

Institution:

Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania:

The Alpha Centre of Modern Languages

The Department of Romanian Language, Culture, and Civilization

Inspectors:

Radadiana Calciu

John Haagensen (reporting)

Dates:

26-27th January 2017



Section One: Inspection Verdict

Verdict statement:

Accredited membership of the institution can be confirmed, as all standards of the Equals Charters are fully met.

Grades

Grade 2 = meets the high quality Standards required by the Equals Charters

Grade 2,5 = does not meet the Standards required by the Equals Charters with reference to one or more relatively minor indicators of compliance, which can easily and swiftly be rectified, and evidence, such as a document or photo, can be readily submitted

Grade 3 = does not meet the high quality Standards required by the Equals Charters

Grade 1 = exceeds the high quality Standards required by the Equals Charters and identifies a Category of consistent excellence in the institution

Grade 15 = meets the high quality Standards required by the Equals Charters and identifies a Category which, in some respects, exceeds Equals high Standards, exhibiting one or two indicators of excellence, while not achieving consistent excellence in this Category

CATEGORIES		Grade	CATEGORIES (CON'T)		Grade
1	Management and Administration	1.5	7	Client Services	2
2	Teaching and Learning	2	8	Quality assurance	1.5
3	Course Design and Supporting Systems	1.5	9	Staff Profile and Development	1.5
4	Assessment and Certification	1	10	Staff Employment Terms	1
5	Academic Resources	1.5	11	Internal Communications	2
6	Learning Environment	2	12	External Communications	2
TOTAL GRADE:					19.5

Executive Summary

The Alpha Centre of Modern Languages, and the Department of Romanian Language, Culture, and Civilization at the Faculty of Letters, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca are language education centres of high quality, with established reputations both locally and nationally.

The Alpha Centre is an established language testing specialist which in recent years has diversified to offer tuition in second languages, largely to private clients. The Department of Romanian runs courses in Romanian language and culture to preparatory year undergraduates, to learners on international exchange programmes such as Erasmus, short intensive Romanian language and culture courses, as well as offering Romanian language teacher training courses to Masters level.



Section Two: Account of the Inspection

Timetable

Day 1			
Time	Activity	Staff involved (Job Title)	Inspectors
08.30 – 9.00	Arrive, tour premises, introduction to available school staff, fine tune timetable	Language Teaching Director Alpha Centre, Executive Director & Language Testing Director Alpha Centre and available staff	JH, RC
09.15 – 11.00	Meetings with management	Deputy Dean Of Faculty of Letters Executive Director Alpha Centre Head of Romanian Department	JH, RC
11.00-11.15	Coffee – inspectors confer		JH, RC
11.15 – 13.00	Lesson Observations: Romanian (2 together for standardisation)	Teachers	JH, RC
13.00-13.30	Student Focus Group	Students	JH, RC
13.30-14.15	Lunch		JH, RC
14.45-15.15	Alpha Centre Off-site lesson Observation: IT company	Teacher : Language Teaching Director	RC
15.00-16.45	Alpha Centre client administration	Office Manager	JH
16.00-16.20	Alpha Centre On-site lesson Observations: 1:1 IELTS 1:1 IELTS	Executive Director & Language Testing Director Teacher	JH RC
16.30-17.30	Documentation checks		JH
17.35-18.15	Documentation checks	Language Teaching Director	JH, RC
18.30-19.30	Alpha Centre On-site lesson Observations: English, Spanish	Teachers	JH, RC



Day 2			
Time	Action	Staff involved (Job Title)	Inspectors
08.30 – 9.15	Documentation check		JH, RC
09.20 – 11.15	Meetings with staff: Faculty of Letters Premises: IT and Media Alpha Centre	Head Secretary of the Faculty of Letters 2 Faculty secretaries Equipment and Supply Manager Equipment and Supply Manager & IT Engineer Executive director	JH, RC RC JH
11.15-12.30	View student accommodation blocks	Equipment and Supply Manager	RC
11.15 – 11.45	Health and Safety tour of premises	Accounting manager (also responsible for departmental H & S), Office Manager Alpha Centre	JH
11.45-13.00	Lesson Observations: Romanian	Teachers	JH
12.30-13.00			RC
13.00-13.45	Teacher Focus Group	Teachers, Romanian Department, Alpha Centre	JH, RC
13.45-14.30	Lunch		JH, RC
14.40-15.30	Romanian Department follow up Resources	Head of Romanian Department	RC
15.00-16.30	Alpha Centre academic management and assessment	Language Teaching Director	JH
		Language Teaching and & Language Testing Director	RC
16.30-16.50	Lesson Observation: Alpha Centre: Russian	Teacher	RC
16.30-18.00	Further documents check and feedback preparation		JH, RC
18.10-18.25	Lesson Observation Alpha Centre: Swedish	Teacher	JH
18.30-20.00	Feedback to school management	Deputy Dean of Faculty of Letters Executive director Alpha Centre Head of Romanian Department Language Teaching Director Alpha Centre Language Teaching & Testing Director	JH, RC



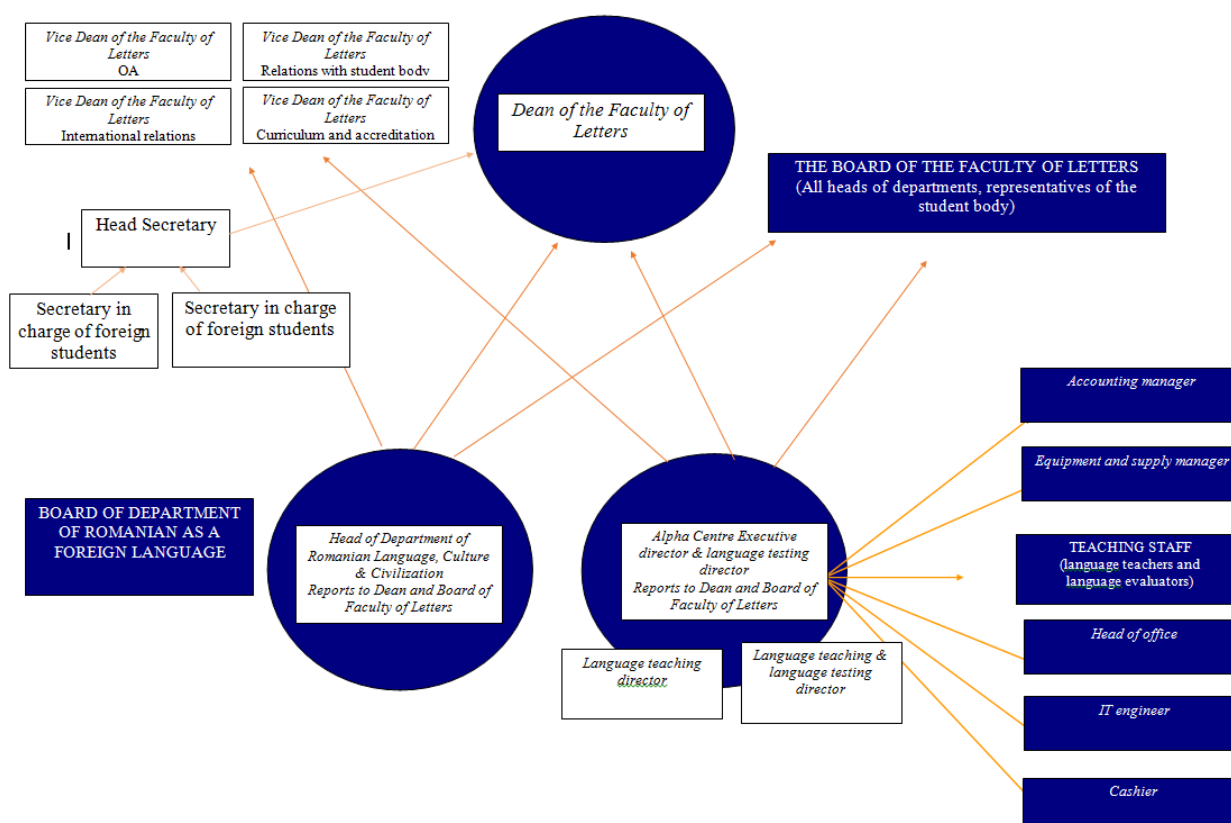
Staffing of the Language Education Centre

The Department of Romanian Language, Culture, and Civilisation (DRLCC) and the Alpha Centre (AC) are two parts of the Faculty of Letters of the state-funded Babes Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. Each has separate department heads who report to the Dean of the Faculty. The two Directors of Studies are engaged in the academic management of both departments. The Head of the Romanian department teaches in that department; similarly the Executive Director of the Alpha Centre teaches Alpha Centre classes. The two Directors of Studies teach in both centres.

