



Accreditation of Study Programmes
Assessment Report

Institution: The State University of Moldova

Study programme: Professional Master in Customs Law and Customs Activity

Assessment committee:

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Dates of the assessment visit: 21/05/15

Assessment committee sent the preliminary report to EKKA: 10.07.2015

Assessment committee received the comments of the institution under accreditation: 20.07.2015

Assessment committee approved the final version of component assessment with 5 votes in favour and 0 votes against.

Date: 07.09.2015

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I Summary of the assessment (mark with 'X'):

	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
Study programme and its development	X		
Teaching and learning		X	
Teaching staff		X	
Students		X	
Resources		X	

General Introduction:

The State University of Moldova (hereinafter referred to as SUM) is a state higher education institution established in 1946 with a mission of educating qualified specialists able to adapt to the changing social and economic conditions, as well as conducting fundamental and applied scientific research and offering various continuous education training programmes. Since 2001, SUM holds the status of an autonomous National University granted by the Government of Moldova and constitutes a unitary, integral and indivisible academic, educational, scientific and cultural center.

As the largest University in Moldova, SUM is providing both full and part-time studies on a wide range of specialties at the Bachelor's level (1st cycle) and the Doctoral level (3rd cycle), and on 125 Master of Research and Professional Master study programmes (2nd cycle) with the corresponding duration of 2 and 1.5 years.

The Law Faculty of SUM was founded in 1959 and continues to be the leading provider of specialists in law in Moldova. The Faculty consists of nine departments: Theory and History of Law, Constitutional Law and Administrative Law, International Law and Law of Foreign Economic Relations, Civil Procedure Law, Civil Law, Business Law, Criminal Law and Criminology, Labour Law and Criminal Procedure and Forensics/Criminalistics, and is

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governed by the Council of the Faculty elected for a term of five years. In academic year 2014/15, SUM conducts studies on 12 Professional Master programmes in the field of law: “Business Law”, “Criminal Law”, “Criminal Procedure Law and Forensics”, Civil Law”, “Civil Judicial Procedures”, “National and European Enforcement Law”, “Labour Law”, “International Law”, “Human Rights”, “Informational Law”, “Customs Law” and “Public Law”.

The Professional Master programme “Customs Law and Customs Activity”, which is being evaluated, is a programme with the duration of 1.5 years of studies, three semesters and 90 credits. The programme was established in 2006 and is managed by the Department of Constitutional and Administrative Law within the Faculty of Law.

Comments:

The study programme is authorized and functions in accordance with the normative acts in force. Considering the majority of the study disciplines within the programme as well as the learning outcomes of the curriculum the title of a study programme is consistent with its content. **However, it is highly recommended to increase the cooperation between the master of law programmes in MSU regarding both the content and conduct of studies.**

The objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme are in correspondence with the European Qualifications Framework. The courses and study disciplines taught within the master’s programme are distinguishable from those offered on the bachelor’s study programme. Study disciplines are presented in a logical succession. The study programme in general follows the major trends of the labour market.

The academic staff is well aware of the objectives of the study programme and of their role in achieving these objectives. It is advisable to pay more attention to developing the students’ English language skills (e.g. include in the curriculum more foreign language materials) and also offer the students some special course(s) on the methodology of legal research.

The Faculty and Department regularly conduct surveys to evaluate learning process and outcomes. However, the Committee received mixed information on whether and how students, alumni and employers are actually involved in the development process: The Department should have a clearer procedure to engage the students, alumni and employers in the development process.

The meeting with teaching staff indicated that a variety of teaching methods are used, and they prefer to use active teaching methods. It is commendable that the teaching staff publishes practical journal articles and teaching materials for their courses. Teaching staff is well aware of the need to keep up with the changes in legal regulations and recent court practice. Still, in order to provide a wider, comparative perspective, it is essential to include non-Moldovan, non-Romanian and non-Russian literature in the syllabi. The library should acquire, as the first step, some well-known up-to-date textbooks on European Union customs law in English.

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The University has agreements or good cooperation with many public and private institutions, where the students can perform their internship. Students in general expressed satisfaction with organisation of internship. However, some students complained that sometimes tutors do not have time to guide them. If this happens, the Department should react quickly to make sure that the internship fulfils its objectives. In order to achieve the necessary learning outcomes, all the internships should be conducted in the field of customs law.

It remains unclear how exactly the assessment methods are chosen and matched to learning outcomes and whether the students receive personal feedback regarding their performance at different assessments in order to support student development.

The necessary regulation appears to be in place for the recognition of prior learning, but there is no actual experience. The Department should consider the possibility of increasing the proportion of elective courses in the curriculum. It provides more choices to students, but also increases the amount of credits that could be transferred after the end of academic mobility and therefore again makes academic mobility more attractive.

Although the students are already being encouraged to participate in scientific conferences and publish articles, the Department should find more ways to involve master students in current or future research projects (also in development activities).

All of the full-time teaching staff hold a PhD degree. The fact that some members of the teaching staff are also involved in practical legal activities related to the disciplines taught can be considered positive. The distribution of staff by age should ensure academic continuity. The members of the teaching staff have adequate teaching competence - the fact that most of them are involved also in practicing legal activities in field similar to disciplines taught is a positive as they can combine the practical experience with their teaching activities.

Apart from providing some continuous education opportunities for the teaching staff, it appears that there are no other staff development measures implemented. At the Faculty management level, it is recommended to establish a comprehensive staff development system that includes also other important elements of staff development, like the implementation of regular appraisal interviews with the teachers.

Members of the academic staff involved in this programme have not actively participated in teaching activities in other foreign institutions. The management should continuously support and encourage the members of the full-time teaching staff to regularly develop their knowledge and skills and participate in international mobility and networks. Measures should be taken to encourage and support the teaching staff to participate in the international research projects and other international scientific activities. Regular goals for the international cooperation should be set and the achievement of those goals should be measured regularly e.g. during quarterly performance reviews of the members of the academic staff. Also, the Department of Constitutional and Administrative Law should actively seek possibilities for involving visiting professors in the teaching on the study programme.

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Compared to internationally acceptable standards, the participation in the international research projects and other international scientific activity needs to be much more active. In order to achieve that, more resources should be found and allocated to research activities. **It is highly recommended to apply for the EU funding already available to Moldova, e.g the Erasmus + programme.**

Research activities of the teaching staff are planned and monitored efficiently.

The students' satisfaction with the study programme is high and they have good informal relationship with the teaching staff. At the moment, mobility options on the study programme are very limited and the academic mobility is virtually non-existent. It is recommended to encourage master students to participate in academic mobility and focus on informing them about the mobility opportunities (for example, hold classes or seminars to introduce the opportunities for academic mobility). In order to help the University in its internationalization (and academic mobility) processes at the University and also at the Faculty level, it is advisable to consider updating and revising the webpage's content in English in order to attract foreign students.

To further support the students, MSU should establish a formalized and effective counselling system for the students – e.g consider to delegate the responsibility of study counselling from professors to trained specialists. Also, students need to be more informed about the additional counselling services Moldova State University (and also the Faculty) is offering.

