

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION CURRICULA IN CONFORMITY WITH EUROPEAN QUALITY

Editors:
Juraj Nemec
David Špaček
Daniel Klimovský

NISPAcee
The Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration
in Central and Eastern Europe

**Methodological Framework
for Developing
Public Administration Curricula
in Conformity with European Quality**

Editors:
Juraj Nemec
David Špaček
Daniel Klimovský

2021

Copyright © 2021 by NISPAcee

The Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration
in Central and Eastern Europe

Methodological Framework for Developing Public Administration Curricula in Conformity with European Quality

Editors:

Juraj Nemeč (Masaryk University Brno), David Špaček (Masaryk University Brno), Daniel Klimovský (NISPAcee Bratislava)

Main contributors:

Taco Brandsen (EAPAA), Juraj Nemeč (Masaryk University Brno), David Špaček (Masaryk University Brno), Éva Kovács (Corvinus University Budapest), Katarína Vitališová (Matej Bel University Banská Bystrica), Soňa Čapková (Matej Bel University Banská Bystrica), Primož Pevčin (Ljubljana University), Bogdan Moldovan (Babes-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca), Ludmila Gajdošová (NISPAcee Bratislava)

Other contributors and reviewers:

Participants of the virtual project workshop held on September 16–18, 2020 and all project partners.

Coordinators:

Ludmila Gajdošová (NISPAcee Bratislava), Daniel Klimovský (NISPAcee Bratislava)

Published by:

NISPAcee Press
Polianky 5
841 01 Bratislava 42
Slovak Republic
e-mail: nispa@nispa.org
<http://www.nispa.org>

ISBN 978-80-99939-05-0

Note:

This publication represents the Intellectual Output number 6 of the project:

Public Administration Education Quality Enhancement (PAQUALITY), Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership KA203, No – 2018-1-SK01-KA203-046330, Slovakia, 09/2018-08/2021, co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. More information about the project and its outputs are published on the project portal: www.nispa.org/paquality

The report expresses an opinion of the authors and contributors. The EC doesn't have responsibility for any utilization of included information.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	7
1. EAPAA procedures and criteria and their applicability in the CEE region	9
1.1 Types of evaluation	9
1.2 An overview on the accreditation process.....	10
1.3 The necessary criteria for successful accreditation.....	12
2. Experience of the project partners with EAPAA accreditation	15
2.1 Masaryk University.....	15
2.2 Corvinus University.....	18
2.3 Matej Bel University.....	20
2.4 University of Ljubljana	25
2.5 Babes-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca.....	30
3. Opportunities and challenges for EAPAA evaluation in the new member states	32
3.1 Challenges related to the content of the EAPAA criteria.....	32
3.2 Challenges related to EAPAA procedures.....	34
4. Recommendation for developing public administration curricula in the new member states in conformity with European quality.....	36
List of abbreviations.....	38
References.....	40

Introduction

The PAQUALITY project aims to support changes in the area of public administration (PA) education in conformity with the Bologna objectives, mainly:

- Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies, and
- Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regard to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research, which have not yet been fully applied in the area of public administration high education in Slovakia and the new EU states.

Higher education public administration programmes vary greatly, especially in the central and eastern European member countries of the EU – in the new EU member states (NMS). From this perspective it is highly relevant to facilitate a quality assurance mechanism which would ensure not only comparable quality of education processes, but also comparable outcomes of the education (e.g. quality of graduates, their knowledge, skills and experience) in these countries.

In addition, the project aims at tackling skills gaps and mismatches in the area of public administration high education through designing and developing curricula that meet the learning needs of students which are relevant to the labour market and societal needs, including through better use of open and on-line, work based, multi-disciplinary learning and new quality assessment criteria. Simultaneously, with this priority in view, promoting and rewarding excellence in teaching and skills development, training of academics in new and innovative pedagogical approaches, new curriculum design approaches and sharing of good practices through collaborative platforms, will be at the centre of the project.

The main objectives of this intellectual output is to explore opportunities and challenges for EAPAA evaluation of PA programmes in the new member states of the EU with special focus on the PA programmes in Slovakia and other participating countries.

The intellectual output was prepared within the PAQUALITY project, based on the workshop that was organised within the programme online in September

2020. Besides the grant holder (NISPAcee), representatives from six other partners took part in the workshop.

The workshop focused on current PA curricula of participating countries and their conformity with European quality. It concentrated on the following areas:

- Review of present experiences with accreditation processes and readiness of other universities in the CEE region concerning the applicability of European standards on PA programmes.
- Applicability of European accreditation and its criteria in the CEE region (with a focus on PA programmes).
- Challenges and methodological recommendations for developing PA curricula and improving of PA programmes.

Based on the input obtained during the workshop this intellectual output focuses on the following topics and is structured accordingly:

1. Review of the EAPAA procedures and criteria in terms of their applicability in the CEE region.
2. Case studies of good practice.
3. Opportunities and challenges for EAPAA evaluation in the new member states with special focus on the public administration programmes in Slovakia.
4. Recommendation for developing public administration curricula in the new member states in conformity with European quality.

1. EAPAA procedures and criteria and their applicability in the CEE region

European Association for Public Administration Accreditation (EAPAA) is a discipline-specific accreditation agency, active since 1999. EAPAA's core mission is the accreditation of BA/MA programmes in higher education across Europe and neighbouring regions. (It has no ambition to go global).

The education programmes under the accreditation process can generally be clustered into strong ones, where accreditation/certification is not in doubt; those that minimally meet the requirements, and those which are insufficient, and which will receive either a conditional decision or an outright rejection.

Given the increase of evaluated programmes in the CEE region, there has also been a greater number of conditional decisions, where accreditation or certification was not awarded immediately, but only after additional steps were demonstrably taken to meet the requirements.

Based on the recent experience of EAPAA, rejections are relatively rare because of self-selection: programmes that are uncertain of meeting the requirements usually refrain from applying in the first place. This is probably because (unlike, for instance, in the field of business schools) the market is so international and accreditation so widespread that being accredited is considered essential, due to both market and social pressure. There are definitive benefits to EAPAA evaluation, both in terms of prestige and quality improvement, but given the mostly national focus of public administration programmes, avoiding external evaluation is still relatively painless.

Nevertheless, EAPAA is by now well-established in the CEE region. At the time of writing (November, 2020), 22 programmes had been accredited or certified, spread across nine countries, with numbers gradually rising over time. CEE countries have some of the best and worst PA programmes in Europe. Nowadays, internal diversity within countries tends to be greater than the differences between countries.

1.1 Types of evaluation

There are now three types of EAPAA evaluation:

- **Accreditation** for first/second cycle academic degree programmes: this is the traditional evaluation with which EAPAA began in 1999.
- **Certification** was introduced in 2016 and is meant for programmes that are more practical and less academic in nature. These could either be professional training programmes or programmes that aspire to be internationally recognised as an academic degree programme, but are at an earlier stage of development.
- **PhD programme accreditation** began in 2019 and is meant for training programmes for doctoral students.

The key difference between these three types of evaluation concerns the role of research. Good-quality teaching can (and should) be the standard for any programme, but academic programmes are distinctive in that they are research-based; in other words, the content of the programme should reflect state-of-the-art research. To some extent, all teaching should reflect what we know about public administration (i.e. not based solely on ideology, or on outdated knowledge), but research-based teaching must be at the frontline of our knowledge.

This should be reflected in several ways. For a start, teaching staff should have demonstrable research credentials such as projects, publications and academic conference presentations. There should also be evidence that insights from research are integrated into the teaching. Finally, students should learn to adopt a critical researcher's perspective through methodology courses (for example, how to identify misleading statistics). For PhD programmes, this is all weighted even more strongly, since these are meant to train future researchers. Here there are additional requirements, such as a strong emphasis on research methods.