The Alpha Centre has an Office Manager who takes care of departmental day-to-day administration and is also on the teaching team, and an Accounting Manager, also on the administrative team and in charge of Health and Safety at the Faculty of Letters.

Romanian department student administration is the domain of the Head Secretary of the Faculty of Letters and her assistants.

Resources, Equipment and Supply, and IT Managers are shared, the two centres also sharing classroom and learning facility space to a large extent.





Description of the Institution; provided by the Language Education Centre.

The Alpha Centre

Section E		
Language Education Centre Background Information		
History	The Alpha Centre for Modern Languages is part of the Faculty of Letters of Babes-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca (a state university which falls under the jurisdiction of the Romanian Ministry of Education). The Centre was founded in March, 2002 and has not undergone significant changes since then. The University, the largest in Romania, accommodates up to 45000 students every year. The Alpha Language Centre, however, is open both to the registered students of the university and outside clients. We offer language courses and we organise proficiency tests for various languages (English, French, German Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Norwegian, Dutch, Swedish, Finnish, Japanese, Romanian, Hungarian, Russian). The ALPHA Centre also runs courses in English for the Cambridge suite of examinations, IELTS, TOEFL and DELE courses for Spanish. The Alpha Language Centre is one of the two language centres of the university, the other one – Lingua Language Centre - being part of the Faculty of Economic Studies, specialising in Business English.	
Premises	The offices of the Alpha Centre are located on the ground floor of the Faculty of Letters building. We have a staff room (with 10 computers, a library, a reception desk), a meeting room and a separate office for the executive director. Classes take place in the same faculty building. Our classrooms are used by the Alpha Centre in the afternoon. In the mornings, the Faculty of Letters has access to them too.	
Facilities	In the building of the Faculty of letters there’s a cafeteria – available for staff and students of the Faculty of Letters. However, this cafeteria closes at 15.30. Since most of our classes are in the afternoon, our course participants can instead use the vendor machines in the building for coffee, drinks or snacks. Our headquarters are very close to the city centre and there are a lot of restaurants and cafes around.	
Classroom equipment	Our classrooms are equipped with video-projectors (all apart from one). Our teachers can use audio equipment (CD players) and laptops that are kept at the Alpha centre office. Two of our classrooms have interactive white boards. The Alpha Centre staff room is equipped with 10 desktop computers. All members of our staff can use the Centre library, which consists mostly of teaching material. The students can obtain library cards that give them access to the Central University Library.	
Any other premises used by the Language Education Centre	Apart from our regular language courses, we offer in company language courses. In this case, the language courses take place on the company’s premises.	
Section F		
Courses Offered		
	Approximate percentage of total student hours as calculated below	Approximate number of teachers per language taught
Language 1 English	55-60%	8
Language 2 Italian	12%	2
Language 3	11%	3



French				
Language 4 Swedish	10%	2		
Spanish, German, Norwegian, Finnish, Romanian, Dutch, Russian, Portuguese	All under 10% (hard to predict)	Spanish (2 teachers), German (2 teachers), Norwegian (2 teachers), Finnish (1 teacher), Romanian (4 teachers), Dutch (2 teachers), Russian (2 teachers), Portuguese (1 teacher)		
Types of course, e.g national and international exam courses, and on-line courses over the year (add rows as needed)				
General Language	General language courses	90%		
Special purpose	International exams courses	Up to 5%		
Special purpose	Business	Up to 5%		
Any courses provided which are <u>not</u> language courses (e.g. teacher training). NA				
Section G Student Numbers				
Approximate total of number of all student hours of tuition provided by the Language Education Centre during the last 12 months Include course participants taught in-company and in other off-site locations		Total Number: 5010 student hours		
Approximate total of number of students at different times of the year	Q1 Jan-March: 130	Q2 April-Jun: 70		
	Q3 July-Sept: The centre is closed	Q4 Oct-Dec: 80 (current academic year, around 100, normally)		
Approximate numbers of full time (15 or more hours per week) and part-time (under 15 hours per week) course participants over the year		Full-time	Part time	
	Number:		170-200	
	Percentage:	%	100%	
Maximum size of classes taught:	15 students			
Staffing				
Number of Full Time Teaching Staff employed	Q1 Jan-March:	Q2 April-Jun:	Q3 July-Sept:	Q4 Oct-Dec:
	0	0	0	0
Number of Part Time Teaching Staff employed Our teaching staff – 0 hour contract (on call work)	Q1 Jan-March:	Q2 April-Jun:	Q3 July-Sept:	Q4 Oct-Dec:
	10-15 for teaching 20-25 for testing	10-15 for teaching 20-25 for testing		10-15 for teaching 20-25 for testing
Number of Full Time Administrative Staff employed	Q1 Jan-March:	Q2 April-Jun:	Q3 July-Sept:	Q4 Oct-Dec:
	1	1	1	
Number of Part Time Administrative Staff employed	Q1 Jan-March:	Q2 April-Jun:	Q3 July-Sept:	Q4 Oct-Dec:
	4	4	4	4



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The Department of Romanian Language, Culture and Civilisation

Section E		
Language Education Centre Background Information		
History	The Department of Romanian Language, Culture and Civilisation is part of the Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, and was established in 1974, then bearing the name of “The Unit of Romanian as a Foreign Language”. In 1995, the Unit changed into a Department, as a consequence of extending the Romanian-language teaching activities within international programmes (TEMPUS, CEEPUS, ERASMUS, SOCRATES, DAAD), as well as intensifying the research work in the field of Romanian as a Foreign Language (RFL). During these 40 years of existence, thousands of students coming from over 110 countries have studied Romanian at our department.	
Premises	7 classrooms 4 offices The offices of the DLCCR are located on the ground floor of the Faculty of Letters building. We have 4 offices that are being used by our teachers and by the head of department. Classes take place in the same faculty building. We have 7 classrooms that are mainly used by DLCCR, but the Alpha Centre and the Faculty of Letters have access to them as well.	
Facilities	In the building of the Faculty of letters there’s a cafeteria – available for staff and students of the Faculty of Letters. Our students can also use the vendor machines in the building for coffee, drinks or snacks. Our headquarters are very close to the city centre and there are a lot of restaurants and cafes around.	
Classroom equipment	Our classrooms are equipped with video-projectors (all apart from one), computers (16). Our teachers can use audio equipment (CD players), projectors (2), video cameras, recording equipment and laptops (16) that are kept in our offices. Four of our classrooms have interactive white boards. Our teachers have access to two recording studios (one at the Faculty of Letters, another one at the Faculty of Theology). The DLCCR staff room is equipped with computers and copy machines (4). All members of our staff can use the books deposited in or staff room (mostly of teaching material). The students can obtain library cards that give them access to the Central University Library.	
Any other premises used by the Language Education Centre	NA	
Section F		
Courses Offered		
	Approximate percentage of total student hours as calculated below	Approximate number of teachers per language taught
Language 1 (insert name) add further rows as needed	Romanian 100%	12-16
Types of course, e.g national and international exam courses, and on-line courses over the year (add rows as needed)		
General Language	Romanian as a foreign language A1, A2, B1, B2	80%



Special purpose	Romanian for specific purposes/academic purposes 1. Romanian for Medicine 2. Romanian for economics, IT and sciences 3. Romanian for social sciences and art	10%		
Special purpose	Introduction in Romanian culture and civilization	10%		
Any courses provided which are <u>not</u> language courses (e.g. teacher training). Please specify type and student numbers.(add rows as needed)				
Name of course	Type	Student Numbers		
Teaching Romanian as a second language (for the national minorities) RLNM	Teacher training	3500 (between 2010-2014)		
Romanian as a native language EVRO	Teacher training	1500 (between 2014-2015)		
Romanian as a foreign language (Master program)	Teacher training	17-47 students/module since 2008		
Romanian as a foreign language (one week TT program)	Teacher training	8-14/module		
Section G				
Student Numbers				
Approximate total of number of all student hours of tuition provided by the Language Education Centre during the last 12 months Include course participants taught in-company and in other off-site locations		66,080 student hours - Preparatory Year 19,040 student hours - Erasmus		
Approximate total of number of students at different times of the year	Q1 Jan-March: 200	Q2 April-Jun: 200		
		Q3 July-Sept: 50		
		Q4 Oct-Dec: 200		
Approximate numbers of full time (15 or more hours per week) and part-time (under 15 hours per week) course participants over the year		Full-time	Part time	
	Number:	60-110	100/semester	
	Percentage:	%	%	
Staffing				
Number of Full Time Teaching Staff employed	Q1 Jan-March:	Q2 April-Jun:	Q3 July-Sept:	Q4 Oct-Dec:
	7	7	7	7
Number of Part Time Teaching Staff employed	Q1 Jan-March:	Q2 April-Jun:	Q3 July-Sept:	Q4 Oct-Dec:
	9	7	4	7
Number of Full Time Administrative Staff employed	Q1 Jan-March:	Q2 April-Jun:	Q3 July-Sept:	Q4 Oct-Dec:
	2	2	2	2



Number of Part Time Administrative Staff employed	Q1 Jan-March:	Q2 April- Jun:	Q3 July- Sept:	Q4 Oct-Dec:
	0	0	0	0



Section Three: Grading

1. Management and Administration (Eaquals General Charter: 1, 2, 3, 4)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found some Points of Excellence in this category (Grade 1.5)

- 1.1 There is an institutional ethos which provides the foundation for the institution's activities.
- 1.2 The leadership and organisational structure of the Language Education Centre support this mission and the achievement of its objectives.