The committee welcomes the use of modern software by MSU in order to discover plagiarism, yet this approach is only one aspect of plagiarism detection. Therefore, the committee urges the Faculty to adapt a unified and more systematic approach towards preventing plagiarism and actively seek opportunities how to teach students about anti-plagiarism and academic ethics (e.g course for academic writing, master's seminars etc).

Neither SER nor the additional documents provided more detailed data on the employment rate of the graduates. It is recommended that the data regarding the employment of graduates should be collected be more regularly and systematically.

Although the graduation of students per each year meets the legal requirements, it would be in the Faculty's best interests that the causes for dropping out would also be formally collected and analysed.

The budget planning in general is sustainable. However, the Faculty is underfinanced, which according to the understanding of the committee is the reason for many shortcomings described above, e.g. the general salary level of the academic staff, the state of library and the general infrastructure of the Faculty, the low level of academic mobility etc. It would be advisable for the University to try to find some additional resources in order to mitigate the possible risks to the financial sustainability and also upgrade the infrastructure and the library of MSU and also support the mobility of both teaching staff and the students.

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The number of master's degree students on the master's degree program is slightly decreasing but stable which indicates the sustainability of the study programme.

As the Faculty in general was at least partially under renovation, it was not possible for the committee to assess the conformity to the requirements of the teaching and learning environment as a whole. There was dissatisfaction among the students with the learning environment.

ICT devices are available for both Faculty members and students. The computer rooms look modern and meet the basic contemporary standards. The staff and the students are relatively motivated to use ICT techniques. The positive trend is the using of *Moodle* platform providing the students with information regarding the courses online. Still, the existing ICT solutions should be further developed in order to guarantee the existing resources to be fully utilised and to take the usage of modern technologies to the next level, e.g., full e-courses, webinars, video lectures and comparable.

There is almost no foreign literature in the field of law and the books available are rather out-dated. The University should pay attention to the modern sources of information when replenishing the library, investing in international academic databases, training the librarians, teaching staff and students of being able and motivated to use the resources. The library needs major investment, especially regarding field specific legal literature in English, French or German. It is recommended to increase the awareness of students and academic staff of international databases and motivate them to use the few available.

Commendations:

- Good employment rate of the graduates;
- Good qualification of the teaching staff;
- Teaching staff is balanced by age and there is a sign of academic continuity;
- Teaching staff finds time to publish teaching materials for their courses;
- Internship well organized and the University helps the students with a place of internship due to specific agreements or good cooperation with many employers;
- The ratio between master's students and supervisors is favourable;
- The workload of academic staff is well-balanced according to the ratio between teachers and students;
- Budget planning has sustainable character;
- The usage of Moodle platform providing the students information regarding the courses online;
- Students' suggestions and feedback is considered valuable input to the University and faculty;
- Students' satisfaction with the study programme is high.

Recommendations:

- **It is highly recommended to increase the cooperation between the master of law programmes in MSU regarding both the content and conduct of studies.**
- It is advisable to implement a clear system of gathering and taking into account the feedback from all the important stakeholders.
- It is recommended to consider the possibility to increase the proportion of elective courses in the curriculum. It would provide more choices to students, but also increase the amount of credits that could be transferred after the end of academic mobility, and therefore again make academic mobility more attractive to the students.
- It is advisable to pay more attention to developing the students' English language skills (e.g. include in the curriculum more foreign language materials) and also offer the students some special course(s) on the methodology of legal research.
- It is recommended to include more comparative perspective in different areas of the study programme.
- Syllabi should include foreign legal literature (journal articles and books) in addition to literature in Romanian and Russian the library should acquire, as the first step, some well-known up-to-date textbooks on European Union customs law in English.
- In order to achieve the necessary learning outcomes, all the internships should be conducted in the field of customs law.
- It would be advisable to provide students with personal feedback regarding their performance in order to support student development.
- In connection with the recognition of prior learning, it should be considered to increase the proportion of elective courses in the curriculum in order to (1) provide more choices to students and (2) make academic mobility more attractive.
- If the alumni and the employers do not participate in the evaluation of study process, the Department should involve them as they can provide useful feedback.
- It is recommended to involve master students in broader research and development activities (beyond their individual research).
- At the Faculty management level, it is recommended to establish a comprehensive staff development system that includes also other important elements of staff development, like the implementation of regular appraisal interviews with the teachers.
- It is recommended to increase academic mobility and invite more visiting professors from foreign institutions;
- The academic staff should be encouraged to obtain international experience and supported to participate in the international research projects and other international scientific activities. At the Faculty management level a system should be created that supports and encourages the members of the full-time teaching staff to regularly develop their knowledge and skills at foreign higher education institutions and participate in international networks. Regular goals for the international cooperation should be set and the achievement of those goals should be measured regularly e.g. during quarterly performance reviews of the members of the academic staff.
- The Department of Constitutional and Administrative Law should actively seek possibilities for involving visiting professors in the teaching on the study programme.

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- Compared to internationally acceptable standards, the participation in the international research projects and other international scientific activity needs to be much more active. In order to achieve that, more resources should be found and allocated to research activities. **It is highly recommended to apply for the EU funding already available to Moldova, e.g the Erasmus + programme.**
- MSU should establish a formalized and effective counselling system for the students – e.g consider to delegate the responsibility of study counselling from professors to trained specialists. Also, students need to be more informed about the additional counselling services Moldova State University (and also the Faculty) is offering.
- The faculty should encourage master students to participate in academic mobility and focus on informing them about the mobility opportunities (for example classes or seminars to introduce the opportunities for academic mobility).
- In order to help the University in its internationalization (and academic mobility) processes at the University and also at the Faculty level, updating and revising the webpage's content in English in order to attract foreign students should be considered.
- It is recommended to adapt a unified and systematic approach towards preventing plagiarism and seek opportunities how to teach students about anti-plagiarism and academic ethics (e.g course for academic writing, master's seminars etc). Implementing anti-plagiarism software is a positive improvement but there is room for further improvements.
- It is recommended to seek ways how to formally strengthen the ties with graduates (alumni club, events for graduates, satisfaction surveys for alumni etc).
- It is recommended that the data regarding the employment of graduates should be collected be more regularly and systematically.
- It would be in the interests of the Department to formally collect and analyze the causes for dropping out.
- It would be advisable for the University to try to find some additional resources in order to mitigate the possible risks to the financial sustainability and also upgrade the infrastructure and the library of MSU and also support the mobility of both teaching staff and the students.
- The University should pay attention to the modern sources of information when replenishing the library, investing in international academic databases, training the librarians, teaching staff and students of being able and motivated to use the resources. The library needs major investment, especially regarding field specific legal literature in English, French or German.
- It is recommended to increase the awareness of students and academic staff of international databases and motivate them to use the few available.
- The existing ICT solutions should be further developed in order to guarantee the existing resources to be fully utilised and to take the usage of modern technologies to the next level, e.g., full e-courses, webinars, video lectures and comparable.