This is, of course, a gradual distinction. For instance, even in very strong academic programmes, not all teaching staff are highly regarded researchers. What matters is that, adding everything up, there is a convincing case that the programme is sufficiently connected to state-of-the-art research.

1.2 An overview on the accreditation process

The process of accreditation/certification consists of standard steps with their time and contents-related logic – Table 1.

Table 1
Most important steps of the accreditation process

Step	Time and contents logics
The application is submitted by the programme.	Programmes can apply for accreditation at any time of the year. However, since the EAPAA Accreditation Committee meets only once a year, in early September, it is effective to submit an application in winter.
Eligibility check: is the programme part of the discipline of public administration (and not merely a specialisation of another discipline)?	Delivered swiftly by the EAPAA after receiving the application.
A self-evaluation report is submitted by the programme, according to a specified format.	Programmes that prefer a quick decision should aim to deliver their self-evaluation report in the first months of the calendar year.
Desk evaluation of the report; possibly a request for further information.	Delivered swiftly by the EAPAA after receiving the report.
A site visit by a committee of experts, usually lasting two days.	Late spring, very early summer.
Check of the site visit team's report by the programme, with the opportunity to respond and correct factual errors.	Normally approximately one month after the site visit.
Evaluation and decision by the Accreditation Committee, based on the site visit report.	The meeting is normally organised in conjunction with the EGPA conference.
Publication of the report on EAPAA's website.	Soon after the decision.

The formal decision on accreditation/certification is taken by the Accreditation Committee. The site visit team is on a fact-finding mission and is not allowed to pass judgment on whether the programme should be accredited/certified, although it can evaluate separate aspects of the programme. The programme of the site visit includes standard elements, which can be reorganised according to the situation on the spot – see Table 2 as an example.

Table 2

Example of the schedule: Site Visit Matej Bel University 20 and 21 November 2018

Day before (19 November 2018)	
18.00	The university car picks up the team members at Vienna airport
18.00–21.00	Travelling to Banska Bystrica
21.00	Accommodation in hotel Kuria, dinner
Day 1: (20 November 2018)	
08.15–09.10	Meeting of the Site Visit Team to prepare visit
09.30–10.45	Meeting with the programme management
10.50–11.20	Meeting with the Dean of the faculty
11.30–12.30	Meeting with staff teaching common core courses
12.30–13.45	Lunch (with staff and management)
14.00–14.50	Meeting with students (8 students representing each curriculum year)
14.55–15.45	Meeting with employers (representatives of employers located in Banska Bystrica and surroundings)
15.50–16.50	Meeting with graduates
Evening	
Dinner and Site Visit Team meeting (team members only)	
Day 2: (21 November 2018)	
09.30–10.15	Second meeting with the programme management
10.15–11.15	Examination of copies of theses and term papers of students
11.15–11.45	Meeting with university and faculty senates chairmen
12.00–12.45	Visit to computer facilities, library, classrooms, PR office, AIESEC, etc.
13.00–14.00	Lunch (team members only) to arrive at a consensus about the site visit evaluation and to outline the draft Site Visit Team Report
14.00–15.00	Final presentation to programme representatives
Before leaving, the site visit team agrees on how and when to write the report.	
Day after (November 22)	
07.00	Leaving Banska Bystrica and travelling to Vienna Airport

In terms of workload, the self-evaluation report is usually the hardest part. In recent years, EAPAA has reduced the length of the report, but programmes should still leave ample time to prepare it.

1.3 The necessary criteria for successful accreditation

The EAPAA criteria are outlined in detail in the self-evaluation report guide, but the most important ones are the following (in order according to the expected structure of the self-evaluation report; not according to their importance):

- Mission
- Curriculum

- Teaching methods
- Assessment
- Links with practice
- Student performance
- Self-monitoring
- Staff quality
- Governance

Each of these should be sufficient if the programme is to pass the evaluation. On the basis of prior experience, a number of potential pitfalls can be identified.

The mission of the programme should indicate what it wants students to know or be at the end of their studies, and what it regards as its role towards society. Such mission statements, though they may, of course, be ambitious, should not be too fuzzy or too grand. They should also pay attention to democratic or ethical values.

The curriculum should be coherent, balanced and linked to the mission. There is not one template for a good curriculum, but it should be internally logical. Strong programmes introduce elements from different academic disciplines. It is perfectly acceptable to have one dominant discipline (say economics or management), but students should be exposed to different perspectives. Also, in academic degree programmes especially, attention should be paid to research methodology and ethics.

Teaching methods should preferably be varied. For instance, there should be more than classical lectures. Teaching should encourage students to think analytically and critically, not simply to absorb descriptive texts. The content should reflect the state-of-the-art of our knowledge on public administration. This will be evident, for example, from reading materials, which should preferably include recent and international work.

Assessment, likewise, should be varied. If the mission notes that students should acquire specific skills or competences, then the methods for assessment should reflect that. The criteria for evaluating students should be clear and transparent.

Links with practice concerns the extent to which students are introduced to the practice of public administration, for instance, through internships and guest lectures. If students are required to take an internship and are coached well during the process, this is appreciated.

Student performance should reflect what the programme aims to achieve. Individual students can always fail, but if, on aggregate, most students do not meet the formal requirements (or if all students always meet the requirements) then it becomes an issue. If large numbers of students drop out or exceed the standard time period for completing the programme, this may be an indication of a problem, for

instance, poor supervision. But this is not necessarily the case, because the delay might be caused by factors external to the programme (for instance, students may have an incentive to delay graduation, or may use the additional time to take extra courses). In any case, it is up to the programme management to offer a convincing explanation. A very basic test of the competence of programme management is whether they collect the data to track student performance and whether they know the story behind the data.

Self-monitoring concerns the extent to which programmes assess their own performance. The most important question is not whether programmes show a perfect performance on all indicators, but whether those responsible can sufficiently assess the situation and their potential to change it. For instance, strong programmes can demonstrate how they receive feedback (e.g. through anonymous surveys) and how they act upon it. Self-criticism and changes to the programme can be evidence that the programme is serious about improving its performance.

Staff quality relates to both teaching and research qualifications. Preferably, faculty members should have demonstrable educational qualifications, for example, by having taken courses in didactics. In academic degree programmes, it is important that they conduct research of their own and publish it. Attendance at conferences such as NISPAcee's is evidence that they are in touch with the latest academic developments.

Governance is judged primarily on the basis of two criteria. The first is whether the independence of the programme management is sufficiently guaranteed. Clearly, the standards for academic freedom vary by country, but the programme management should have sufficient control over the programme. A second issue is continuity. An issue that sometimes arises is that too much responsibility rests on one or a few persons, without backup. The continuity of the programme should not be overly dependent on the health and well-being of a couple of individuals.

2. Experience of the project partners with EAPAA accreditation

2.1 Masaryk University

As was already presented in other PAQUALITY project's outputs (especially in those related to the intellectual outputs 1 and 3 – see https://www.nispa.org/paquality.php?proj_id=16&sid=1887), Masaryk University has experienced two rounds of EAPAA accreditation.

The first round of EAPAA accreditation was initiated by the application of accreditation submitted in November 2010. The main aim was to obtain international feedback on the full-time programme Public Economy and its slightly modified version – the programme Public Economy and Administration that was being delivered in a combined form of study. Another motive was to be the first programme, in Czechia that is, potentially accredited by the EAPAA. It was also anticipated that during the process, experiences of one of the faculty members who was involved in EAPAA accreditation (as a member of EAPAA as well as a member of faculty core of another programme that underwent the EAPAA accreditation) would be used. Based on the self-evaluation report, the site visit, additional information and the second Site Visit, the Accreditation Committee eventually granted, in 2014, unconditional accreditation of the two programmes until 2019.