The Alpha Centre and the Department of Romanian Language, Culture and Civilization are departments of the Faculty of Letters of Babes Bolyai (State) University (BBU). The Alpha Centre is headed by the Executive Director, the Romanian Department by the Head of Department. Both departments operate according to the ethos of the University Mission Statement, which lays out principles of respect for, and mutual knowledge of, Romanian multiculturalism and multilingualism. A tangible example and outcome of this policy specifies that all Romanian university students, in any discipline, should attain at least B2 level in a second language by the time of graduation from their Bachelor programmes. In order to achieve this, students attend language classes at the Department of Languages for Specific Purposes, also part of the Faculty of Letters, which was not part of the Eaquals application for accreditation, and therefore this inspection. There has been a recent and ongoing discussion concerning the requisite accepted level, with a move to lower this to B1; the Alpha Centre management is keen to maintain the B2 standard.

The Faculty of Letters has a language policy which reflects the Mission Statement's principles of acceptance and inclusion.

The institutional aims and historical development of activities of both Alpha Centre and Romanian Department are well-known to their staff and to a large extent to students. The former was established in 2002 to provide language assessment for all Faculties of the BBU, later diversifying into second language instruction, including the development of a more commercial identity, providing course offers in a number of languages to the general public. Provision of language testing remains an important service provided by the Alpha Centre; there are scheduled testing sessions in popular languages resulting in the Alpha Certificate. Income generated by the Alpha Centre is approximately 50% from tuition, and 50% from its language testing service.

The Romanian Department has been in existence for over 40 years, at first as a unit for the teaching of Romanian as a Foreign Language, becoming a department in its own right in 1995 as it was extending its Romanian language teaching activities within international programmes such as Erasmus. This historical information relating to the DRLCC is available on its website, while the website of the Alpha Centre lacks this.

There are no individualised Mission statements for each department; this is something which they might consider as a means to consolidation of their identities. Inspectors were informed, for example, that the goal of the Alpha Centre is to provide affordable services in the area of language learning – this is apparent in the sliding scale of fees, with higher enrolments leading to larger class sizes and much-reduced tuition charges.

Strategic aims of the Romanian Department are integrated into the University's overall student recruitment activities. The trend is towards expansion, numbers recently swelling with an increasing Middle Eastern influx, including many refugees from Iraq and Syria. The Alpha Centre is a separately budgeted commercial unit, self-supporting (including overheads - charged at a fixed rate of income). The rest of its income goes to the Faculty of Letters, with 7% for the Centre to deploy for maintenance, minor operational improvements, etc. While the Alpha Centre management very naturally seeks to improve its business, it does not wish to compromise the integrity and rigour of services such as language testing. In this area the commercial market has sometimes requested language level assessment on demand, for example, a direction in which Alpha management does not wish to go, offering instead complete and rigorous exams scheduled in regular



calendar slots.

The management and staffing structures of both centres are appropriate in size. While the Executive Director and Language Testing Director of the Alpha Centre takes responsibility for company performance and management decisions taken, the decision-making process is cooperative and consensual across the “Board” team of three which includes the Language Teaching Director, and Language Teaching and Language Testing Director. There are regular, usually weekly, management meetings with important action recorded, though in a small centre with key staff occupying the same space essential communication is spontaneous and immediate. There are whole staff meetings 3 or 4 times a year, records of which were inspected. There are also weekly meetings between the Heads of the two departments and the Dean or Vice Dean, as well as spontaneous “dropping in” by either side for coordination purposes.

As stated in the Staffing section above, for the Romanian Department, student administration, guidance and welfare, accounts and finance, are the responsibility of the Faculty of Letters Secretariat. The Head of Department is assisted by the two Alpha Centre subordinate Directors, who are also lecturers at this Department, with as many meetings as needed for exam preparations and at least two formal, whole staff meetings at the beginning and end of any semester.

Romanian and international copyright law is observed, and managers are careful to monitor and advise staff on the regulations covering reproduction of published and media material.

For both centres, it was evident that student enrolment processes were efficient and documentation was comprehensive and complete. Administrative software is used, and staff stated that it functions well. Extensive paper records are also kept and archived. In time it may be conceivable to make more use of electronic media and data logging. Also for student management and orientation/information it would be advantageous in terms of efficiency, ease of access, and motivation to use a platform such as Moodle.

Points of Excellence

- 1.2 is excellent due to the strong yet consensual, mutually supportive leadership approach in both Alpha Centre and Romanian Department, and positive coordinated interaction and reporting to the Dean’s Office. Staff are both supported and consulted.
- Administrative processes are functional, detailed and complete.

Recommendations

- Consider inclusion of institutional biographical information on the Alpha Centre website, and in publicity.
- For both DRLCC and Alpha Centre, consider the potential value of developing individualised Mission statements
- Alpha Centre Management may consider the future development of language assessment which can be offered more spontaneously in response to customer demand, without compromising its professional integrity and reputation as a leader in reliable language testing
- Consider logging management and staff meeting records in the form of departmental action plans, so as to monitor and update progress on plans and developments, establish deadlines where needed, etc.
- Work towards more use of electronic and online media for student management and communication

Requirements: none



2. Teaching and Learning (Eaquals General Charter, 1.2; Charter For Course Participants 1,2, 3)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found that the Language Education Centre meets Eaquals criteria for this category (Grade 2)

2.1 The pedagogical approach and methods reflect the institution's educational philosophy.

2.2 The quality of course delivery consistently provides opportunities for effective learning.

2.3 Lessons are planned with reference to the course programme and the learning and motivational needs of individuals and the group; specified learning outcomes are shared with learners.

2.4 The opportunities offered for learning are varied, making use of available technology and resources.

2.5 Learners have the opportunity to develop their study skills and to share responsibility for their own learning.

25 lesson segments and 25 teaching staff were observed. 8 of these 25 were Alpha Centre classes or 1:1 lessons, while the remaining 17 were classes in Romanian, largely for those students doing their preparatory year of Romanian study before embarking on undergraduate study in their chosen disciplines. The stated overall pedagogical approach is communicative language teaching and learning for both centres, and the inspectors were able to observe this approach in principle and practice. In all classes seen there were opportunities for effective learning to take place.

Lessons were planned following the pathways provided by specified course programmes: structured syllabi for the Romanian classes, though adapted to class needs and interests to some extent, and negotiated, more tailor-made courses for Alpha Centre clients. Learners are aware of intended learning outcomes.

The inspectors observed good lesson practice:

- Careful planning overall, and with one exception there was a comprehensive observation pack awaiting the inspectors, including schemes of work founded on the syllabus documents and adjusted to student needs, and lesson plans with clear aims and activities described. Individual lesson plans are written for every Alpha Centre lesson. Each activity indicates the type of interaction pattern(s) in each stage. In a few of the plans, the lesson aims were described in terms of learner abilities, can-do competences, that would be developed during lessons, while the majority used more generic language aims and practice terminology. The inspectors advise that the former method is preferable in a communicative approach focused on enhancing student abilities.
- Good elicitation technique of thematic and linguistic input
- Teacher use of L1 in all the Romanian classes
- Positive, good-humoured classroom working atmosphere
- Learner engagement and involvement with learning tasks
- Relevant and interesting themes
- Excellent teacher guidance and expertise: linguistic support and explanation, exemplification of lexis and structure, use of gesture and mime for elicitation
- Teacher support and help in all lesson stages
- Variety of interaction patterns: plenary, pairs, groups, individual work, with different communicative competences practised: negotiation, exchange, agreement/disagreement, presentation, etc
- Some good attention to correction of errors, with evidence of different techniques used
- In a number of lessons the use of hard-copy visuals, photos and flash cards to enhance context and interest



- While most classes use a core text, there was also much evidence of the design and use of real-world and teacher-produced lesson material
- Use of projectors for lesson stimulus, exemplification etc
- Use of email for feedback, homework correction to Alpha Centre clients

There were also some areas where improvement may be made:

- In spite of attention to the variation of interaction patterns, there was an overall tendency towards teacher-centredness, for the most common interaction to be T<>S
- In some cases, the more unstructured pair and group work did not engender quality student language input
- Some activities tended to take longer than planned
- While there was evidence of attention to errors and pronunciation, it was not always clear to observers, and presumably to learners, what correction strategy was being employed in any given stage.
- In one or two observed classes, both in Romanian and Alpha Centre other languages, lesson focus was on working through course book gap-fill practice exercises, in one case exercises without obvious benefit in learning outcomes. Levels of learner involvement and of communicative language development were consequently lower than observed elsewhere.
- There are interactive boards in a number of classrooms, though these were not seen in use. In two classes teachers projected material on to IWBs, indicating either lack of maintenance or a lack of confidence in the use of IWBs – the latter was confirmed in later interviews with staff and the teacher focus group.