Recommendation to the Ministry of Education

- According to the Framework Plan for higher education (Order of the Ministry of Education no 455 of 2011 § 62) for the master studies, a course shall have 5/10/15 credits and subsequently one semester shall plan 6-2 courses/modules. This means that all courses on master's level must have the same amount of ECTS (5 ECTS) with the same number of contact hours and hours for individual work. Some

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courses also are “combined courses” and they offer 10 ECTS. The assessment committee recommends considering changing this rule in order to enable the universities offering master’s level programmes some additional flexibility and to support the academic mobility.

II Assessment areas and requirements

1. STUDY PROGRAMME AND ITS DEVELOPMENT	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
mark with ‘X’	X		
<p>Collected evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-evaluation report (SER); • Annexes of SER; • Internal regulations; • Additional documents received during the site visit; • Interviews with the management, teaching staff, students, graduates, employers. 			
<p>General comments:</p> <p>Based on available documents and on the discussions during the assessment visit the assessment committee is convinced that the master’s programme in Customs Law and Customs Activity substantially conforms to requirements.</p> <p>The study programme is authorized and functions in accordance with the normative acts in force. Considering the majority of the study disciplines within the programme as well as the learning outcomes of the curriculum the title of a study programme is consistent with its content. However, it is highly recommended to increase the cooperation between the master of law programmes in MSU regarding both the content and conduct of studies.</p> <p>The objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme are in correspondence with the European Qualifications Framework. The courses and study disciplines taught within the master’s programme are distinguishable from those offered on the bachelor’s study programme. Study disciplines are presented in a logical succession. The study programme in general follows the major trends of the labour market.</p> <p>The academic staff is well aware of the objectives of the study programme and of their role in achieving these objectives.</p> <p>It is advisable to pay more attention to developing the students’ English language skills (e.g. include in the curriculum more foreign language materials) and also offer the students some special course(s) on the methodology of legal research.</p>			
<p>Commendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development structure ensures sustainability and continuous development • The academic staff is well aware of the objectives of the study programme and of their role in achieving these objectives. • Graduates acquire skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the labour market 			

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<p><u>Recommendations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is highly recommended to increase the cooperation between the master of law programmes in MSU regarding both the content and conduct of studies. • Although the feedback of students, employers and other stakeholders is to some extent taken into account when developing the study programme, it is advisable to implement a clear system of gathering and taking into account the feedback from all the important stakeholders. • It is recommended to consider the possibility to increase the proportion of elective courses in the curriculum. It would provide more choices to students, but also increase the amount of credits that could be transferred after the end of academic mobility, and therefore again make academic mobility more attractive to the students. • Recommendation to the Ministry of Education: The system of distributing the amount of ECTS is only partially internationally comparable because according to the Framework Plan for higher education (Order of the Ministry of Education no 455 of 2011 § 62) for the master studies, a course shall have 5/10/15 credits and subsequently one semester shall plan 6-2 courses/modules. This means that all courses on master's level must have the same amount of ECTS (5 ECTS) with the same number of contact hours and hours for individual work. Some courses also are "combined courses" and they offer 10 ECTS. The assessment committee recommends considering changing this rule in order to enable the universities offering Masters level programs some additional flexibility and to support the academic mobility. • It is advisable to pay more attention to developing the students' English language skills (e.g. include in the curriculum more foreign language materials) and also offer the students some special course(s) on the methodology of legal research. 	
<p>1.1. REQUIREMENT: A higher education institution regularly plans its development: the higher education institution has a development plan accompanied by an action plan to ensure sustainability both in the institution and in a given study programme. The implementation of the action plan is analysed and forms the basis for planning of the next development period.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>According to the information obtained during the assessment visit, the new strategic plan of SUM for years 2015 – 2020 shall be established after the election of the new Rector which takes place in October, 2015. In terms of development, the Rector informed the committee that the priority issues for SUM are quality assurance, scientific research and also, modernizing the infrastructure of the University.</p> <p>Concerning the level of the law programmes, the management found it important to have more impact on local level and create a competitive framework for new talents. Fighting counterfeit and corruption was underlined as a key issue regarding the development of the law programmes.</p>	

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According to the management (the Rector and Vice-Rector), in the interests of more profound studies, the master programmes in law should be consolidated, as there is currently a surplus of the programmes. The committee was informed that starting from June 1st 2015, there shall only be 5 law departments at SUM.

There is a Strategic Development Plan in place for the Faculty of Law for years 2012 – 2017 that is also accompanied by an action plan.

The master program “Customs Law and Customs Activity” is developed according to the University's strategic plan ([Appendix B.1.1.1](#)); the Strategic plan of the faculty ([Appendix B.1.1.2](#)) and the Strategic plan of the department ([Appendix B.1.1.3](#)). In order to achieve the strategic plan, the department regularly designs its action plan ([Appendix B.1.1.4](#)), which is also coordinated with the action plan of the faculty, University and the law field. Implementation of the plan is analysed and the conclusions are the basis for planning further development periods. In this context, along with national acts, MSU has established a procedure for initiation, approval, monitoring and periodic evaluation of study programs in the Regulation of the Senate.

1.2. REQUIREMENT: A study programme is authorized and functions in accordance with the normative acts in force.

Comments:

The master’s program “Customs Law and Customs Activity” was authorized by Order of the Ministry of Education and Youth (Nr 385 of May 30, 2008). The programme is authorized and operates according to the normative acts listed in SER.

The Order no. 455 of the Ministry of Education issued on June 3, 2011, establishes requirements for the study plans at master’s level. It is the requirement for the professional Master’s programmes (90 credits) to be structured in the following way: Master thesis (30 ECTS), Internship (10 ECTS), Fundamental disciplines (15-25 ECTS), and Specialized disciplines (25-35 ECTS) among which there should be up to 20% alternative disciplines.

The structure of the master’s programme is as follows: Master thesis (30 ECTS), Fundamental disciplines (15 ECTS), Specialized disciplines (35 ECTS) including two optional/alternative disciplines (10 ECTS), Internship (10 ECTS) and Optional disciplines (10).

The assessment committee finds that relationship between the number of hours and number of credits and the correlation of classes, seminars and individual work substantially meets the requirements of the Framework Plan. The master’s programme substantially functions in accordance with the normative acts in force. The curriculum also respects the impact of the Bologna Higher Education System and is based on the ECTS transfer system.