The second round of the EAPAA accreditation was initiated by the application for accreditation of the two MA programmes – PEaA and MFTAP – submitted to the EAPAA in December 2018. It was decided that the PEaA programme would undergo reaccreditation and the MFTAP would strive for the first accreditation. The motive was to use the possibility that two programmes may be accredited for the same fee. Also, the feedback received during the first time was considered to be rather valuable and facilitating also for internal discussions about developments of the programmes within the faculty and the university. During the second round, experiences from the first round were utilised relating to the preparation of the self-evaluation report and organisation of the site visit. The EAPAA Accreditation Committee decided in September 2019 that the PEaA programme could be re-accredited (the programme received accreditation until 2025) and the MFTAP programme could be conditionally accredited for three years (until 2022).

Based on the two rounds of the EAPAA accreditation of the MU's programmes, valuable experiences were received. In particular, those criteria which are in italics in the table below were quite challenging for our programmes. The table indicates that the programmes did not struggle with the applicability criteria, but had to face challenges posed by the requirements of EAPAA's standards. It is logical that challenges were more apparent and challenging during the first round of evaluation. However, some of them were also somewhat relevant during the second round.

Table 3
EAPAA accreditation and experiences of the MU

Applicability/Eligibility	'STANDARDS'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Academic PA degree programme (“to prepare persons for academic level roles in the PS or academic PA teaching/research positions”) ● Geography (CoE or CIS countries) ● Programme longevity (at least two cohorts of graduates) ● Programme variants and locations (sufficient description of variants/locations, if relevant) 	<p>Domain of PA</p> <p>Mission-based accreditation <i>clear educational philosophy (including competencies/learning outcomes), mission and strategic management elements</i></p> <p>Level</p> <p>Relation to practice and internships <i>(practical skills, internship planning, intensive cooperation with practice)</i></p> <p>Curriculum <i>(multidisciplinarity, studying materials, core vs. electives/specialisations, research methods + entry requirements, intake, results)</i></p> <p>Quality improvement and innovation <i>(DATA, continuous assessment)</i></p> <p>Student assessment</p> <p>Programme jurisdiction <i>(faculty core vs. programme core)</i></p> <p>Faculty <i>(sufficient, internationalisation – research and its outputs)</i></p> <p>Admission of students <i>(policy, standards, gender equality)</i></p> <p>Supportive services and facilities <i>(including accommodation, student attrition)</i></p> <p>Student services</p> <p>Public relations <i>(rather important in case of a low number of students)</i></p>

Based on the experiences, the following recommendations can be made for programmes which would like to undergo EAPAA’s evaluation:

- Explain clearly why the programme complies with the domain of PA criterion (with regards to the mission, learning outcomes/graduate profile and content of your programme).
- Bear in mind that your programme should have a clear mission and a clear educational philosophy (including specification of expected competencies/learning outcomes) and its management should contain some related strategic management elements, including evaluation of intake, student attrition and results (see points below).
- You should provide evidence that your programme is trying to do something with relation to practice. The role of internships and their planning is quite crucial, but it is also about ways in which students are trained in practical skills and how the programme cooperates with practice.

- Your curriculum should be sufficiently multidisciplinary. This is also required in the PA-domain criterion. This also brings some requirements on study materials (use of internationally recognised literature and up-to-date knowledge on what is going on in relevant areas), balance between core and elective courses or specialisations, research methods (programmes should provide evidence that they trained students in research methods + entry requirements, intake, results).
- Quality of programmes should be improved continuously based on data/evidence. The EAPAA standards clearly require continuous programme assessment, including student assessment and programmes may struggle with sufficiency of data. Usually data exist, but they may be fragmented across various departments and it may take time to consolidate them for the preparation of the self-evaluation report etc.
- The core faculty involved in the programme should be sufficient and comply with requirements on internationalisation (in terms of its structure, research and research outputs).
- Taking into account demographic developments, some programmes have to be fairly active in building and managing public relations (especially those that cope with a rather small number of students).

The programmes that were evaluated learned especially the following lessons:

- **Attention should be paid to the self-evaluation report in terms of people involved and its content.** The core team that is involved in the preparation of the self-evaluation report should contain about three people who know the programme well. The text of the self-evaluation report should be clear and focused. It is also good to have its English corrected. In the case of questions, it is strongly recommended to consult the EAPAA's office by email.
- In the self-evaluation report and discussions with members of the site visit team representatives of **the programme should consider not only strengths, but also weaknesses.** Members of the site visit team are highly experienced evaluators and it is better to be honest with them.
- It is also strongly recommended **to work with the staff intensely involved in the programme during the preparation of the self-evaluation report, prior to the site visit and after the site visit.**
- It is strongly advised **to be prepared for the site visit**, since the site visit report is crucial input for the final decision of the EAPAA Accreditation Committee. Programmes should be prepared beforehand and also on the spot (in terms of people involved, organisation of space, equipment and time, catering etc.).
- Although it may not always be pleasant, it is valuable **to listen to feedback from peers**, and members of the site visit team from abroad. It is strongly recom-

mended to programmes not to be afraid **and to discuss** with the site visit team on the spot.

- Programme management should **read the draft site visit report carefully**. The draft is sent by the site visit team for revisions (of potential factual mistakes) and programme management can provide comments. It is strongly advised to comment only on things that were discussed during the site visit.
- In case of conditional accreditation, programmes are required to inform EAPAA on a continuous basis. So someone should bear this in mind.
- Some valuable information can also be found in EAPAA's decisions published on its web pages (<https://www.eapaa.eu/accredited-programmes>) because they outline the strengths and weaknesses of the programmes that were evaluated.

2.2 Corvinus University

To better understand the major challenges of Hungarian PA programmes in Hungary we should grasp the traditional approach and interpretation of public administration as a discipline. Traditionally the PA is a (sub-) discipline understood as a subfield of law study – administrative law – which relies heavily on theories from the academic discipline of law. Due to this historically embedded nature of PA studies, the first university programmes preparing and enabling students for careers in public administration were traditionally heavily over-dominated by subjects on law, especially administrative law.

In this context the MA programme in Public Policy and Management at the Corvinus University of Budapest (and its predecessor institution) can be seen as a “trendsetter” organisation, because it was the first multidisciplinary MA level PA programme launched in 1992. Until the Bologna reform, this was the only instance of its kind. The programme has been significantly shaped by Western and US influence and personal participation from the outset.

In 2005, as a result of the so-called “Bologna reform”, bachelor and master programmes replaced the traditional, single stream college or university programmes. The majority of new bachelor programmes began in 2006 and master programmes (KGKP in the Hungarian language programme and PUMA in the English language programme) in 2009. Each of them underwent an evaluation process.

Both KGKP and PUMA programmes are master level programmes. Graduates receive a degree with the title: “Economist in Public Policy and Management”. The title reflects the fact that the programmes have a multidisciplinary character and are officially classified within the academic field of Economic Sciences. Building on Economics, Management Sciences, Law, Political Science, Public Administration and Public Policy (Analysis), the programme offers comprehensive, genuine multi- and inter-disciplinary education for graduates who will occupy high positions in

government, public service, international organisations, NGOs or in private companies in highly regulated industries.

The KGKP programme (the Hungarian language version) was accredited in 2012 by the EAPAA. In 2019 this programme was re-accredited for a normal accreditation period of seven years.

