain confidentiality and to be trustworthy	27	19	6	10	1	63
<b><i>Professional curiosity and wish to learn</i></b>	19	21	5	11	7	63
<b><i>Ability to use the logistics (computer, telephone, etc.)</i></b>	26	21	5	9	3	63

### Respondents' evaluation

	Evaluation indicators	Average score
	<b><i>Work quality</i></b>	
1	- understanding	3,36
2	- speed and amount of work performed	3,41
3	- achievement of the tasks given	3,33
	<b><i>Reasoning</i></b>	
4	- capacity to make logic and viable decisions	3,76
5	- capacity to act independently or to ask for help	3,82
	<b><i>Creativity</i></b>	
6	- capacity to suggest viable alternatives	2,89
7	- capacity to apply efficiently the knowledge and abilities	3,46
	<b><i>Problem solving</i></b>	
8	- capacity to identify, analyze and solve the problems	3,49
9	- capacity to analyze the impact of decisions before performing them	2,87
	<b><i>Planning and organization abilities</i></b>	
10	- capacity to prioritize	2,86
11	- capacity to observe the planned program	3,87
12	- capacity to manage time in an efficient manner	2,87
	<b><i>Communication and interpersonal abilities</i></b>	
13	- capacity to express correctly and concise, both orally and in writing	2,87
14	- capacity to be a good listener	3,17
15	- capacity to interact tactfully when he has contact with internal and external staff	3,27
16	- capacity to adapt to the team work, to collaborate to the achievement of the tasks	3,21
17	- punctuality	3,57
18	- capacity to evaluate critically his own activity and to be impartial	3,35
19	- capacity to maintain confidentiality and to be trustworthy	3,97
20	<b><i>Professional curiosity and wish to learn</i></b>	3,54
21	<b><i>Ability to use the logistics (computer, telephone, etc.)</i></b>	3,96

If we make a graph of the results obtained, respectively the average value of the marks, taking into consideration that the maximum mark that may be obtained for each indicator is 5, we have the following information:



– the lowest average score is for the *“capacity to prioritize”* – 2,86 (when 41,26% of the respondents gave the mark “satisfactory” for this indicator). If this result is correlated with the very low score of the indicator *“capacity to manage time in an efficient manner”* – 2,86, we have an unfavorable image of the element “Organization and planning activities”; namely, the future graduates have problems with organizing activities. The majority of these students are not capable to identify the priorities and manage their time to fulfill their tasks. We may ask the question if this result is a signal related to the way the students are “fed” with theoretical elements, without having enough time to practice; or if there is a deficiency in the relationship with the practical training tutor, who cannot send the adequate information to the student. We think that both situations may be improved if in the future we lay stress on teaching strategies focusing on the student, on creating learning methods focusing on the student and if we renounce partly to the classical teaching method, which concentrates especially on giving information.

– we think that the low result obtained for the indicator *“capacity to express correctly and concise, both orally and in writing”* – 2,87 is the unfavorable effect of the examination methods, as we know that in the higher education system, the written examination is the most used examination form. As if it weren’t bad enough this way, we have gone further and generalized the level of the bachelor programs, and the students have multiple choice forms to complete for their exams. If for the written exams, where the students have to present the exam subjects, we have the possibility to see at least how they think, how they express in writing, at present, using the multiple choice tests and eliminating almost totally the oral examination, based on the hours spent by the students in front of the computer – we have “stolen” from them this minimum possibility to express themselves! We ask ourselves if this is a strong signal that the examination methods should be re-thought for the benefit of the student, by choosing methods focusing on the student, as we have already mentioned: case studies and role – playing games during the seminars, respectively oral examination or based on projects for semester examinations. Is this the result of the pressure made by universities that register many students, without being able to offer them the necessary conditions for a quality education service?

– as related to the result obtained for the indicator *“capacity to maintain the confidentiality and to be trustworthy”* – 3,97, we think that this is the result of the confidentiality conventions that the interns have signed with some practical training partners, by which they have undertaken to observe the confidentiality of commercial information they would find during their practical training;

– it is important to notice the results obtained for the indicators “capacity to act independently and to ask for help”, respectively “capacity to observe the planned program”, which make us see better the employment possibilities of the future graduates.

We think that this is a present-day subject. The partnership between universities and business environment is only the beginning, because as we try to understand each element that may connect the university and business environments, we find more and more questions that we have to answer as quickly as possible.

Analyzing the first information, we think that the persons in charge with the practical training of the students, together with the practical training partners, permanently involving the students and all academic staff, have to be responsible for these practical trainings and analyze the following aspects:

- alternatives of the teaching strategies focusing on involving the students in the teaching process, in order to offer them the possibility to improve their communication abilities, both in writing and especially the oral communication;
- involvement of the Student Career Orientation and Counseling Centre, which operates at each university and / or faculty and which should concentrate its whole activity according to the needs identified as a result of these studies, and at the same time to be a collaborator of the faculty in its relation with the business environment;
- re-thinking of the examination forms and change of the written examinations with other forms of examinations as projects, test based on oral examinations;
- organization of round table discussions where the representatives of the universities should discuss the best practices in the field of these strategic partnerships between the universities and the business environment;
- organization of periodic meetings with the representatives of the business environment to identify the contradictions between the training of the future graduates and the requirements of the employers, as related to their training for their profession;
- determination of performance indicators for the students’ professional activity, correlated to the results of these permanent studies of the employers’ perception, in order to obtain a quality educational service.

We think that within the context of the present reform of the Romanian education, the attention of the Romanian universities for the practical research activity, respectively for the students’ practical training, both at the bachelor and master degree programs (or maybe especially at these levels) should represent an important part of the process for the adaptation of the institutional evaluation procedures to the European standards for higher education.

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