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<p>1.3. REQUIREMENT: The title of a study programme is consistent with its content.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>According to the information presented in the SER and the curriculum, the title of the study programme is consistent with its content. The curriculum includes disciplines that develop the masters knowledge in the field of customs activity and customs law (<i>European customs law; Organizing customs activity; Exercising customs control; Customs regimes; Procedural documents in customs activity; Liability in customs activity; Evaluation and expertizes in customs activity; Techniques and methods of discovering customs crimes and the special investigation activity in this field</i>). The concerned disciplines are linked to customs public international law, private international law, tax law, financial law, transport law, civil law, bank law, criminal law, etc.</p> <p>Nevertheless, it is highly recommended to increase the cooperation between the master of law programmes in MSU regarding both the content and conduct of studies.</p>	
<p>1.4. REQUIREMENT: The conduct of studies, including the student workload of independent work and internship, support achievement of the objectives of the study programme.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>According to the information presented in the SER and obtained during the site visit the conduct of studies, including the student workload of independent work and internship in general support achievement of the objectives of this study programme.</p> <p>However, the discussions during the site visit revealed that most of the students studying on the programme are already employed and attend the courses in addition to their everyday work. Taking into account that for 90 ECTS, students also have an additional independent workload of 25-30 hours per credit point, it is questionable whether the students actually have enough time to spend on their studies during the semester to meet these requirements.</p> <p>The available study plan and the detailed curriculum supports the objectives of the study programme through individual work and practical training. Contact hours with academic teaching staff and individual work are integrated and compulsory and mandatory subjects are offered.</p> <p>The internship is organized in a professional manner and students gain support from the University as well as from the Department of Constitutional and Administrative Law. According to the information available to the committee, the internship is organized according to the Framework Regulations on practical training in higher education and is based on the curriculum of the internship and an internship portfolio.</p>	
<p>1.5. REQUIREMENT: The objectives and learning outcomes of a study programme are in coherence with the European</p>	

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<p>Qualifications Framework (EQF). The structure and content of the study programme is internationally comparable.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>According to the SER the objectives and learning outcomes of the programme take in consideration the regulations of the Ministry of Education and the requirements of the Bologna Process (ECTS credit-transfer-system). The objectives of the curriculum (content and learning outcomes) are in accordance with the requirements of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The learning outcomes are comparable with other programmes of HEIs in Moldova and internationally comparable to similar programmes in Romania, Bucharest University, Iasi, Cluj.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Recommendation to the Ministry of Education: The system of distributing the amount of ECTS is only partially internationally comparable because according to the Framework Plan for higher education (Order of the Ministry of Education no 455 of 2011 § 62) for the master studies, a course shall have 5/10/15 credits and subsequently one semester shall plan 6-2 courses/modules. This means that all courses on master's level must have the same amount of ECTS (5 ECTS) with the same number of contact hours and hours for individual work. Some courses also are "combined courses" and they offer 10 ECTS. The assessment committee recommends considering changing this rule in order to enable the universities offering Master's level programs some additional flexibility and to support the academic mobility.</p> 	
<p>1.6. REQUIREMENT The objectives, content and learning outcomes of the Master's study programme are clearly distinguishable from those of the Bachelor's study programme.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The SER and the discussions during the assessment visit confirm that the objectives, content and the learning outcomes are in general distinguishable from those of the bachelor's study programme. At master's level, new disciplines are introduced as well as disciplines that deepen the skills that have been achieved beforehand</p> <p>This master's programme is specially designed for future customs officers or other professionals involved in customs and import-export activities and takes into consideration the development of specific learning outcomes for the graduates, in accordance to the needs of their line of duty, especially due to the fact that at bachelor's level there is only one discipline related to Customs Law with the duration of one semester.</p>	
<p>1.7. REQUIREMENT: Study disciplines of the study programme are presented in a logical succession.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The curriculums as well as the additional documents clearly show a logical structure of the master's programme. According to the SER, the</p>	

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<p>study disciplines of the study programme are presented in a logical succession, from general to special, from monodisciplinary to bidisciplinary and multidisciplinary and from national to international.</p>	
<p>1.8. REQUIREMENT: Development of a study programme takes into consideration the needs of the labour market.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The SER and the discussions during the assessment visit confirm that development of the study programme takes into consideration the major trends of the labour market. The content of the study program is continuously improved to assure that the graduates are educated according to current labour market requirements. According to the SER, the study programme is elaborated according to the needs of exercising the profession of customs evaluator, customs inspector, lawyer in the customs bodies, criminal investigation officer, prosecutor, lawyer, judge, etc. The programme has been approved by the Ministry of Finances, the Judge Association of the Republic of Moldova, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Transport.</p> <p>During the assessment visit it was emphasized that this programme is one of the cornerstones of the Moldavian Customs Services educational system and therefore there is a clear need for such a programme. The employers and the alumni themselves were very satisfied with the skills and qualifications of the graduates of the Customs Law and Customs Activity study programme.</p>	
<p>1.9. REQUIREMENT: Study programme development is a continuous process which, among others, involves feedback from students, employers and other relevant stakeholders.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>According to the information made available to the committee, the study programme renewal procedure is determined by the legal provisions of normative documents in force. The Regulation on initiation, approval, monitoring and periodical evaluation of the study programmes approved by the MSU Senate on 25.02.2014 acts at the institutional level. Any change in the curriculum starts at the initiative of the specialized chairs, taking into account the provisions from the Framework Plan. After that, the curriculum is discussed at the office of the Faculty and subsequently at the meeting of the Commission for Quality Assurance including in its structure also a representative of the employers. After this, the curriculum is approved by the Faculty Teaching Council and, by the last instance the Senate of MSU.</p> <p>The representatives of employers were very satisfied with the development process as their suggestions were integrated in different curriculum developments and changes. For example, according to the SER, taking into consideration the actuality and the necessity of improving the practical activity of the criminal investigation officers and prosecutors, for the year of study 2015-2016 a modification shall be provided to the study programme by introducing some new disciplines: <i>The special activity of investigations done by the customs bodies</i> and <i>Psychology in the customs activity of the Republic of Moldova</i>. During the discussions with the employers and alumni, the need for psychology subjects in the</p>	

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curriculum was also underlined.

Also, the students recalled giving their opinion about some aspects of the curriculum. However, this feedback appeared to have been given in rather an informal and unstructured manner. The committee received no evidence about the involvement of the alumni in the study programme development.

It can be concluded that although the feedback of students, employers and other stakeholders is to some extent taken into account when developing the study programme, a more systematic approach would be helpful.

- **Recommendation:** Although the feedback of students, employers and other stakeholders is to some extent taken into account when developing the study programme, it is advisable to implement a clear system of gathering and taking into account the feedback from all the important stakeholders.

1.10. REQUIREMENT: The members of the teaching staff are aware of the objectives of a study programme and of their role in achieving these objectives.	
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Comments:

The interview with the academic employees conducted during the site visit proved the strong awareness of the teaching staff of the study programme and of their role in achieving these objectives. The teaching staff makes considerable efforts for the assimilation of master students' knowledge, by using various modern methods of teaching (group assessments, modelling of situations, solving test cases etc.). The teaching staff elaborates the course learning outcomes in accordance with the general objectives of the study programme.

One of examples of the engagement of the members of teaching staff is also that they bring, when possible, all necessary specialized literature for interested students and contribute by organizing site visits for students at different border and customs control points.

1.11. REQUIREMENT: Study programme provides opportunities for further education at doctoral level.	
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Comments:

In general, the study programme provides the students with opportunities for further education at doctoral level. The students gain some experience in academic writing while preparing their master's theses and therefore obtain necessary skills to continue their research activity within the doctoral studies in Law.

Still, there is some room for improvement regarding both the foreign language skills of the students (inevitably required for advanced scientific

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research) and their overall experience in academic writing.

Recommendation: It is advisable to pay more attention to developing the students' English language skills (e.g, include in the curriculum more foreign language materials) and also offer the students some special course(s) on the methodology of legal research.