The PUMA programme was accredited by EAPAA for the first time, for a normal period of seven years in 2019.

The programmes that were evaluated especially learned from the following lessons:

- **The importance of investing in creating a clear vision which is not the same as the educational goal:** We made several written and personal rounds of communication in order to re-work our strategic vision and mission. We recognised the importance of a clear, “bigger picture” vision that provides a gathering point, or common understanding and helps to unify the staff into a team that is organised, focused, and working together to contribute to the vision. However, this has proven to be more difficult than anticipated, as in the meantime (since the previous EAPAA accreditation in 2012) no major strategic review has taken place. During this period, however, the programme environment and key operational features of the programme have changed substantially (including, for example, the composition of the student intake and the intended learning outcomes and, to some extent, the curricula of the English language programme). There were several meetings with key faculty of other departments playing a role in the provision of the programme. Such meetings and discussions did not happen in a structured and focused manner in the past. Placing this communication on a structured footing helped the academic staff to gain new insights into their own, as well as each others’ activities, problems faced, and views of the programme.
- **The importance of greater involvement of external stakeholders (employers, alumni, or others):** The external stakeholders have an important role to play in the accreditation process because they are involved in the site visit and interviews. To maintain a permanent and good relationship with these actors makes it easier during the accreditation process to explain the concept of accreditation, the foreseeable questions and concepts. But these in-depth communications also help the programme manager to shape the programme better and meet the needs of potential employees.
- In our case the programme management has already had in-depth communication with many of its external constituencies at the outset of the self-evaluation (a separate mention of the external advisory boards – both international and domestic – is in order here).

- **Linking curriculum design and oversight to intended learning outcomes:** In our case, this is now implemented during the accreditation process. To improve education quality, special efforts are required to align the intended curriculum (the official guidance), the implemented curriculum (what teachers and students actually do) and what students actually learn (outcomes). Effective curriculum is based on backward planning, which begins with the identification of the desired learning results (outcomes) and how these can be measured, and then determines the learning experiences, subjects and teaching methods that can lead to these outcomes.
- **Eliminating duplication and redundancies in the curriculum:** In the process of curriculum review we identified some gaps, as well as some overlaps, between certain curricular components. For example, ethical elements were better located, and this was the case with components dealing with, or related to, behavioural public policy and behavioural economics.
- **The importance of the linkage and cooperation between administrative and academic staff:** The role of administrative support staff has become more visible and permanent, and in some ways has gained additional importance. Links and interactions between administrative and academic aspects and actors became more expressed, accepted and permanent.

In the following, we summarise the main outcomes of the accreditation process in three areas:

- (1) Internal (programme level) effects: It had manifold effects on the programme itself. Due to the accreditation process and changes which have been started organically in the assessment system with more focus on the “learning outcomes-based curriculum” design, a discussion and precise revision were introduced on the thesis procedure and major steps were taken in order to standardise and define objective requirements and eligible criteria for thesis. This was important leverage for programme management vis-a-vis top management.
- (2) Market effects: Difficult to single out individual factors – EAPAA accreditation is part of a (much) bigger parcel. Impacts and impact mechanisms differ according to student characteristics – accreditation is meaningful only for a select subset of (“elite”) students.
- (3) Institutional level outcomes: It shows important effects. Successful accreditation enables us to cooperate in a more effective way in an international environment. We launch joint activities with international partners (indirect effects).

2.3 Matej Bel University

This text represents a brief case study summarising the experience of the Faculty of Economics, Matej Bel University in Slovakia with EAPAA certification. It is built on experience gained thanks to certification of two programmes – the bachelor study

programme Territorial Management and the master study programme Territorial Studies. This case study's ambition is to identify whether and how strategic learning – a main intended outcome of accreditation – takes place as an immediate result of the self-assessment process. Experience shows that such learning may take many different forms and may be the most visible outcome of the accreditation (next to the findings and recommendations of the site visit team).

The bachelor study programme **Territorial Management** is a multidisciplinary oriented study programme. The study programme is delivered as a full-time programme (3 years). It is aimed at the acquisition of specialist knowledge, competencies and skills necessary for posts in the middle levels of management in the public sector, public administration and regional development bodies.

The master study programme **Territorial Studies** is a multidisciplinary oriented study programme aimed at management of the territory and processes of changes taking place in a particular space. The study programme Territorial Studies deepens and extends the knowledge, skills and experience gained in the first stage of study and ensures the continuity of the Bachelor study programme Territorial Management. The study programme is delivered as a full-time programme (2 years).

Regarding the content, the study programmes are founded on the general requirements for the preparation of public administration, the public sector and non-profit economists and managers. Simultaneously, they reflect the structure of subjects forming the so-called “core” in the study field Public Administration and Regional Development set for national accreditation. At the Master level, students have an opportunity to choose from four blocks of courses. Both study programmes are based on multi-disciplinarity with the opportunity to react dynamically to the needs and requirements of the practice, using experience gained at home and abroad.

As indicated above, the programmes must reflect the required structure of subjects forming the so-called “core of knowledge” (national curriculum) in the study field Public Administration and Regional Development, within which these programmes were accredited. The national prescriptions for the curricula in the fields of study were very detailed. Overall, national regulation determines about 3/5ths of the whole curriculum. Thus, the scope for programmes to design their curricula is limited.

It should be mentioned that a previous programme (Public Economics and Public Administration, also at Bachelor and Master levels) at the same faculty has been accredited by EAPAA in 2005, but the programmes did not seek reaccreditation.

The sub-department responsible for the programmes began to consider seeking EAPA accreditation or certification again in the first half of 2017. After a few meetings of the responsible team, aimed at discussing the pros and cons, including

the discussion with a representative of EAPAA, who knows the university environment and education in public administration in the Slovak Republic, in October 2017 a final decision was taken to apply for certification of bachelor and master study programmes. Since then, collecting information, data and the supporting materials necessary for the development of the self-evaluation report has begun.

Here are the basic steps of the evaluation process, which took almost two years because it did not begin early enough to manage all steps before the Accreditation Committee meeting in September.

The application form for EAPAA certification for bachelor and master study programmes and lists of the courses in these programmes were sent to the EAPAA Secretariat on February 16, 2018. The main lesson for us was that **the preparation of a self-evaluation report was a demanding process, requiring engaging all relevant stakeholders and compiling information and data which were not previously registered.** By the end of July 2018, the report was completed and sent to the EAPAA Secretariat and the site visit team arrived in the autumn – from the evening of November 19, 2018 to the afternoon of November 21, 2018.

The draft site visit report was sent to the programme managers to react to the evaluations and recommendations by the site visit team through additional information or clarifications in the middle of January 2019. The comments and reaction to the report had been prepared and sent to EAPAA secretariat at the beginning of February 2019. In September 2019, the EAPAA Accreditation Committee decided to grant conditional certification to the programmes Bachelor of Territorial Management and Master of Territorial Studies for three years until September 30, 2022.

Although the committee recognised the formal restrictions to which the programmes are subject, it urged the programme management to strengthen the public administration elements in the courses, for instance, by adding further public administration courses and/or adding more public administration literature. This is regarded as a requirement for changing the conditional to full certification in three years' time. **The critical strengths and limits** that were identified by the site visit team include:

Strengths

- The programmes are well organised, administered and publicised. The number of contact hours is relatively high (about 22/week in average). The programme has an appropriate faculty nucleus.
- The programmes maintain intensive relations to 'practice', i.e. to public sector organisations in the country. Lecturers regularly invite practitioners, undertake site visits and excursions and encourage students to study practical issues in their term papers and theses. An orientation to practice as suitable for delivering a skill set for future civil servants or employees in the public sector (both

students and alumni of evaluated programmes seem to be satisfied with the programmes and with their relevance for practice).