Overall the standard of teaching and learning was good, and meets Eaquals' standards. The inspectors gained an impression of motivated and engaged teaching, positive classroom dynamics, and clear evidence of learning progress. Students in their focus group were complimentary about their classes and teachers.

Recommendations

- **Describe lesson plan aims in terms of learner communicative competences, rather than – or as well as – language structure**
- **Work on the long-term aim of enhancing quality and quantity of student talk during lessons through reduction of teacher talking, and through enhanced preparation for and modelling of student-to-student interactions**
- Set reasonable time limits for activities and keep to them so that a wider range of tasks can be offered
- **Clarify for learners how errors are to be handled in different lesson stages.**
- **Use judgement to avoid coursebook gap-filling exercises as class activities unless they can be handled communicatively/motivationally**
- **Regarding the use of classroom educational technology: consider ongoing training and sharing of IWB best practice, and the possible use of mobile apps, mobile internet etc to streamline some classroom practice, save on paper and photocopying, and add the interest and relevance of new media to the learning experience**
- Consider further development of course input online, exploring the possibility of blended delivery, particularly for Alpha Centre courses

Requirements: none



3. Course Design and Supporting System (Eaquals General Charter 1.2; Charter for Course Participants 2.2, 2.4, 2.6,)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found some Points of Excellence in this category (Grade 1.5)

3.1 There is a statement of the institution's educational philosophy and written descriptions of its learning programmes, including course objectives and content.

3.2 All language course programmes are specified by levels which refer to the CEFR, and learning objectives are related to the global descriptors of CEFR levels.

3.3 There is an academic management and coordination structure, with supporting systems, which ensure the implementation of the institution's educational philosophy.

Regarding language educational philosophy and mission, these are specified in Faculty of Letters policies, and on the Faculty website.

The Romanian Department learning programmes include the Preparatory Year Programme for undergraduates (intensive 25 hours a week, at the time of the inspection about 150 students), Romanian for international and exchange programmes such as Erasmus (short course intensive, otherwise 4-6 hours pw, about 200 students per year) and smaller scale intensive summer programmes, one of which is for students from the University of Arizona. Some Preparatory Year students self-fund, some are on grants or scholarships. The Erasmus programme students did not have classes during the days of the inspection, having just taken exams, the inspection period falling around the time of the end semester break. Additionally the Romanian Department operates a range of teacher training courses to teachers and assessors of Romanian as a foreign/second language: these were not part of this inspection and accreditation.

Romanian Department course programmes are well documented, starting with a Subject Outline syllabus which describes, by CEFR level, the total number of hours to complete the level, broad course content in terms of language structural targets, thematic development, and communicative competences, plus more detailed description of course components, syntax and morphology, and a bibliography of texts specifying learning techniques and approaches.

There is also a detailed spreadsheet indicating the Academic Credits contribution of each course component in the Preparatory Year programme. Then there are week-by-week schemes of work, written by the class teachers, covering the detailed class programme. The preparatory year intensive programme is taught by between 2 and 4 teachers during the course of the week, so scheme of work preparation is necessarily collaborative, and communication between class teachers is important. The academic year, organized by semesters, divides the language progression as follows: A1 and A2 in the first semester, B1 and B2 plus Romanian cultural identity, and subject-area-specific input in the areas of medical, technical/economic, or social/artistic/humanistic, depending on future study. Schemes of work are monitored by the Director of Teaching of the Alpha Centre.

As an initiative from the Head of the Romanian Department, in future Master students from the Master programme in Romanian as a second Language will volunteer supplementary practice and activities in Romanian up to six hours a week to Preparatory Year students.

Alpha Centre courses are designed to meet the needs of private sector customers, and typically are 4 hours per week (2 x 2 hours), sometimes 6, and the usual course length being 30 hours, or 60 for exam preparation courses. Once a course has been negotiated, students complete a self-assessment and needs analysis, leading to a learning contract with specified needs and aims. The self-assessment is extremely thorough, with global competence descriptors for language skills, cross-referenced to CEFR levels for self-evaluation. Syllabi are drawn up or sourced and adapted from previous courses, weekly schemes and



individual lesson plans are produced.

The emphasis is on flexibility and customer-oriented course design. For in-company classes there would naturally be some company management input into course outcomes required, and such courses are flexibly negotiated to meet corporate needs. Similarly, on-site courses, even general language ones, are subject to modification in accordance with group requirements. These groups frequently comprise fewer than ten students and can be as few as 3 or 4, enabling a more personalised, tailor-made approach. Nevertheless, unless there is substantial adaptation required, most Alpha on-site courses can be classified as General Language, or exam preparation (commonly IELTS) therefore following a modern course book with up to ca. 40% independent course elements included in the schemes of work. There are also one-to-one clients, often requiring language exam coaching.

The academic management of both Romanian Department and Alpha Centre is ably carried out by the Language Teaching and Language Teaching and Testing Directors. As far as the Alpha Centre is concerned, the former oversees management of off-site courses, the latter on-site. These two, overseen by the Romanian Head of Department, and the Alpha Centre Executive Director manage the teacher and classroom allocation, and all aspects of academic support. They are supported in this by the Alpha Centre Office Manager who takes care of a large part of required administrative tasks. All class records and academic records and reports are detailed and complete.

The clear descriptions of learning programmes, CEFR-referenced, which are communicated to teachers and learners, with learning objectives and recommended means of achieving those objectives are a strength of both the Romanian Department and Alpha Centre. There is also evidence of both coherence of learning programmes combined with flexibility, student needs-focused, in their application by many teachers.

Points of Excellence

3.2 is excellent due to:

- Detailed and meaningful reference to the CEFR
- Comprehensive syllabus documents and frameworks for creation of learning objectives in Schemes of Work and lesson plans, and monitoring of these
- Clear descriptions of course content, communicated to learners
- Flexible adaptation of syllabi to meet the needs of private clients

Recommendations

- **Consider strategies to ensure that *all* teachers apply the principle, adopted by the majority, of creatively adapting course programmes and materials to learners' needs**

Requirements: none



4. Assessment and Certification (Eaquals General Charter 1.2; Charter for Course Participants 1.2, 1.3, 2.10, 3.1)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found standards in this category to be a Point of Excellence for the Language Education Centre. (Grade 1)

- 4.1 Assessment procedures are compatible with the institution's educational philosophy and course objectives.
- 4.2 Placement procedures are appropriate to the learning context and to learners' needs.
- 4.3 Systems for assessing language competence provide reliable, valid and fair means of evaluating progress and achievement in a way that is appropriate for the course and the learners.
- 4.4 Reports and certificates issued to learners indicate their achievements in terms of the course objectives and content. They provide a reliable statement of the level achieved.
- 4.5 Where information on public examinations is provided, relevant advice and support is given to learners.

Assessment procedures for the Romanian Department are in line with departmental ethos and objectives, testing Romanian language as communication, and additionally Romanian culture and civilization. These principles hold for the preparatory year, Erasmus, and Romanian as a foreign language courses.

The preparatory year, with the target of covering levels A1 A2, B1 and B2, has four scheduled compulsory level proficiency tests throughout the academic year. In the first semester of the preparatory year, levels A1 and A2 Romanian exams take place. Nearly 100% of students start as beginners or false beginners, there is therefore no placement test required. In the second semester, there are B1 and B2 exams, and two additional compulsory tests in Romanian: a test of knowledge of Romanian cultural identity, and subject-area-specific tests in the areas of either medical, technical/economic, or social/artistic/humanistic, depending on students' chosen study path, leading finally to the Preparatory year in Romanian Language Certificate. A stand-alone Romanian language proficiency test and certificate also exists, for foreign students whose Romanian is already of a high enough level.

Erasmus programme students may have some proficiency in Romanian language (some, for example have Romanian backgrounds or may be in linguistically mixed marriages) are pre-tested and placed in 3 level ranges.