2. TEACHING AND LEARNING	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
mark with 'X'		X	
<p>Collected evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-evaluation report (SER); • Annexes of SER; • Internal regulations; • Additional documents received during the site visit; • Interviews with the management, teaching staff, students, graduates, employers. 			
<p>The Faculty and Department regularly conduct surveys to evaluate learning process and outcomes. However, the Committee received mixed information on whether and how students, alumni and employers are actually involved in the development process: The Department should have a clearer procedure to engage the students, alumni and employers in the development process.</p> <p>The meeting with teaching staff indicated that a variety of teaching methods are used, and they prefer to use active teaching methods. It is commendable that teaching staff publishes practical journal articles and teaching materials for their courses. Teaching staff is well aware of the need to keep up with the changes in legal regulations and recent court practice. Still, in order to provide a wider, comparative perspective, it is essential to include non-Moldovan, non-Romanian and non-Russian literature in the syllabi. Syllabi should include foreign legal literature (journal articles and books) in addition to literature in Romanian and Russian and the library should acquire, as the first step, some well-known up-to-date textbooks on European Union customs law in English.</p> <p>The University has agreements or good cooperation with many public and private institutions, where the students can perform their internship. Students in general expressed satisfaction with organisation of internship. However, some students complained that sometimes tutors do not have time to guide them. If this happens, the Department should react quickly to make sure that the internship fulfils its objectives. In order to achieve the necessary learning outcomes, all the internships should be conducted in the field of customs law.</p> <p>It remains unclear how exactly the assessment methods are chosen and matched to learning outcomes and whether the students receive personal feedback regarding their performance at different assessments in order to support student development.</p> <p>The necessary regulation appears to be in place for the recognition of prior learning, but there is no actual experience. The Department should</p>			

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consider the possibility of increasing the proportion of elective courses in the curriculum. It provides more choices to students, but also increases the amount of credits that could be transferred after the end of academic mobility and therefore again makes academic mobility more attractive.

Although the students are already being encouraged to participate in scientific conferences and publish articles, the Department should find more ways to involve master students in current or future research projects (also in development activities).

As described above, the study programme has both strengths and areas of improvement in this assessment area. Some problems are significant and require substantial effort to improve the situation (e.g. availability and use of foreign legal literature, involving master students in broader research and development activities, increasing comparative perspective). As a result, the study programme fulfils the following requirements partially. The Committee understands that some areas of improvement are on Faculty or University level, and thus demand action on Faculty or University level, but still inevitably affect the specific study programmes and their quality.

Commendations:

- Teaching staff finds time to publish teaching materials for their courses.
- Internship is well organised and the University guarantees the students a place of internship due to specific agreements or good cooperation with many companies.
- The ratio between the students and teaching staff is favourable

Recommendations:

- Syllabi should include foreign legal literature (journal articles and books) in addition to literature in Romanian and Russian and the library should acquire, as the first step, some well-known up-to-date textbooks on European Union customs law in English.
- In order to achieve the necessary learning outcomes, all the internships should be conducted in the field of customs law.
- It would be advisable to provide students with personal feedback regarding their performance in order to support student development.
- In connection with the recognition of prior learning, it should be considered to increase the proportion of elective courses in the curriculum in order to (1) provide more choices to students and (2) make academic mobility more attractive.
- If the alumni and the employers do not participate in the evaluation of study process, the Department should involve them as they can provide useful feedback.
- It is recommended to involve master students in broader research and development activities (beyond their individual research).

2.1. REQUIREMENT: Study management is regulated, publicly available, and supports the achievement of learning outcomes. In course of study management development, the results of feedback surveys and the analysis of learning activities are taken into account.

Comments:

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The main text of the SER mentions some documents which regulate study management, development and improvement, but is otherwise very short and superficial. However, the annexes of the SER, and additional information and materials received during the meetings (including those from other programmes) gave more information. The study management is regulated by national and internal normative documents, which are publicly available (although mostly in Romanian).

The SER and the meetings with the Dean, the Head of the Department, teaching staff and students (including those from other programmes) showed that the Faculty and Department conduct regularly surveys to evaluate learning process and outcomes. In the context of courses, students give their feedback on how course was delivered, what were their expectations, whether they achieved their objectives, etc. The results are taken into account when planning and implementing improvements. Teaching staff told the Committee that the study programme is adjusted also according to practical needs/expectations from the society. The proposals for changes to the study programme are first approved by the Department, then sent to the Faculty and finally to the senate. The Committee received mixed information on whether and how students, alumni and employers are actually involved in the development process: some said that they are involved, some regretted that they are not (alumni were more critical). The Department should have a clear procedure to engage the mentioned groups in the development process.

2.2. REQUIREMENT: Within the education process of study programme, efficient teaching strategies are applied (modern, interactive, teamwork-based, etc.) and oriented towards active learning of the students.

Comments:

The SER includes a long list of teaching methods, which include both traditional (e.g. lectures) and modern (e.g. seminars, problem solving, group work) teaching methods. The meeting with teaching staff indicated that a variety of teaching methods are used, and they prefer to use active teaching methods. Lectures are meant to provide introduction to the course and to explain basic concepts of the subject matter. Seminars are for practical teaching and learning, to develop teamwork, to solve cases, to conduct debates, etc. Seminars demand active participations from students and prior preparation at home. As a good starting point for independent learning, some courses have a textbook written by the instructor (member of the teaching staff). Teaching staff decides which teaching methods they wish to use and adjust the choice of teaching methods as needed. They bring frequently customs and other officials to auditoriums to discuss practical issues. The meeting with students confirmed that students are generally happy with the choice of teaching methods and that students are active in seminars (although sometimes tired as the lessons take place in the evening after work). Students complained that most auditoriums do not have a stationary projector and valuable time is lost at the beginning of lectures/seminars for setting up the projector and were otherwise not satisfied with the technical conditions. The Committee was informed that the Faculty will move to renovated premises in autumn and the teaching/learning conditions will improve.

2.3. REQUIREMENT: Within the education process of study programme, up-to-date teaching materials are used.

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Comments:

The SER concentrates on technical and electronic means which support teaching and learning processes.

However, the meetings with teaching staff and alumni gave more information regarding teaching materials. The use of up-to-date teaching materials is inevitable for providing high quality education. It is commendable that teaching staff publishes practical journal articles and teaching materials for their courses. Teaching staff is well aware of the need to keep up with the changes in legal regulations and recent court practice.

However, syllabi and meetings with teaching staff showed that a very limited number of foreign legal literature (journal articles and books) is used during the studies. The Committee notes that syllabi contain literature published in Romania or in Russia, but the situation is troubling when it comes to literature in English, French, German, etc. It is understandable that the study programme focuses on Moldovan law, giving Moldovan sources a priority, but in order to provide wider, comparative perspective, it is essential to include non-Moldovan, non-Romanian and non-Russian literature.