- A large number of faculty members seem to be particularly committed to teaching; they adjust the courses to reflect recent developments, maintain contacts with practice and introduce their research experience into the courses.
- In both programmes, appropriate teaching methods and didactical concepts are used. Apart from lectures, seminars also play a role. Lecturers apply motivating didactical tools that also offer the opportunity to encounter practice of public sector organisations. A variety of used assessment methods is satisfied with the assessment system of the programmes.
- Students are constantly exposed to analytical approaches so they are driven to make judgments based on data and data analysis. The programmes are to be commended for the intensive teaching of research methodologies which equips graduates to apply such methods effectively when they work in the public service.

Limits

- Question on eligibility of the study programmes and programme curricula. The site visit team highlighted the strong economic dominance for a large part of study programmes, which is the result of traditions and of national and faculty curriculum regulations. The national accreditation criteria define 3/5ths of the study programmes curricula. There are 40 courses at BA level and of these, 23 courses deal with public administration (this is more than 56% and appears to be quite high as the BA level should provide a general type of education). There are 20 courses at MA level and, of them, 19 courses deal with public administration. However, courses on Political Science and Public Policy, Public Management and Law are missing.
- The mission statement and vision formulation of the study programmes are more general.
- The number of students enrolling for such programmes has declined over the last couple of years.
- The quality assurance system is not complete. In particular, the (formal) influence of students and the feedback regarding programme changes are not sufficiently developed. There is insufficient evidence that programme improvements are discussed with relevant stakeholders, mainly employers and graduates.

The EAPAA visit and certification process resulted in a critical organisational learning process especially in the following areas:

a. Improved communication within the education unit providing the programme

The preparation of the self-evaluation report as well as site visits within the process of certification was time and information consuming. The section of the department involved in the preparation met on a regular basis to develop the self-evaluation report. The processing of the report helped to create a database of all relevant data (e. g. employers, list of graduates) that can also be utilised in the process of national accreditation of study programmes.

b. Improved communication between programme management and the faculty/university leadership

There was no specific problem in the communication of programme management and the faculty leadership. The faculty management, as well as all service employees, were very helpful in the processing of the self-evaluation report. A potential improvement could be in the collection of data (publications, conferences, CVs, etc.) concerning teachers and researchers involved. Common collected and structured data in an information system could make it easier.

c. Improved communication with external stakeholders (employers, alumni, or others)

During the site visit in 2018, meetings took place between employers and alumni. These meetings were repeated because of the PAQUALITY project activities. All participants from the alumni and employers appreciated these activities which helped to improve the quality of study programmes and which were a valuable source of inspirational ideas on how to improve the curricula and strengthen the relationship in practice. They were willing to participate in the formation of a new version of study programmes in a new accreditation period. They will be included in the special advisory body for the development of study programmes in the next accreditation process.

d. New structural or procedural solutions supporting the above improvements

Because of the major changes in the accreditation process in the Slovak Republic, new quality bodies are forming at the university and faculty levels, but as yet there is no more specific information. These changes meet with some of the recommendations of the site visit team on the quality assurance system.

e. Changes to the curriculum planning process and structures

Within the strict national and faculty regulations for the programmes, the department has a reasonable de-facto programme jurisdiction and the implementation of any changes is quite difficult to realise. There will be a new space for changes within the new accreditation system which will be introduced in 2020. Course evaluations are standardised and used each year. Programme accomplishment is more or less

informal and “continuous” and the national accreditation plays an important role, as does the university’s review system. There could be improvements with regard to the involvement of students and the analysis and comparison of the annual course evaluations. A weakness in the feedback given to the students about their proposals for changes in the courses as well as regarding the evaluation of courses by students was identified.

However, the changes in the curriculum are limited by national regulations and the policy of the Faculty of Economics. Some possibilities were identified to include more courses with a deeper focus on public administration in the programmes. The present bachelor and master programme is more economic/public than economic oriented. As recommended during the site visit we should give more support to the public administration field embodied in the courses. From our experience, some courses can be seen as public administration oriented by the content, but a more suitable title is needed.

The process of the self-evaluation of study programmes, as well as an external evaluation by EAPAA, provided the programme’s managers with very constructive inputs. The evaluation report offers many recommendations and inspirations on how to develop the study programmes, to make them more interdisciplinary and internationally recognised in the future.

However, the future of the study programmes strongly influences the challenges at the national level. These include:

- the reform of the accreditation process of university education as well as the position of international accreditation within it;
- the reform of the public administration system and reflection of quickly changing practice needs in the study programme’s curricula and include the competences of graduates;
- the outflow of “quality” students abroad (CEE countries, western Europe) or their orientation on more prestigious study programmes;
- awareness of the importance of international recognition of HEIs.

2.4 University of Ljubljana

UL FPA has so far accredited three study programmes with EAPAA; one master level programme in 2008, and two bachelor level study programmes in 2011. Today, all those programmes still hold EAPAA accreditations, as they were re-accredited in 2015 and 2018 respectively.

The first programme that was accredited was the master level programme Administration – Public Sector Governance, which at that time was named only “Administration”. The process was initiated in 2007, as this corresponded to the existence of the first cohort of graduates of this newly developed Bologna-style study

programme. The main aim was to obtain both international feedback on the evaluation of the programme as well as to be potentially the first programme and institution in the country with an internationally accredited study programme in the domain of public administration. This corresponded to the ongoing activities of some other faculties within the UL, which began with similar endeavours in their domains. This reflects the idea that signalling was one of the main promoters to start with this endeavour, and this would be relevant for both domestic students, international students, as well as other stakeholders of the faculty (employers, university etc.). Based on the procedure, which included the preparation of a self-evaluation report and organisation of the site visit in 2008 the EAPAA accreditation committee granted unconditional accreditation for the programme for a period of seven years i.e. until 2015.

After the first accreditation was obtained, the faculty began planning to undertake similar activities for the two bachelor level study programmes, i.e. University Study Programme in Public Sector Governance (at that time labelled Administration) and the Higher Education Professional Study Programme in Administration. The existence of two programmes is a consequence of the binary structure of higher education in Slovenia, where there is a parallel existence of academic and professional bachelor level study programmes, which can both be run by the universities, but the entry requirements differentiate more or less based on secondary school graduates holding either a matura or vocational matura examination. The process was initiated in 2010, where the main motivation for this stemmed from the idea to have potentially all own programmes internationally accredited as well. The faculty at that time was running three study programmes on its own, whereas other study programmes were either internally interdisciplinary or joint international study programmes, so co-management was required. Thus, the motivation was to have holistic institutional coverage on the programmes holding international accreditation, as at the time one relevant issue was also related to the discussions on the criteria of financing, where the preposition was that international recognition and internationalisation would supposedly be one of the criteria for public financing of study programmes. Based on the procedure, which included the preparation of a self-evaluation report and organisation of the site visit, in 2011 the EAPAA accreditation committee granted unconditional accreditation for both programmes for a period of seven years that is until 2018.

Based on this, in the following years, the faculty decided to maintain all those accreditations, as the benefits from a stakeholder perspective were evident, and internationalisation became one of the internal university criteria for the additional distribution of more variable funds among faculties, so re-accreditations of the programmes took place in 2015 and 2018 respectively, and the faculty was granted another 7 years' accreditation for all these three programmes.