Students must attend 75% minimum of their course, and must pass each exam. There are make-up repeat exam sessions later for those who miss or fail an exam. In-course formative progress is also tested by shorter input-based tests or quizzes which are composed and administered by class teachers, who also complete a report of continuous achievement (against course objectives, test performance, performance in course topic areas, attendance, interest and participation, etc).

The level exams are in three parts: listening, a written part which, as well as structural and writing assessment, includes reading tests, and an oral exam. The latter, taken with paired students, is in three parts with interactive (exchange/discursive) and monologue segments. There are two assessors (who later moderate) and an interlocutor for each oral test; tests are recorded for grade standardization and, with students' agreement, may also be used anonymously for future test research and development. Assessor standardisation training takes place before each testing phase.

Continuing its original remit for testing and assessment, development of Romanian language test content by the Alpha Centre is continuous, the responsibility of the Director of Teaching and Testing and a team of test developers. Banks of test items are produced, and task types developed. These are externally validated by assessors and experts checking on CEFR cross-referenced difficulty level and item discrimination. They are also pre-tested, and subjected to psychometric analysis of test item effectiveness. The resulting, finalized sets of tests are then used for the following year's assessment schedule. After each Preparatory year proficiency exam, cut-off marks are established, and grades are standardized, using the "method of contrasting groups."

Impressive publications on the assessment of Romanian, co-written by the Directors and other assessors,



had recently been published.

Results of tests, achievement of objectives, as well as continuous assessment of course performance, and recommendations for further study are contained in reports provided for each student of Romanian language. At the termination of their courses, a final achievement report is given. This is accredited by the Ministry of Education and students can also enrol in other Romanian Universities.

Romanian Language Testing Items and exams have recently undergone the ALTE accreditation procedures.

Students attending Alpha Centre courses are provided with an impressive CEFR can-do descriptor-based self-assessment and needs analysis through which they assess their CEFR level and confidence/competence in speaking, reading, writing, conversational interaction etc. They also take a placement test giving entry CEFR levels: these vary in format for the different languages. Some (such as that for English) are commercial placement level tests, while others are in-house produced. There was no evidence of mis-placement observed or reported.

Alpha Centre Courses are largely coursebook-based, with varying degrees of independent teacher input founded on class needs and interests. Coursebook unit tests with additions of own test material are used by teachers. This formative assessment is uncontrolled and not subject to standardization training. There are mid, and end-course proficiency tests to assess students against course target CEFR-level aims. The end-of-course test is optional, and the Alpha Test is currently available in 5 languages (Romanian, English, French, Italian, and Spanish, for each of which a bank of tests exists with new tests developed as required), a communicative language proficiency test with in-depth assessment of Listening, Reading and Writing, and Oral skills. Instead of taking the Alpha test, clients may choose not to be tested, or to receive a certificate of participation, stating at which level the learner studied, without specifying their final CEFR level. As with the Romanian department, at the end of the course teachers also complete a progress report for clients, with further study recommendations.

This test is also available as a stand-alone commercial product, providing the Alpha Certificate statement of language proficiency, which has 6 proficiency levels, cross-referenced to CEFR levels, and valid for two years. This validity period is currently under review; Alpha Centre website information informs that the validity may well extend beyond this if further courses or experience in a language have taken place. Monthly testing sessions take place on Saturdays. The reputation of Alpha Centre testing and of the Alpha certificate is high, both in the local area and beyond. Future planned development is a redesign of the assessment grids, making use of corpus analysis and teacher consultation.

Organisation and supervision of student testing for placement in both departments are the responsibility of the Language Teaching Director. Responsibility for Alpha Centre test design, assembling Romanian language tests from the item bank, recruiting, and managing and training evaluators and invigilators for exam sessions, lies with Language Testing Director.

There is full information available at the Alpha Centre regarding preparation courses, self-study, and entry for public examinations such as IELTS and Cambridge Assessment exams, DELF/DALF, DELE, Goethe SprachDiplom etc

Points of Excellence

4.1-4.5 are excellent. The qualified expertise, experience, and operational practice of language assessment is comprehensive and outstanding, including:

- Alpha Centre placement procedures which are highly effective, include impressive CEFR descriptor referenced self-assessment, and provides detailed individual self-study advice
- Formative and summative assessment
- Rigorous Romanian course assessment, with validation and moderation techniques to a high standard, and published material contributing to this area
- Excellent final testing and certification for both courses in Romanian, and the Alpha Certificate for second languages
- Excellent information and preparation for external exams

Recommendations

- Consider how the approach to formative assessment may be better standardized, both for Romanian and other language courses

Requirements: none



5. Academic Resources (Eaquals General Charter 1.2, 1.3; Charter for Course Participants 2.5)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found some Points of Excellence in this category (Grade 1.5)

- 5.1 The coursebooks or other core course materials, online learning platforms and resources, and reference materials reflect course objectives and the methodology used.
- 5.2 There is a system for monitoring learning material developed in-house.
- 5.3 All equipment and electronic connectivity is accessible and well maintained.

The Head of the Romanian Department, the Alpha Centre Director of Teaching, Director of Teaching and Testing and others have co-authored high quality communicative-approach course books for Romanian as a foreign or second language. These are among the core texts used by the DRLCC for its courses, they are also used around Romania and globally, therefore this resource creation initiative was considered a strength by the inspection team. Core text content is topical and relevant to student needs and the institutional aim of teaching language as communication, as is the use of supplementary resources.

There is a Romanian Department resources room which is well-furnished with Romanian language teaching texts and reference materials, additional materials for the teaching of Romanian culture and literature, as well as further resources for the teaching of the subject-specific Romanian units: medical, technical/economic, or social/artistic/humanistic. There are also support materials for class use such as sets of flash cards and visuals which are well-organised and easily accessible. Teachers can also use the two recording studios of the Faculty of Letters and the Faculty of Theology, where they can produce their own audio materials. These facilities, and the quality of the material generated from them, is impressive.

Students receive a library card in order to have access to the Central University Library, one of the largest libraries in the country.

Similarly, the Alpha Centre has a comprehensive resources library of current, methodologically communicative and/or task-based course books, reference works, and supplementary materials in the languages it offers. The Office Manager oversees and assembles the in-house resources packs needed by teachers before each teaching session, while some lesson materials may be prepared by teachers off-site, or using the same Faculty resources mentioned above.

Monitoring of the quality and relevance of in-house resources is the responsibility of the Director of Teaching, new materials may be requested, then approved and signed off by the heads of department, with the finalised requests for the acquisition of new resources being made by the Equipment and Supply Manager. There is awareness of, and adherence to copyright law, with teaching staff being informed of copyright requirements, and compliance monitoring in place.

Classroom teaching and learning resources are overseen by the Equipment and Supply Manager. There is some variation: some classes are furnished with whiteboards, a few with blackboards, there are fixed projectors in some and laptops and mobile projectors available, interactive white boards in some classes, two computer rooms, and other rooms with enough PCs for students to use in pairs. Wi-fi is provided throughout, though strength can vary. Classes change rooms in order to access different facilities.

The Equipment and Supply (IT) Engineer takes care of the maintenance of technical equipment: on the whole, it was seen to function well, though as stated under Teaching and Learning certain features such as interactive boards and live internet were not seen in lesson use. Both the IT engineer and teachers in the focus group stated that the quality of educational technology –hardware and software- was somewhat variable, and to some extent outdated, affecting speed and use-ability. Purchases of new equipment tend to be made in bulk, and subject to a tendering process. Despite financial constraints the Management of the Faculty of Letters is very supportive in acquiring new equipment and materials for both the Romanian Department and the Alpha Centre.



Points of Excellence

- 5.1 is excellent due to the variety and quality of the course material, in particular the coursebooks for the teaching and learning of Romanian written by the Directors, the visual material used in class, and the facilities for creation of materials in both Alpha Centre and Romanian Department
- 5.2 is excellent due to the care exerted in the monitoring and development of new materials in these two departments

Recommendations

- **As and when budget allows, upgrade the quality of classroom resources so that all have a modern white board and projection facilities to enable internet access.**
- **When finances permit, upgrade educational technology to enable faster access and improved functionality.**

Requirements: none



6. Learning Environment (Eaquals General Charter 1, Charter for Course Participants 2.3; Staff Charter 2)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found that the Language Education Centre meets Eaquals criteria for this category (Grade 2)

- 6.1 The teaching and study environment meets the requirements of course programmes and learners.
- 6.2 Any non-pedagogical facilities and/or spaces required for the services offered are fit for purpose and well maintained.
- 6.3 Arrangements are made to protect the health and ensure the safety of learners and staff.