The programme contains courses which are related to European/international law (e.g. Community Customs Law), but their lists of literature contain almost no foreign materials. Teaching staff admits that a very limited amount of foreign legal literature is available. It is also useful if students worked with foreign legal literature as well as authentic texts of treaties or judgments (Romanian versions are usually translations) to improve their foreign legal language skill. Customs officials are in contact with people from different countries, making good command of English a valuable asset. Teaching staff told the Committee that it is forbidden to list materials that are not available in the library. It is understandable that compulsory materials must be reasonably available, but it is unreasonable to forbid to list (foreign) materials even as recommended materials. This allows the instructors, who are experts in a field, to guide the students to additional materials. The fact that the instructor has used foreign legal literature to prepare his/he textbook does not mitigate this issue. Alumni emphasised that the study programme should include more the practice of other states (again demanding foreign materials). Students mentioned that some instructors lend their personal books to students in order to help their research. The Committee saw that legal literature databases (e.g. WestLaw, LexisNexis, HeinOnline) are not available at the University, but there are numerous journals that are openly accessible and provide high quality articles.

- **Recommendation:** The library should acquire, as the first step, some well-known up-to-date textbooks on European Union customs law in English.

2.4. REQUIREMENT: Organisation of internship is clearly regulated, the requirements for the completion of internship are determined, the instructions for conducting the internship are available and the supervision of students in work environment is ensured.

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<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The internship is regulated by national and internal normative documents. The curriculum contains a compulsory five week internship (10 credits). The objectives of internship are defined in the regulation of internship and also available in the blank portfolio of internship that is given to each student performing internship. Each student is officially assigned to a place of internship, and is appointed a supervisor from the University and a tutor from the place of internship. At the end of internship, students complete a portfolio of internship.</p>	
<p>2.5. REQUIREMENT: The higher education institution has a network of partner organisations offering internship opportunities for students and supporting the achievement of learning outcomes of study programmes.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The University has agreements or good cooperation with many public and private institutions, where the students can perform their internship. Students can themselves find a place of internship. At the meeting with employers, the latter assured that they are satisfied with the students who have performed their internship with them and they are happy to receive the students also in future. Students expressed satisfaction that the University guarantees them a place of internship. The Committee learned that the students who already work can perform their internship at their current workplaces. This opportunity involves a risk. If the current workplace is not related to Customs Law, the internship may not achieve its learning outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation: In order to achieve the necessary learning outcomes, all the internships should be conducted in the field of customs law. 	
<p>2.6. REQUIREMENT: Assessment of learning outcomes of students is performed in accordance with the existing requirements. Assessment methodology is consistent with learning outcomes and includes feedback supporting student development.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The assessment of learning outcomes is regulated by national and internal normative documents. The assessment as a whole is comprised of the initial assessment at the beginning of study process, the current assessments during the semester (60%) and the final assessment at the end of the semester (40%). The SER lists different assessment methods which are used. Students are informed at the beginning of the semester how the course will be assessed (methods) and what are the criteria. The Committee understands that the instructor of the course may choose the assessment methods. It remains unclear how exactly the assessment methods are chosen and matched to learning outcomes, especially when considering the fact that all courses are of 5 credits and contact hours are quite similar per 1 credit. The content of assessment methods (e.g. exam questions) is regularly updated. The SER states that the quality of applied assessment method (e.g. specific questions, tests, exams) are assured by the head of the Chair, of the Department and of Quality Management. If they are not subject matter experts, how do they assess</p>	

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and ensure the substantial quality questions, tests, exams, etc. in question? The Committee is not convinced that students receive personal feedback regarding their performance at different assessments in order to support student development.

- **Recommendation:** It would be advisable to provide students with personal feedback regarding their performance in order to support student development.

2.7. REQUIREMENT: The higher education institution recognizes prior learning and work experiences.

Comments:

The SER is very brief on this topic.

The recognition of prior learning and work experience is mainly regulated by national normative documents. The meetings showed that there is confusion as to what the recognition of prior learning and work experience actually means. The Committee was interested if the students can transfer the credits earned, individual courses taken in other Moldovan or foreign higher education institutions at master's or higher level to the MSU as part of their studies at the MSU. The Committee understands that according to national regulation, work experience is recognised only in the framework on vocational higher education. After the meetings, the Committee believes that necessary regulation is in place for the recognition of prior learning, but there is little actual experience. The recognising prior learning is closely connected to academic mobility, i.e. if the credits earned during academic mobility are recognised without undue difficulties, students have one more incentive to take advantage of academic mobility. Some students/alumni claimed that public sector does not take it favourably if the person has done mobility.

- **Recommendation:** Still, the Department should consider the possibility of increasing the proportion of elective courses in the curriculum. It provides more choices to students, but also increases the amount of credits that could be transferred after the end of academic mobility and therefore again makes academic mobility more attractive.

2.8. REQUIREMENT: Systematic analysis of achievement of learning outcomes is performed and improvement measures are undertaken.

Comments:

The evaluation of study process has clearly defined purposes and its results are used to improve curriculum, courses, teaching methods etc. and to select teaching staff. There are several organs or officials who are involved in the analysis of the achievement of learning outcomes, e.g. Dean, Quality Assurance Commission, Quality Management Department, and the Pro-rector responsible for didactic activity. The SER and meetings showed that teaching staff and students are asked for feedback and their feedback is considered by appropriate organs and officials. However, the Committee received mixed information on whether and how alumni and employers (some were quite critical) also participate in

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<p>the evaluation of study process. If they are not involved, the Department should involve them as they can provide useful feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation: If the alumni and the employers do not participate in the evaluation of study process, the Department should involve them as they can provide useful feedback. 	
<p>2.9. REQUIREMENT: Students are involved in research and development activities, the supervision of student research papers (seminar papers, applied projects, final thesis) is well organised and the satisfaction rate with the quality of supervision is high.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>Each student has a supervisor appointed by the Department. The study programme involves 5 instructors and has 18 master’s students (enrolled in 2014). When considering the number of teaching staff and students, the ratio is favourable and students should receive adequate supervision. Students have the freedom to choose the topics for their master’s theses. The meetings with students and alumni showed that they were satisfied with supervision. Master’s students are encouraged to participate in scientific conferences and to publish scientific articles. The meetings with students and alumni showed that students actually participate in conferences and publish articles (sometimes with their supervisors).</p> <p>However, the Committee found no evidence that students are involved in broader research and development activities (beyond their individual research), e.g. participating in a research project led by a member of teaching staff. True, there are examples where professors and students/alumni have co-authored a publication. The SER shows and teaching staff told the Committee that they participate in research projects (e.g. fight against contraband/smuggling).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation: The Department should find ways to involve master’s students in current or future research projects (also in development activities). 	

3. TEACHING STAFF	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
mark with 'X'		X	

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Collected evidence:

- Self-evaluation report (SER);
- Annexes of SER;
- Internal regulations;
- Additional documents received during the site visit;
- Interviews with the management, teaching staff, students, graduates, employers.

General comments:

All of the full-time teaching staff hold a PhD degree. The fact that some members of the teaching staff are also involved in practical legal activities related to the disciplines taught can be considered positive. The distribution of staff by age should ensure academic continuity.

The members of the teaching staff have adequate teaching competence - the fact that most of them are involved also in practicing legal activities in field similar to disciplines taught is a positive as they can combine the practical experience with their teaching activities.

Apart from providing some continuous education opportunities for the teaching staff, it appears that there are no other staff development measures implemented. At the Faculty management level, it is recommended to establish a comprehensive staff development system that includes also other important elements of staff development, like the implementation of regular appraisal interviews with the teachers.