Table 4
EAPAA accreditation standards and specific challenges of the UL

STANDARD	CHALLENGE
Mission	Ensuring transparent procedure
Internship	Ensuring focus on PA organizations
Curriculum content	Ensuring “full” multi-disciplinarity
Student assessment	Ensuring feedback on thesis assessment
Diversity	Ensuring strategy attached

Based on all these accreditation processes, valuable experiences were received. As the eligibility and applicability were not issues at all, some challenges have arisen from the standards, as presented in the above Table. It is worth noting that the faculty did not have specific challenges with the applicability criteria for accreditation of programmes or with EAPAA’s standards. Some issues were pointed out which later on the faculty tried to amend, and which are of potential specific relevance for other programmes that would like to obtain EAPAA accreditation:

- It is important that there is a **clear mission and educational philosophy** of the programme. In the case of UL, this challenge emerged in two forms. First, it was recognised that programmes did not have specific missions, as this was somehow justified to be specifically covered by the faculty mission. Since the faculty is specialised solely in PA, this was recognised and accepted by the referees. Second, when the first evaluations of the bachelor level study programmes was taking place, considerable attention was given to the explanations of why two separate programmes exist, at a time when both were labelled “Administration”, but one was the professional programme and the other, academic programme. The existence of two is actually the consequence of the binary structure of the HE system in the country, where faculties can perform either academic or professional study programmes, the first one targeting mostly secondary school graduates holding matura, and the second one targeting secondary school graduates holding vocational matura. The challenge was also related to the question of whether two separate reports should be prepared, but it was later recommended by the EAPAA that a single report should be prepared focusing on explaining the distinctions. From the internal perspective, this has meant that most priority was given to distinguishing the contents of the programmes, an issue clearly and highly relevant for EAPAA. This has meant that in recent years major consideration was given to distinguish clearly the content, focus and purpose-based distinctions between the two programmes, so for both programmes major amendments were delivered, stressing the practical orientation of the professional programme and the governance orientation of the academic programme, which also resulted in the renaming of the programme (Public Sector Governance) and the introduction of a specific EU governance module.

- **Both a student-centred approach and quality assurance mechanisms** are important. The first evaluation has clearly highlighted that these are important aspects of the evaluation for the fulfilment of the criteria. The faculty has transformed these suggestions by establishing a special Centre for the development of pedagogical excellence (CDPE) in 2009, which, from that time onwards, has clearly focused its activities on the pedagogical excellence of educators by running various workshops, focusing on building and evaluating competencies, maintaining and evaluating student surveys, providing teaching requirements for students with special needs, and streamlining the faculty pedagogical processes, etc. Simultaneously, CDPE also heavily focuses on promoting activities targeting students, such as career options, internship activities, tutor system, exchange students, international mobilities, alumni etc. In this context, it is important that both the content of programmes and the quality of their delivery are continuously monitored and improved, based on the evidence. Taking this into consideration, the positions of programme directors were created later and their responsibility is to evaluate the programmes on a yearly basis – this includes preparing the self-evaluation reports also based on programme delivery screening with the relevant stakeholders (teachers, students).
- **Faculty nucleus** involved in the delivery of a programme is important. This relates to presenting evidence that a programme has a sufficient number of educators involved in its delivery, including their full commitment, as well as their quality, which tends to be measured with the quality and quantity of their scientific and other outputs. An issue that is of importance is diversity, both from a gender and minority perspective, where some strategy should be attached to ensuring it.
- Curriculum content from the perspective of **multi-disciplinarity matters**. The faculty has been promoting this heavily. There was still a recommendation that the curricula of the programmes should include more elements of political science (public policy process, policy analysis). Although all programmes were highly interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary in nature, the lack of the aforementioned contents was somehow unintentional bias, as within the UL, other programmes bear the domain in these fields. Nevertheless, the recommendations enabled the faculty to also start introducing these topics into the curricula. The same applied later to topics of ethics, leadership, governance and civic engagement. The related issue was concerned with internship, where it is important that PA organisations are involved in the majority, as the approach of the faculty in this domain has been rather liberal, following the trajectories of the labour market situation.
- Finally, it is important that **student assessment** is organised in a manner that learning is possible through it, so students should receive feedback on their

grades and outputs, which was indicated as a challenge for the final thesis evaluation.

The following lessons should be considered, taking the expertise from UL accreditation endeavours, **before becoming involved in the accreditation**:

- It is important that a programme follows the domain of PA, including a multi-disciplinarity perspective of the programme and its contents, i.e. generalist approach. A clearly identified mission needs to be provided. Internship and the relation of content and teaching for PA practice are to be considered, as to some extent, practical orientation of the programme is recommended.
- It should be of relevance that a sufficient faculty nucleus is ensured for the delivery of a study programme, where its quality and diversity are relevant elements.
- A student-centred approach is an important aspect as well as quality assurance mechanisms in programme delivery. Relevant mechanisms should be developed for this purpose; their continuous implementation and learning loops too. Their goal should be promoting quality and excellence in teaching PA.
- Relevant stakeholders should be granted access and acknowledgement in programme and mission development as transparency of the process is important. A recommendation is that relevant stakeholders' collaboration in programme development is extensive and continuous. Commitment to students is also important.
- Do not neglect the importance of supporting services, i.e. IT, PR, students' office etc. for their roles in programme delivery.

When deciding on the process to obtain EAPAA accreditation, these specific procedural features **should be considered during the process**:

- Make sure that you provide a reasonable explanation on the motives for submitting to the process.
- Make sure that a self-evaluation report is considered and understood by all relevant stakeholders involved in the process. It should contain realistic and true information.
- Make sure that you prepare the stakeholders, i.e., management, faculty, supporting services, students, alumni, employers etc. for the site visit interviews. Relevant information should be provided to them, and they should be instructed to reveal the facts when interviewed.
- A suggestion is that you have a programme director that is also responsible for the accreditation process and self-evaluation report preparation, together with quality assurance responsibility.

- Make sure that you acknowledge or address the recommendations of evaluators during and after the process of evaluation, as they are an integral part of the continuous development of the programme.

2.5 Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca

Babeş-Bolyai University's (BBU) Master of Public Administration Programme, currently holds an EAPAA accreditation, being re-accredited in 2014. The Public Administration Department successfully applied for the first accreditation of the master of public administration programme by EAPAA in 2007, being the first Romanian PA programme internationally accredited.

The fully taught English programme is structured based on the interdisciplinary approach to the study of public administration, and its goal is to contribute to the training of a body of specialists who will work in administrative and non-profit organisations. The curriculum is structured in such a way as to allow the students to gain both the knowledge and the abilities that they need in order to face the challenges encountered while working in modern organisations. The interdisciplinary nature of the programme is supported by the curriculum approach and program structure (the 2-year programme has four tracks – Public Services Management, NGO Management, Community Development and Urban Planning, and Economic Governance of the Public Sector).

The success of the two accreditation procedures has its roots in the innovative approach (at the time) used in the initial design of the Programme. The duration of the master programme was extended to two years in 2002 (4 semesters), somewhat unusual for that time, when the ordinary length of the master programme was 1 year, making the transition process under Bologna an easy task.

The establishment of the Public Administration Department within the Faculty of Political Sciences in the 90's can be considered an important step toward the rethinking of the undergraduate programmes in the field of public administration in Romania. Thus, in 2000 the curriculum became based on an interdisciplinary mixture of disciplines (management, political science, sociology, law, research methods, etc.).

The Department of Public Administration has tried over the years to disseminate this approach of the study of public administration to other schools in public administration at the national level. As a result of this approach, a substantial altering of the undergraduate curriculum has taken place over the years in Romanian PA programmes, contributing to the acknowledgment of the interdisciplinary character of the study of public administration and to the departure from the law 'dominance'.