The offices of the Romanian Department and Alpha Centre are each on the ground floor of the Faculty of Letters, an historic building, and a former monastery. The offices are close to the main entrance which is clearly signed as the Faculty of Letters. The building has a rear half-cloister with a garden and seating, accessible to staff and students in warm weather. Classrooms are to be found over the ground, first and second floors of the impressively proportioned Faculty building. The Alpha Centre office is multifunctional, being the staff room, meeting room, reception, and in post office hours may be used as a classroom. There are some small classroom spaces close to the Alpha Centre office for small group and one-to-one lessons, and there is a resource preparation area with photocopier.

Classrooms varied considerably in size, but all were fit for purpose in terms of size, natural and artificial lighting, comfort, ventilation, sound insulation, and heating (the inspection taking place during winter). Notice boards were adequately sized and content well-managed.

Classroom furniture was also appropriate, though desk arrangement was frequently in rows, sometimes providing seating for more than the maximum class size of 15, therefore often not allowing sufficient space for ease of re-arrangement into configurations which would be more conducive to communicative groupings (horseshoe, island, space for mingling etc), although creditably in some classes such layouts had been temporarily managed.

Besides the seven classrooms the Romanian Department has 4 offices where teachers can prepare for their classes.

There is a small Faculty of Letters recreation room/cafeteria for the Romanian Department students with light refreshments, and around the spacious university corridors there are some drinks and snacks vending machines. Other than this, break out and recreational space in the immediate vicinity of the classrooms is limited.

There is an adequate number of clean toilet facilities, though hand drying provision was missing in some.

There is good attention to health and safety, the Faculty responsibility for this lying with the Accounting Manager. Measures include:

- 5 designated medical points with first-aid trained administrative staff assigned to one of these, and with correctly stocked first aid boxes
- Annual training for all tenured staff in fire/natural hazard and medical emergency procedure. Untenured staff are trained by administrative heads in each department such as the Alpha Centre Office Manager. An annually updated health and safety training booklet is produced, and any ongoing updates are attended to.
- Emergency evacuation routes are posted in each class, in staff rooms, and on public noticeboards. Emergency exit routes are clearly marked.
- Fire evacuation drills have not been that frequent (none in the last 5 years), though one is scheduled for October 2017



- Any departmental social activities involve the health and safety training of teachers and accompanying staff.
- There are fire extinguishers and hydrants, regularly checked

Recommendations

- **Ensure that emergency evacuation drills take place at least annually.**
- Consider if a larger room for the cafeteria / student recreation might be made available for student use during breaks
- Introduce paper towels for hand drying in toilets where they are lacking

Requirements: none



7. Client Services (Eaquals General Charter 2.3;, 3.1; Charter For Course Participants 2.8)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found that the Language Education Centre meets Eaquals criteria for this category (Grade 2)

7.1 Advice and support is available to learners and sponsors throughout the course, including welfare arrangements, where appropriate.

7.2 There are systems for monitoring and administering the provision of any leisure programme and/or accommodation. Any social programme takes account of learners' interests.

The Office Manager of the Alpha Centre is the staff member immediately responsible for client services and client administration, and she holds a diploma in customer support. The role includes being the go-to contact for the teaching team regarding timetables and course documentation (signed off monthly for teacher payment), resources preparation, and general communication and administration, for example for students' attendance and assessment. Additionally, she is the principal initial point of contact for existing clients, and new client enquiries. She is also involved in local publicity for the centre, and in management of its social media pages. Both teachers and students were appreciative of her efficiency and positive support.

Foreign students on Romanian language programmes have a first stage of contact with the university through the Centre of International Cooperation. They are each assigned a Tutor, who acts as their guide and inductor in the first instance. Ongoing client service support for the Romanian Department (for students on the preparatory year, Erasmus and short course programmes) is the domain of the Head Secretary of the Faculty and her departmental secretaries. Secretariat support includes assistance in obtaining residence permits, general living advice including transport (free or discounted for students) and further pastoral advice and help if requested. Students in their focus group stated that they had felt welcomed and supported by the Faculty on arrival in Cluj.

There are no social events arranged for students in either Alpha Centre or Romanian Department, although as part of the Romanian Culture and Civilisation study it is usual for the teachers and classes to arrange trips and excursions. Foreign students on the Preparatory Year programme considered this as something that could be improved, so that they could socialise more, and get the chance to speak more Romanian socially to boost confidence and competence. There are, however, university clubs and societies, and some social/recreational activities at the halls of residence.

Summer short courses, such as the Arizona State University programme, have excursions and social programme included. The participants' welfare care and security for "closed" foreign language group activities has to meet the regulatory standards of both BBU and those of the students' home educational institution.

Some Preparatory year and Erasmus students live in university residence blocks. These were found to be comfortable and well-equipped rooms can accommodate up to 5 students each. Students can use facilities such as: a library room with free wi-fi, an entertainment area with fitness devices and billiard table, a kitchen on each floor where they can cook their meals, a suitable number of showers and toilets on each floor, in the basement a place with washing machines where they can do their laundry, etc. Students in the focus group were content, overall, with their halls accommodation, though they stated that in some cases they had shared with same-nationality and mother tongue students, and there was also a request for rooms for married couples. The buildings are 10-storied blocks, dating from the communist area, and they are being refurbished floor by floor, with work still in progress. There is also the intention to extend internet access in all rooms by implementing a million euro project. The administrative managers of these residence halls are aware that a lot is still to be done and try to improve living conditions constantly and gradually.

Recommendations



- To enhance informal Romanian language practice and the social experience, consider introducing some social events, particularly at the beginning and end of the academic year, for foreign students on preparatory year or Erasmus programmes, such as: weekly gatherings for informal discussion (“Stammtisch”-style), cultural outings, tandem “language buddy” exchanges with Romanian speakers, WhatsApp interest groups and Facebook pages etc
- Continue the project to improve the facilities in student halls of residence
- Consider providing rooms for married couples.

Requirements: none



8. Quality Assurance (Eaquals General Charter 1.3; Charter for Course Participants 2.2, 2.7, 3.2; Staff Charter 4, 6)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found some Points of Excellence in this category (Grade 1.5)

8.1 There are systems to foster a culture of quality through continuous evaluation, reflection and action.

8.2 The learning experience is fully monitored by management systems (including regular classroom observations) which are used to improve the quality of all services.

8.3 There are procedures which enable learners and sponsors to give regular feedback relating to the academic and other services provided.

Attention to quality and pride in its delivery was evident in all interviews with staff, both in Romanian Department and Alpha Centre. During internal meetings in either department, therefore, standards of service reportedly feature as a matter of course, with a desire to maintain their respected local and national reputation. For the Romanian Department this is formalised annually as a Quality Management Plan, part of which involves the expansion of accreditation by external bodies such as Eaquals and ALTE.

From the time of the Alpha Centre's foundation, the quality of its language testing service has been central, and it remains so. As has already been described in section 4, test creation follows rigorous evaluation procedures, and the same rigour applies to evaluator training and standardisation. The Director of Language Testing conducts and evaluates post-test feedback from test-takers.

Quality control of language training activities in both Romanian and other language (Alpha) courses is via:

- Monitoring of lesson plans and monthly schemes of work by the Language Teaching Director (off-site courses) and Language Testing Director (on-site courses).
- Evaluative observations for new teachers, and at least one observation per year for all teaching staff, and one per 30 hour course being the target for the Alpha Centre. These follow an in-depth procedure which includes planning, a full two hour observation (double lessons being timetabled), a post observation focus group with the students, a teacher reflection exercise, a very detailed and extensive inspection report, and post observation interview.
- The outcomes of teacher observations influence in-service training programmes for both centres
- Close attention and checking of course requirements against learning contracts for in-company and off-site courses by the Language Teaching Director
- The use of regular learner feedback questionnaires (after each 30-hour course for Alpha, at end-of-semester for the Romanian Department), and follow-up action there from where needed. Earlier course questionnaire feedback may be of value, although Alpha Centre teachers reported that they use self-designed lesson feedback forms close attention to any problems or complaints, though these are evidently few in number. Complaints and appeal policies and procedures for the Romanian Department follow BBU regulations. This involves students at the orientation session being issued with and taken through a comprehensive document explaining their rights and obligations according to university statutes, and to whom and how they should complain if they feel unfairly treated either in academic or administrative spheres. The appropriate contact emails are communicated via an introductory leaflet, and the students are guided to the student area of the university and faculty websites. Procedures include the right of referral to the appropriate external regulatory bodies should they be in dispute about the handling of their complaint.

In the Alpha Centre, communication at the beginning of course informs students to submit questions or complaints by email to the secretarial office. The Alpha Centre Director responds to complaints, as



specified in her job description.

- There was no written policy in the Alpha Department for dealing with complaints, though this lack would not appear to detract from the evident handling of any issues which arise. Students and staff were clear regarding which staff members they should approach in case of problems.