Members of the academic staff involved in this programme have not actively participated in teaching activities in other foreign institutions. The management should continuously support and encourage the members of the full-time teaching staff to regularly develop their knowledge and skills and participate in international mobility and networks. Measures should be taken to encourage and support the teaching staff to participate in the international research projects and other international scientific activities. Regular goals for the international cooperation should be set and the achievement of those goals should be measured regularly e.g. during quarterly performance reviews of the members of the academic staff. Also, the Department of Constitutional and Administrative Law should actively seek possibilities for involving visiting professors in the teaching on the study programme.

Compared to internationally acceptable standards, the participation in the international research projects and other international scientific activity needs to be much more active. In order to achieve that, more resources should be found and allocated to research activities. **It is highly recommended to apply for the EU funding already available to Moldova, e.g the Erasmus + programme.**

Research activities of the teaching staff are planned and monitored efficiently.

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Considering all those facts, as well as the general findings from the SER and provided annexes, the general conclusion of the committee is that this criterion is partially compliant with the requirements.

Commendations:

- Good qualification of teaching staff.
- Teaching staff are also involved practical activities in the field of law;
- Teaching staff participate in conferences;

Recommendations:

- At the Faculty management level, it is recommended to establish a comprehensive staff development system that includes also other important elements of staff development, like the implementation of regular appraisal interviews with the teachers.
- The academic staff should be encouraged to obtain international experience and supported to participate in the international research projects and other international scientific activities. At the Faculty management level a system should be created that supports and encourages the members of the full-time teaching staff to regularly develop their knowledge and skills at foreign higher education institutions and participate in international networks. Regular goals for the international cooperation should be set and the achievement of those goals should be measured regularly e.g. during quarterly performance reviews of the members of the academic staff.
- The Department of Constitutional and Administrative Law should actively seek possibilities for involving visiting professors in the teaching on the study programme.
- Compared to internationally acceptable standards, the participation in the international research projects and other international scientific activity needs to be much more active. In order to achieve that, more resources should be found and allocated to research activities. **It is highly recommended to apply for the EU funding already available to Moldova, e.g the Erasmus + programme.**

3.1. REQUIREMENT: The number and qualification of full-time teaching staff complies with the requirements established by legislation. At least 60% of the study programme is covered by full-time staff. 100% of full-time staff involved in the study programme have PhD degree or equal.

Comments:

Although the SER stipulates that the study programme involves 5 people out of which 3 are full-time, annex D5 states that only 2 of them are full-time teaching staff. At the visit, however, it was confirmed by the head of department that also one more teaching staff member is full-time, therefore 60% of the programme is being covered by full-staff. They all hold PdD degrees. Therefore, the number and qualification of full-time teaching staff complies with the requirements established by legislation.

3.2. REQUIREMENT: Distribution of full-time teaching staff by age, and the percentage of young members of the teaching staff, ensures the sustainability of studies in a higher education institution and a study programme.

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<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The average age of the two full-time staff members is 47 years. The oldest staff member is 56 years old and the youngest is 34. Given the fact that all of the academic staff has a PhD degree and the ratio of younger researchers is bigger than the one of older ones, it is possible to say that the programme’s sustainability can be ensured, despite the reduced number of staff.</p>	
<p>3.3.REQUIREMENT: The total number and qualification of teaching staff is – based on their responsibilities, workload and the number of supervised students – sufficient and adequate for achieving the objectives and learning outcomes of the study programmes at MA level.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>According to the CVs presented to the committee, the substantial qualification of the teaching staff is adequate for achieving the objectives of the study programme.</p> <p>There are 9 disciplines in the curriculum, which are taught by five people overall (3 full-time), one academic teaching 4 of them and another 3 of them. The two remaining disciplines are taught one by two part-time staff members and the other by a full-time staff member. The fact that there were only 18 students enrolled at this master’s programme in 2014 the supervision workload is around 4 students per member of teaching staff which can be considered sufficient in terms of achieving the learning outcomes of the study programme. Also, some of the academics involved in this study programme are not involved in other BA/MA programmes.</p>	
<p>3.4.REQUIREMENT: The members of the teaching staff have an adequate teaching competence and improve their teaching methods.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The SER only states that the teaching staff has adequate competences as most of them hold superior teaching degrees. From annexes provided it is impossible to determine how the teachers really improve their teaching methods. At the visit were provided the CV’s of all staff members, stating their teaching skills and competences. However, the improvement of the teaching methods has been proved thoroughly only for one Professor and one Lecturer, who also acts as Deputy Head of the Border Police and attended in this position various training sessions related to the customs activities, allowing him thus to improve his teaching methods with good practical skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation: It is advisable that all members of the teaching staff systematically participate in different trainings and improve their teaching methods, the department should monitor and support this process. 	

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<p>3.5. REQUIREMENT: The staff development system is effective: the members of the teaching staff have opportunities for self-improvement, staff development methods are applied by the higher education institution.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The only methods mentioned by the SER with regard to the improvement of teaching staff are doctoral studies (although all staff seems to hold a PhD degree) and psycho-pedagogical module.</p> <p>The Development Plan for the 2012-2017 period (Annex D7) states that until 2012 self-improvement was the only existing way for improvement of the teaching staff. In the respective plan it is stated that the University should embark into developing cooperation links with foreign institutions, mainly from Romania, allowing professors to be invited to teach on a reciprocity basis. The assessment committee can only agree with the latter.</p> <p>Concerning other staff development activities besides some continuing education possibilities, the committee did not receive any evidence concerning the broader staff development plan, including conducting systematic appraisal interviews with the staff and other methods of staff development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation: At the Faculty management level, it is recommended to establish a comprehensive staff development system that includes also other important elements of staff development, like the implementation of regular appraisal interviews with the teachers. 	
<p>3.6. REQUIREMENT: Visiting members of the teaching staff (including from foreign higher education institutions) are involved in teaching in a study programme.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>There are no foreign visiting professors involved in this programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation: The committee recommends that the department should actively seek possibilities for involving more visiting professors in the teaching of the study programme. 	
<p>3.7. REQUIREMENT: The members of the full-time teaching staff of a higher education institution regularly develop their skills at foreign higher education institutions and participate in international networks.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p>	

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The SER stipulates that only one member of the teaching staff developed his skills in foreign institutions. From the analysis of Annex B3.8, it appears that also another member of the staff attended courses and conferences over the last five years, also in his other quality as Deputy Head of the Border Police.

- **Recommendation:** The committee recommends that at the Faculty management level a system should be created that supports and encourages the members of the full-time teaching staff to regularly develop their skills at foreign higher education institutions and participate in international networks. Regular goals for the international cooperation should be set and the achievement of those goals should be measured regularly e.g. during quarterly performance reviews of the members of the academic staff.

3.8. REQUIREMENT: Teaching staff are involved in national and international research projects and participate in forums, national and international scientific conferences.

Comments:

Annex B 3.8 presents the participation of one teaching staff member at different conferences and courses, organized both in Chisinau and abroad, which led, in some cases, to the publication of scientific papers. However, there is no involvement in scientific projects.