Institutional efforts initiated by the Department (meetings of the schools in public administration, Association of Public Administration Master Programmes,

establishment of the 'Club of the 4') has succeeded in encouraging other Romanian PA programmes to apply for EAPAA accreditation – National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest has, at this moment, two accredited programmes, while the Bucharest University of Economic Studies accredited its PA Master Programme in 2019.

Besides the clear mission and the interdisciplinary approach of the programme, the competitiveness of BBU PA master alumni, the fact that the Master programme is the best in the country (according to the Ministry of Education's ranking from 2011), the double degrees offered – a certificate issued by the Institute for Public Policies and Social Research (IPPSR) at Michigan State University (MSU), United States, and a double degree in collaboration with Corvinus University of Budapest were the strong points of the Programme. These explain the fact that no problems regarding the eligibility criteria and standards were identified in either of the two phases of accreditation.

However, both accreditations were fuel for a continuous improvement of the programme over time. Our experiences with accreditation allow us to **underline several important points for programmes aiming to undergo this procedure:**

- multidisciplinary curricula approach is a must;
- develop a pragmatic approach to study content;
- show interest in linking the educational objectives to the practical experience students need when entering public organisations (but do not ignore private organisation's needs as possible employers);
- the mission of the Programme should accommodate all intended learning outcomes;
- correlate the learning outcomes to the competencies' fit to the public administration field;
- place a specific focus on internships;
- create and maintain a close relation (structure) with alumni and practitioners:
 - actively involve them in specific initiatives and teaching process, creating a strong link to the public administration profession;
 - value their views on learning outcomes and the competencies students acquire by formally engaging them in the development of the programme;
- address the needs of students who have backgrounds other than PA (levelling up formal approach);
- have clear and formal curriculum development procedures put in place;

Also, a **focus on research and on involving students in preparing and conducting research studies in accordance with their individual interests should be doubled**

by emphasising the need to involve staff in research networks, and institutional efforts towards creating an extensive network of national and foreign partner universities.

3. Opportunities and challenges for EAPAA evaluation in the new member states

The project partners identified two main areas of challenges, which represent critical success factors from the viewpoint of EAPAA accreditation:

- the challenges related to the content of the EAPAA accreditation and certification criteria in the CEE (new member states); and
- the challenges related to the procedures used during the EAPAA accreditation and certification.

3.1 Challenges related to the content of the EAPAA criteria

The project partners confirmed that in particular the following two dimensions should be considered to be crucial:

- (a) the relation between the mission of the programme, the learning outcomes and the curricula;
- (b) the faculty, especially from the viewpoint of its “quality”

The relation between the mission of the programme, the learning outcomes and the curricula

This point is stressed by the following requirements of the EAPAA accreditation guidelines:

“The programme should clearly state its educational philosophy and mission. Please define a set of credible programme objectives based on the mission. All other standards of this accreditation will be evaluated in light of the programme’s mission and objectives and success”.

“Explain what students are trained for: what kinds of competencies are they expected to acquire in the course of the programme?”

EAPAA guidelines also provide critical checkpoints for the points above, as follows:

- “The relation between the mission and the strategies and programme objectives are clearly explained.
- The competencies, which describe the qualifications a graduate should have acquired, are clearly derived from the mission and objectives of the programme”.

“The curriculum should cover the domain of public administration from a multidisciplinary perspective. All components of the curriculum should be justified with reference to the programme objectives and competencies”.

EAPAA guidelines provide the following checkpoints for this dimension:

- “The curriculum covers the broad domain of public administration sufficiently to be considered a public administration programme.
- The relation between the programme objectives, the required competencies and the core programme components and specialisations is clear.
- The relation between core components and specialisation tracks is clear.
- The programme is up-to-date with recent developments in the field of public administration.
- There is sufficient attention for research methods and ethics”.

From this point of view, the following critical content-related challenges can be enumerated for which measures are proposed in the recommendations part of this output:

1. How to prove the Public Administration domain of the programme.
2. How to formulate acceptable curriculum contents.

The faculty (especially its “quality”)

This point is stressed by the following requirements of the EAPAA accreditation guidelines:

“The faculty teaching the programme should have a demonstrably sufficient capacity and quality.”

EAPAA guidelines provide the following critical checkpoints for this dimension:

- The field of expertise and experience of the faculty reflects the expertise necessary to deliver the programme as intended.
- The programme maintains active relations with international academic research networks.
- Staffs are active in academic research, as evidenced by projects and publications.

From this point of view, the following critical content-related challenge can be enumerated for which measures are proposed in the recommendations part of this output:

3. How to assure the required level of international and research/publication profile of staff.

3.2 Challenges related to EAPAA procedures

In this area, challenges related to EAPAA procedures can be put into the following three phases:

1. preparation phase,
2. phase of the accreditation process that consists of (a) the preparation of a self-evaluation report and (b) the site visit,
3. phase of follow-up activities

According to experiences presented and discussed during the workshop, the following major substantial areas can be identified that an organisation needs to focus on during the accreditation process:

(1) Stakeholder involvement: Explaining to them what their role is, what the site visit really is (the very idea might be culturally alien to stakeholders).

- (a) Internal (students, staff members, university leadership).
- (b) External stakeholders (alumni students, potential employers, academic community).

Site visit manual is a useful tool enabling the preparation of the stakeholders. It also indicates potential questions posed by the site visit team for various groups of stakeholders.

(2) Communication (especially internally): inclusion/consultative forums for students; the same for alumni; structured process for constant programme revision and development based on faculty members' insights

There is a high importance of building commitments towards accreditation. Hence, there is a need to clearly communicate the importance of obtaining EAPAA accreditation and its benefits throughout the preparatory and accreditation process among all university actors, including teachers, students, and staff members.

An exclusively "top-down command" approach does not seem to be efficient in the launch of the accreditation. The programme managers and university leaders need to be open for bottom-up ideas and engagements.

(3) Data collection: There is much data in the universities' operation system. The challenge is to identify and collect all those data and transfer them into relevant information. One of the major challenges during the accreditation process is the data collection. Its very work is extensive and requires a lot of administrative capacity. Generally, all data are embedded in the university's system, but you need to be capable of collecting data and transforming them into useful information

(4) Revising the Curriculum

(5) Organisational management

- a. Building an organisational coalition in support of accreditation (university leadership, faculty; obtaining funds...).
- b. Academic component
- c. Managerial component (authority, time etc)
- d. Administrative component (language skills, proofreading of the self-evaluation report)

(6) Strategic review

- a. Mission/vision
- b. Programme jurisdiction (who oversees it?)

(7) Communication (especially internally): inclusion/consultative forums for students; the same for alumni; structured process for constant programme revision and development based on faculty members' insights.

(8) Technical elements (esp. video conferencing).

4. Recommendation for developing public administration curricula in the new member states in conformity with European quality

In the following part of this methodological framework we suggest measures and recommendations for the individual challenges which are enumerated above.