Points of Excellence

- 8.1 represents a point of excellence, due to the considered approach to achieving, maintaining, and extending an ethos and delivery of high quality in both the Romanian Department and Alpha Centre.
- 8.2 is excellent as a result of the close attention to course planning and delivery by academic management, and the highly developed system of lesson observation.

Recommendations

None

Requirements: none



9. Staff Profile and Development (Charter for Course Participants 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.7 ; Staff Charter 5, 6, 8,)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found some Points of Excellence in this category (Grade 1.5)

- 9.1 The competences, experience and qualifications of managers, teachers and administrative staff are relevant and adequate for each area of responsibility.
- 9.2 There are systems to provide appropriate support and guidance for all staff including a regular staff performance review.
- 9.3 There is a formal framework to assure appropriate continuous professional development for all staff.

All staff in both Alpha Centre and Romanian Department are fully qualified for their roles, whether as teachers, administrative staff, or as managers. There are faculty guidelines for staff recruitment. The acceptable base level of qualification for teaching in a Romanian university context is to have a Master's degree and at least be working towards a PhD, since all university teaching staff are supposed to be qualified to that level. Classroom pedagogy is included in the progression of study, at least at BA and/or MA level. In practice, the large majority of teaching staff, both department heads and all directors are qualified to PhD level, frequently in Philology, and furthermore they are largely ex-students of BBU. The qualifications and employment records of any external candidates for positions are strictly checked.

The Directors have been in their roles for a number of years, therefore being more than adequately experienced. The Alpha Centre Director is a member of the Faculty of Letters teaching English Philology and has a PhD in Philology, an MA in Studies in American Literature and Linguistics, a BA in English and Romanian Philology and a Cambridge Proficiency Certificate at grade A. She has been the executive director since 2012 and previously was the Director of Studies and Language Testing Certification Evaluator for ten years. She was also a test developer during that time. She has been a teacher of English since 1999. Her Language Teaching Director holds a university teaching certificate, an ALTE Auditing System Certificate, an MA in The Dynamics of Contemporary Romanian Language and Discourse Analysis and a BA in Romanian and English Philology. She has held her position for eight years, having previously been a teacher and language testing and certification evaluator and test developer at the centre since 2004. She is also a member of the DRLCC, where she teaches Romanian. The Director of Language Testing has a PhD in Philology, an MA in Integralist Linguistics, an ALTE Auditing System Certificate and a BA in Philology (Romanian and English). She also holds a Teacher Certificate. She has been in her current position for five years but has been a language testing and certification evaluator and test developer since 2006. She also works in the DRLCC teaching Romanian. The Head of the Romanian Department is also highly qualified with a PhD in Philology and Teacher Training Certificate and has participated in numerous research projects. She is also highly experienced, having been employed by the university since 1994 and having developed the DRLCC to its current point.

All teaching staff receive induction packs and full induction training in teaching, planning and testing procedures. The majority of administrative staff are also teachers and as such receive an excellent level of CPD. The few administrative staff who are not also on academic teams receive full induction, with most ongoing training development being on-the-job.

Teacher training is the responsibility of the Director of Teaching, while assessment training – both for Romanian exams for the Preparatory Year and Erasmus courses, and for the Alpha test - falls to the Director of Language testing. Broadly speaking, training falls into two categories: 1 Operational training to update and standardise staff in course planning and assessment procedure 2 Developmental training to enhance or extend skills – these may be linked to the outcomes of lesson observation. In-service training sessions in the Romanian department are organized according to a schedule, following the semester pattern with at least one input session and workshop per semester, while teachers in the Alpha Centre receive training in sessions arranged in accordance with varying teaching schedules, languages, etc. There are opportunities for



staff to receive training at external events, with follow-up cascading of new skills or knowledge acquired. These tended to be almost exclusively academic events. There are numerous examples of participation in national or international conferences (as part of professional development for university teachers):

- The Director of Teaching has participated at Eaquals and ALTE conferences, attends regularly the QUEST Annual Meetings, and in October 2016 in Iasi at a conference and QUEST meeting.
- At conferences, important publishers and their distributors in Romania are invited and they display books, CDs in all areas of language education: testing, exam preparation, coursebooks, etc in English, German, and French
- Departmental staff participate in national and international projects.
- There is also participation in the events organised by the Cultural Centres: British Council, Goethe Institut, Cervantes, and Institut Francais.

Annual appraisals take place for all staff, and are carried out by the appropriate line managers. The appraisal format involves self, and peer reflection and evaluation, annual development and achievements, and future agreed development aims. Every four years of continuous employment there is a more in-depth reflective appraisal session.

Points of Excellence

- 9.1 is excellent due to the outstanding degree standards, ongoing CPD, national and international training events and project participation of particularly the Directors, but also many others on the academic staff.
- 9.2 Is excellent due to the excellent support and professional review system for staff, and the encouragement of teaching staff in particular to develop their skills profiles

Recommendations

- **Include the recommendations under section 2 Teaching and Learning in future in-house CPD sessions**
- **Ensure the small number of non-teaching admin staff (secretaries, IT staff etc) get more training opportunities, appropriate to their ongoing CPD.**

Requirements: none



10. Staff Employment Terms (Staff Charter 1,2, 3, 4, 5,6, 7, 8 9.10)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found that the Language Education Centre meets Eaquals criteria for this category (Grade 1)

10.1 All staff hold current employment contracts; these conform to local requirements, as confirmed by the statutory declaration of the institution.

10.2 The terms and conditions of employment offered to staff are fair and comply with all statutory requirements as stated in a statutory declaration made by the LEC.

All teaching staff are fully contracted, the vast majority being tenured, i.e. permanently contracted to the University of Babes Bolyai, at the appropriate tertiary education grade and remuneration levels: associate, assistant, or senior lecturer and associate or assistant professor. Many therefore have other teaching duties in the Faculty of Letters, for example, in English, in Romanian, in other languages, in Philology, on a teacher training course, etc. Pay levels are in compliance with the Romanian legislation. Staff terms and conditions are in line with the university norms which are regulated by the Ministry of Education, and also with the Eaquals Staff Charter.

Due to the unpredictable course bookings of the Alpha Centre, teaching employees in that department are employed on zero-hours contracts (in addition to their Faculty contracts, if tenured) while those of the Romanian Department have guaranteed hours, five being full-time, 7 being on fixed-term hourly contracts. All administrative staff are contracted on appropriate administration grades, in some cases, such as in that of the Alpha Centre Office Manager, they are also teachers or trainee teachers and/or evaluators. Any non-tenured staff are also employed on appropriate freelance or fixed term agreements.

Overall, as a university employer, the contracts and terms of employment are of a very high standard in the local environment, with an extensive HR department overseeing these. Many staff have been in employment at BBU for long periods, and career progression opportunities are considerable.

Points of Excellence

10.1 and 10.2 are excellent because:

- The LEC offers an excellent package of terms and conditions, safeguarding staff security and assuring staff welfare.
- There are opportunities for permanent or continuous employment for a significant proportion of staff.
- There are opportunities within the LEC for promotion and career progression.

Recommendations: none

Requirements: none



11. Internal Communications (Eaquals General Charter 1.1, 2.3; Staff Charter 1, 4, 8, 10)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found that the Language Education Centre meets Eaquals criteria for this category (Grade 2)

- 11.1 The responsibilities, lines of accountability and channels of communication among members of management and/or staff are clearly defined and documented.
- 11.2 There is formal, documented, communication and consultation between staff and managers, scheduled as appropriate.
- 11.3 Information is available to staff about the institution, its mission and any planned developments.
- 11.4 Grievance and disciplinary procedures are in place for staff and are known to them.
- 11.5 Information about Eaquals and its resources is available to staff and learners.

There is a full organisational chart, familiar to staff, making clear lines of responsibility within and between the Alpha Centre and Romanian Department, and the wider Faculty of Letters. All staff have up-to-date job descriptions.

Support and communication to and from the Dean's Office is good, with weekly meetings scheduled with the two heads of department. There was a very positive message of pride and respect from the Vice Dean for the work of the Alpha Centre and Romanian Department.

Romanian department dissemination of information to staff and students is from the Faculty Secretariat for course dates, enrolment, course management, the administration and approval of course records, etc. The Alpha Centre, as a commercial arm of the Faculty, operates more or less autonomously in these areas, but reports to the Secretariat. Students in their focus group, staff in theirs and in staff interviews all reported that communication was good, enabling operations to run smoothly.

In the Alpha Centre there are weekly, staff/management meetings of the board of 3 directors and the Office Manager. Important decisions and actions are recorded. Given the open-plan office configuration and high level of cooperation, further inter-staff communication is seamless and ongoing from day to day. Whole staff meetings, given the number of teaching staff employed, are restricted to 3 or 4 per year. These meetings are documented. One of these includes a staff and departmental needs analysis and consultation of staff opinion for planning purposes during the coming academic year.