Table 5

Challenges	Proposed measures and recommendations
CHALLENGES RELATED TO THE CONTENT OF EAPAA CRITERIA	
1. How to prove the Public Administration domain of the programme.	<p>Proposed measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • well formulated mission, reflecting the programme environment and long term strategy; • effective link between mission and learning outcomes/competences; • curriculum reflecting mission and expected learning outcomes/competences. <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consult formulation of mission and learning outcomes with programmes/experts already experienced in EAPAA accreditation.
2. How to formulate acceptable curriculum contents.	<p>Proposed measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • curriculum should be multidisciplinary, covering a broad list of different courses, well related to mission and learning outcomes (economics, law, research methods, public administration, public policy, social sciences, informatics...); • curriculum should preferably be delivered via a multidisciplinary approach, including cooperation with other departments, faculties, joint projects for more courses should be promoted, overlaps between courses prevented); • curriculum should reflect international state-of-the-art of the discipline and specialisation; • if feasible, curriculum should offer well balanced set of core vs. elective/specialisation courses; • curriculum should show the relation to practice, if possible internships should be included, curriculum should assure a connection of courses to the needs of practice; • study materials, presented in syllabuses should be well selected, if somehow possible, providing an international perspective of a topic and supporting critical thinking, especially at MA level; • admission policy should be different for different levels of study programmes and to assure that students entering a programme possess the necessary pre-requisites; • curriculum should be the most effective compromise between the rules of national accreditation and internal rules, including internal quality system rules.

Challenges	Proposed measures and recommendations
	<p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check if all relevant courses are included in your curricula (old EPAA self-evaluation report template includes the list of expected courses); • prepare the curriculum in consultation with core stakeholders; • evaluate your curriculum regularly, try to discuss duplicities, include students and employers into the evaluation; • check if your curriculum is "demand based" – delivers what students need to obtain expected competences, or "supply based" – delivers what the staff has the capacity to teach; • for the contents, it is important that political science, policy analysis, ethics, leadership, governance and civic engagement topics are also somehow covered; • take into consideration if the programme is oriented towards public sector employment, thus following a generalist approach; • some sort of practical orientation of the programme might also be warranted, and commitment to the students should be assured; • involve relevant stakeholders in extensive and continuous programme development process.
<p>3. How to assure needed level of international and re-search/publication profile of staff.</p>	<p>Proposed measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staff members are expected to participate in international research conferences and international research networks; • staff members are expected to be involved in research projects within the discipline; • staff members are expected to publish in international journals related to the discipline; • international activities and publications of staff should be somehow balanced ("free riders" in important positions connected to programme delivery should not be visible); • ensure that faculty nucleus is sufficiently large for the delivery of the programme; • international mobility of staff should be promoted and implemented. <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • motivate staff to travel to core international conferences related to the discipline; • provide institutional resources to cover such travels (not everybody can have an effective research grant every year); • design effective system to motivate and support staff to publish in high level international journals and with international publishers in the discipline, relate this system to yearly performance evaluation system and to motivation system; • support staff to work in positions within appropriate international organisations (boards, working groups, etc.); • try to involve (at least on a part-time basis) recognised scholars for functioning within the programme – teaching and research; • promote international mobility of staff, both research as well as teaching oriented staff.

Challenges	Proposed measures and recommendations
CHALLENGES RELATED TO THE EAPAA PROCEDURES	
1. How to assure that data that are needed for continuous evaluation of programme are available.	Proposed measures and recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • data collection is very work extensive and needs a lot of administrative capacity; • generally all data are embedded in the university's system, but you need to be capable of collecting data and transforming them into useful information.
2. Challenges related to the phase of preparation.	Proposed measures and recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building and maintaining a strong network with internal and external stakeholders are crucial; • communication (esp. internally): inclusion/consultative forums for students; the same for alumni.
3. Challenges of the accreditation phase	Proposed measures and recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • structured process for constant programme evaluation, revision and development based on faculty members' insights; • reading, understanding and properly commenting on the SVR. Do not be overly defensive – emphasise the steps you have already taken to tackle the weaknesses; • explaining to the stakeholders what their role is in the process, what the site visit really is (the very idea might be culturally alien to stakeholders).
4. Challenges of follow-up activities.	Proposed measures and recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the Accreditation Committee has made a decision, programmes are obliged to report fundamental changes (EAPAA manuals do not define what a fundamental change is) in the content, structure or other features of the programme to EAPAA. The Accreditation Committee can decide to further investigate such changes if necessary. If the programme does not inform EAPAA about such changes, the Accreditation Committee can rescind its earlier decision. • In the case of conditional accreditation, the respective programme is obliged to report within the given timeline on the implementation of the changes which were the conditions for continuation of the accreditation. The Accreditation Committee can decide to send another review team to verify the changes.

List of abbreviations

BA: bachelor

BBU: Babeş-Bolyai University

CDPE: Centre for the development of pedagogical excellence, Ljubljana

CEE: Central and Eastern Europe

EAPAA: European Association for Public Administration Accreditation

EU: European Union

HE: higher education

KGKP: “Közgazdálkodás és Közpolitika” programme at Corvinus University Budapest

MA: master

MFTAP: “Administration publique” programme at Masaryk University Brno

NGO: non-governmental organisation

NMS: New Member States

MU: Masaryk University Brno

PA: public administration

PAQUALITY: Public Administration Education Quality Enhancement

PEaA: “Public Economics and Administration” programme at Masaryk University Brno

PUMA: “Public Policy and Management” programme at Corvinus University Budapest

UL FPA: University of Ljubljana, faculty of Public Administration

References

- Reichard, 2017; Reichard and Schröter, 2018; Staroňová and Gajduscek, 2016) and our own research conducted within the PAQUALITY project (e.g. Pevcin et al., 2019).
- Farah, M. F. S. 2014. "Public Administration and the Field of Public Policy Studies in the USA and Brazil." *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice* 16(1), 45–61.
- Fenwick, J. 2018. "Teaching Public Administration: Key Themes 1996–2016." *Teaching Public Administration* 36(1), 6–13.
- Gellén, M. 2013. "Public Administration Education in a Legalistic Setting: New Tendencies in Hungarian Public Administration and Training." *NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy* 6(2), 53–67.
- Hajnal, G. 2015. "Public Administration Education in Europe: Continuity or Reorientation?" *Teaching Public Administration* 33(2), 95–114.
- Hajnal, G. 2016. "Illiberal or Simply Unorthodox? Public Administration Education in Hungary." *Teaching Public Administration* 34(2), 205–224.
- Hajnal, G., K. Káddár and É. Kovács. 2018. "Government Capacity and Capacity-Building in Hungary: A New Model in the Making?" *NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy* 11(1), 11–39.
- Marčetić, G., G. Lalić Novak and J. Džinić. 2013. "Public Administration Education in Twelve Post-Socialist Countries and Croatia: Is There a Convergence?" *Croatian and Comparative Public Administration* 13(1), 123–160.
- Miller, D. R. 2018. "Do Undergraduate Public Administration, Policy, and Affairs Programs Mimic Graduate Curricula of Public Affairs Education." *Journal of Public Affairs Education*. DOI: 10.1080/15236803.2018.1443261.
- Pevcin, P., Špaček, D. and Klimovský, D., 2019. "Public Administration Education in the CEE Countries: How Has it Developed During the Recent Decades?" *The NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy* XII(2), 217–232.
- Reichard, Ch. 2017. "Academic Executive Programs in Public Administration and Management: Some Variety Across Europe." *Teaching Public Administration* 35(1), 126–138.
- Reichard, Ch. and E. Schröter. 2018. "Education and Training in Public Administration and Management in Europe." In E. Ongara and S. Van Thiel (eds). *The Palgrave Handbook of Public Administration and Management in Europe*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 41–60.
- Staroňová, K. and G. Gajduscek. 2016. "Public Administration Education in CEE Countries: Institutionalization of a Discipline." *Policy and Society* 35, 351–370.

NISPAcee Press
Polianky 5
841 01 Bratislava 42
Slovak Republic
phone/fax: +421 2 6428 5357
e-mail: nispa@nispa.org
<http://www.nispa.org>



ISBN 978-80-99939-05-0