Documented whole staff meetings in the Romanian Department take place at least twice each semester. The Head of Department, the Language Teaching Director and Language Teaching and Testing Director meet very often for exam preparations, academic management of Romanian courses, material design and other day-to-day administrative issues.

For teachers in both departments there are teachers' dossiers with induction and general information materials. Similarly, there are student induction packs containing what they need to know at course start. Neither department uses online platforms extensively to communicate with staff and students, although there is considerable use of email correspondence.

Grievance and disciplinary procedures with respect to both students and staff are included in Faculty of Letters regulations. These are available to staff and students in written form, and are posted in common areas such as the Faculty of Letters ground floor corridor, and in staff rooms.

Considering this was a first inspection, there was teaching staff, and to some extent, student comprehension of Eaquals' purpose and remit.

Recommendations

- When developmental budgets allow, consider introducing online platforms for learner and client

management in the Romanian Department and the Alpha Centre.

Requirements: none



12.External Communications (Information Charter 1-7)

Verdict statement:

The Inspectors found that the Language Education Centre meets Eaquals criteria for this category (Grade 2)

12.1 All promotional materials accurately describe the institution's learning services: the range and functionality of resources and/or online tools offered, and other services and facilities.

12.2 Contractual information provided to learners and sponsors is accurate and complete, and expressed in easily understood language.

12.3 Accredited members make information about Eaquals publicly available; they display the Eaquals Charters publicly, and use the Eaquals logo correctly.

All promotional materials and media provide accurate factual information about course content and delivery, fees structure, and also very clearly showing the CEFR levels used, with descriptors. The Romanian Department website is simple with clear and well-organised tabs giving essential information to course participants and external inquirers. The Alpha Centre site is reasonably functional but information is presented in lists of academic content and testing formats rather than more visually or intuitively, aimed at the "customer experience". There are two identical tabs for Romanian Language courses – this appears to be a technical fault. As a commercial centre, the inspectors considered that the Alpha Centre would benefit from a more user-friendly and visually attractive website.

Hard and e-copy promotional materials such as leaflets are also available for particular courses, such as the Romanian Preparatory Year. There are also student guides in a number of languages, again in electronic or hard-copy format. A large part of these guides is made up of description and complete samples of assessments, such as the Alpha test.

Use of Eaquals logo: not applicable. Association and participation with Eaquals, including a link to the website is present on the Romanian Department website.

Recommendations

- **Consider a re-design of the Alpha Centre website to be more commercially attractive, and customer-friendly, bringing the below areas more to the fore:**
 - **The Alpha Centre identity, mission, products, etc**
 - **Flexible course design to suit individual clients**
 - **Learner aims and needs, and support for their learner experience**

Requirements: none



Section Four: Summary

Summary of Points of Excellence.

1	Management and Administration
	1.2 is excellent due to the strong yet consensual, mutually supportive leadership approach in both Alpha Centre and Romanian Department, and positive coordinated interaction and reporting to the Dean's Office. Staff are both supported and consulted. - Administrative processes are functional, detailed and complete.
3	Course Design and Supporting Systems
	3.3 is excellent due to: - Detailed and meaningful reference to the CEFR - Comprehensive syllabus documents and frameworks for creation of learning objectives in Schemes of Work and lesson plans, and monitoring of these - Clear descriptions of course content, communicated to learners - Flexible adaptation of syllabi to meet the needs of private clients
4	Assessment and Certification
	4.1-4.5 are excellent. The qualified expertise, experience, and operational practice of language assessment is comprehensive and outstanding, including: - Alpha Centre placement procedures which are highly effective, include impressive CEFR descriptor referenced self-assessment, and provides detailed individual self-study advice - Formative and summative assessment - Rigorous Romanian course assessment, with validation and moderation techniques to a high standard, and published material contributing to this area - Excellent final testing and certification for both courses in Romanian, and the Alpha Certificate for second languages - Excellent information and preparation for external exams
5	Academic Resources
	5.1 is excellent due to the variety and quality of the course material, in particular the coursebooks for the teaching and learning of Romanian written by the Directors, the visual material used in class, and the facilities for creation of materials in both Alpha Centre and Romanian Department 5.2 is excellent due to the care exerted in the monitoring and development of new materials in these two departments
8	Quality Assurance
	8.1 represents a point of excellence, due to the considered approach to achieving, maintaining, and extending an ethos and delivery of high quality in both the Romanian Department and Alpha Centre. 8.2 is excellent as a result of the close attention to course planning and delivery by academic management, and the highly developed system of lesson observation.
9	Staff Profile and Development
	9.1 is excellent due to the outstanding degree standards, ongoing CPD, national and international training events and project participation of particularly the Directors, but also many others on the



	academic staff. 9.2 Is excellent due to the excellent support and professional review system for staff, and the encouragement of teaching staff in particular to develop their skills profiles
10	Staff Employment Terms 10.1 and 10.2 are excellent because: • The LEC offers an excellent package of terms and conditions, safeguarding staff security and assuring staff welfare. • There are opportunities for permanent or continuous employment for a significant proportion of staff. • There are opportunities within the LEC for promotion and career progression.

Summary of recommendations, priorities in bold

1	Management and Administration
	• Consider inclusion of institutional biographical information on the Alpha Centre website, and in publicity. • For both DRLCC and Alpha Centre, consider the potential value of developing individualised Mission statements • Alpha Centre Management may consider the future development of language assessment which can be offered more spontaneously in response to customer demand, without compromising its professional integrity and reputation as a leader in reliable language testing • Consider logging management and staff meeting records in the form of departmental action plans, so as to monitor and update progress on plans and developments, establish deadlines where needed, etc. • Work towards more use of electronic and online media for student management and communication
2	Teaching and Learning
	• Describe lesson plan aims in terms of learner communicative competences, rather than – or as well as – language structure • Work on the long-term aim of enhancing quality and quantity of student talk during lessons through reduction of teacher talking, and through enhanced preparation for and modelling of student-to-student interactions • Set reasonable time limits for activities and keep to them so that a wider range of tasks can be offered • Clarify for learners how errors are to be handled in different lesson stages • Use judgement to avoid coursebook gap-filling exercises as class activities unless they can be handled communicatively/motivationally • Regarding the use of classroom educational technology: consider ongoing training and sharing of IWB best practice, and the possible use of mobile apps, mobile internet etc to streamline some classroom practice, save on paper and photocopying, and add the interest and relevance of new media to the learning experience • Consider further development of course input online, exploring the possibility of blended delivery, particularly for Alpha Centre courses
3	Course Design and Supporting Systems



	Consider strategies to ensure that <i>all</i> teachers apply the principle, adopted by the great majority, of creatively adapting course programmes and materials to learners' needs
4	Assessment and Certification
	Consider how the approach to formative assessment may be better standardized, both for Romanian and other language courses
5	Academic Resources
	As and when budget allows, upgrade the quality of classroom resources so that all have a modern white board and projection facilities to enable internet access. When finances permit, upgrade educational technology to enable faster access and improved functionality.
6	Learning Environment
	Ensure that emergency evacuation drills take place at least annually. - Consider if a larger room for the cafeteria / student recreation might be made available for student use during breaks - Introduce paper towels for hand drying in toilets where they are lacking
7	Client Services
	To enhance informal Romanian language practice and the social experience, consider introducing some social events, particularly at the beginning and end of the academic year, for foreign students on preparatory year or Erasmus programmes, such as: weekly gatherings for informal discussion ("Stammtisch"-style), cultural outings, tandem "language buddy" exchanges with Romanian speakers, WhatsApp interest groups and Facebook pages etc - Continue the project to improve the facilities in student halls of residence - Consider providing rooms for married couples.
9	Staff Profile and Development
	Include the recommendations under section 2 Teaching and Learning in future in-house CPD sessions Ensure the small number of non-teaching admin staff (secretaries, IT staff etc) get more training opportunities, appropriate to their ongoing CPD.
11	Internal Communications
	When developmental budgets allow, consider introducing online platforms for learner and client management in Romanian Department and Alpha Centre.
12	External Communications
	Consider a re-design of the Alpha Centre website to be more commercially attractive, and customer-friendly, bringing the below areas more to the fore: The Alpha Centre identity, mission, products, etc



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Flexible course design to suit individual clients○ Learner aims and needs, and support for their learner experience |
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We confirm that this report is based on evidence found at the time of the Inspection and that our opinion is based on our professional judgement.

DATE 21st February 2017

Signed

John Haagensen

(Reporting inspector)

Signed

Radadiana Calciu

(Co-inspector)