- **Recommendation:** Compared to internationally acceptable standards, the participation in the international research projects and other international scientific activity needs to be much more active. In order to achieve that, more resources should be found and allocated to research activities. **It is highly recommended to apply for the EU funding already available to Moldova, e.g the Erasmus + programme.**

3.9. REQUIREMENT: Research activities of the teaching staff are planned and monitored efficiently.

Comments:

The SER stipulates that the research activity of each member of the academic staff is planned and monitored, as each of the academics has to fill in every year an individual work plan, with research tangible result, which becomes part of the Department's yearly plan, the real achievement of such results being monitored by the head of the Department, based on reports and evidences provided by each member of the teaching staff.

At the same time, the development strategy presented in Annex D7 stipulates for the period 2012-2017 the creation of two research centers: Centre for Public Law and Private Law Center, that will organize scientific activities (sessions and conferences, debates, round tables, practical workshops, case studies, experimental processes, methodological seminars, international schools, summer schools and essay contests), with

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emphasis in organizing international scientific conferences every two years.

At the visit, proofs of individual plan for teachers, as well as reports by head of Department were presented to the evaluation team.

4. STUDENTS	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
mark with 'X'		X	
<p>Collected evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-evaluation report (SER); • Annexes of SER; • Internal regulations; • Additional documents received during the site visit; • Interviews with the management, teaching staff, students, graduates, employers. 			
<p>General comments:</p> <p>Although the committee was pleased to meet many satisfied students who all assured the positive image of the Customs Law and Customs Activity study programme, there is also plenty of room for improvements. Main reasons for regarding the decision to assess the area as partially conforming to requirements were insufficient academic mobility (internal and external) and also the lack of systematic approach towards anti-plagiarism and academic fraud issues.</p> <p>The students' satisfaction with the study programme is high and they have good informal relationship with the teaching staff. At the moment, mobility options on the Customs Law and Customs Activity study programme are very limited and the academic mobility is virtually non-existent. It is recommended to encourage master students to participate in academic mobility and focus on informing them about the mobility opportunities (for example, hold classes or seminars to introduce the opportunities for academic mobility). In order to help the University in its internationalization (and academic mobility) processes at the University and also at the Faculty level, it is advisable to consider updating and revising the webpage's content in English in order to attract foreign students.</p> <p>To further support the students, MSU should establish a formalized and effective counselling system for the students – e.g consider to delegate the responsibility of study counselling from professors to trained specialists. Also, students need to be more informed about the additional counselling services Moldova State University (and also the Faculty) is offering.</p>			

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The committee welcomes the use of modern software by MSU in order to discover plagiarism, yet this approach is only one aspect of plagiarism detection. Therefore, the committee urges the Faculty to adapt a unified and more systematic approach towards preventing plagiarism and actively seek opportunities how to teach students about anti-plagiarism and academic ethics (e.g course for academic writing, master's seminars etc).

Neither SER nor the additional documents provided more detailed data on the employment rate of the graduates. It is recommended that the data regarding the employment of graduates should be collected be more regularly and systematically.

Although the graduation of students per each year meets the legal requirements, it would be in the Faculty's best interests that the causes for dropping out would also be formally collected and analyzed.

Commendations:

- Students' suggestions and feedback is considered a valuable input to the University and Faculty.
- Students' satisfaction with the study programme is high.
- Graduates of the study programme are competitive in the labour market

Recommendations:

- MSU should establish a formalized and effective counselling system for the students – e.g consider to delegate the responsibility of study counselling from professors to trained specialists. Also, students need to be more informed about the additional counselling services Moldova State University (and also the Faculty) is offering.
- The faculty should encourage master students to participate in academic mobility and focus on informing them about the mobility opportunities (for example classes or seminars to introduce the opportunities for academic mobility).
- In order to help the University in its internationalization (and academic mobility) processes at the University and also at the Faculty level, updating and revising the webpage's content in English in order to attract foreign students should be considered.
- It is recommended to adapt a unified and systematic approach towards preventing plagiarism and seek opportunities how to teach students about anti-plagiarism and academic ethics (e.g course for academic writing, master's seminars etc). Implementing anti-plagiarism software is a positive improvement but there is room for further improvements.
- It is recommended to seek ways how to formally strengthen the ties with graduates (alumni club, events for graduates, satisfaction surveys for alumni etc).
- It is recommended to formally collect and analyse the causes for dropping out.
- It is recommended that the data regarding the employment of graduates should be collected be more regularly and systematically.

4.1. REQUIREMENT: The admission requirements for student applicants are based on qualities necessary for completing the study programme. The admission of students is performed by procedures stipulated in the normative acts.

Comments:

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In general, the admission requirements for students in the study programme Customs Law and Customs Activity are in accordance with the normative acts and are based on qualities necessary for completing the study programme.

According to the SER, admission to the master's programme is governed by the rules of organization and development of admission to higher education master cycle II, adopted and approved annually (<http://usm.md/admitere/>) under the Rules for Admission to higher education master cycle II, approved by Government Decision nr.1455 of 24.12.2007. The Dean informed the committee that annually, the criteria for enrolment of students is approved annually by the Senate.

Admission to master's degree studies is in accordance with the rules of the institution and is organized in two sessions. The admission examination for master's degree studies consists in a written or oral test for the profile subjects, also test for one foreign language and test for IT skills. According to the Dean, starting with year 2015, there shall be an online test as an entrance exam to the master's level studies.

The national admission criteria include a specialty exam and evaluation of the IT and foreign language skills (English/French). **Regarding the general lack of foreign language skills among the master students encountered by the committee, a question can be raised whether the language test serves its purpose adequately or is there some room for improvement.**

4.2. REQUIREMENT: The counselling system of students (including study, career and psychological counselling) is planned/targeted and effective.

Comments:

Although the SER claimed that study and career counselling is available to students, as well as the Center of Psychological Assistance for the students, the committee was not able to witness the awareness of the students or the alumni of other formal counselling services than career counselling.

It is recommended for the Faculty to consider delegating the responsibility of study counselling from professors to a trained specialist. All of the professors are not prepared to provide effective study counselling. A separate study advisor can provide more professional counselling and could also ease the professors' workload.

There seems to be a lack of information regarding other counselling services besides career counselling.

- **Recommendation:** MSU should establish a formalized and effective counselling system for the students – e.g consider to delegate the responsibility of study counselling from professors to trained specialists. Also, students need to be more informed about the additional counselling services Moldova State University (and also the Faculty) is offering.

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<p>4.3. REQUIREMENT: Students are provided with internal and external mobility opportunities.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>Mobility options available to the students (especially external mobility options) are very limited. Although there are very few options, the students are still not aware about the opportunities they might have. The committee encourages the faculty to seek more academic mobility opportunities and to raise the awareness amongst students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation: It is recommended to provide master students with internal and external mobility possibilities and focus on informing them about such opportunities (for example, hold classes or seminars to introduce the opportunities for academic mobility). 	
<p>4.4. REQUIREMENT: Students participate in international mobility programmes. The percentage of students participating in student mobility is stable or growing.</p>	
<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>None of the master students have taken part in mobility programs, which clearly can be seen as an area for improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation: The committee recommends the faculty members actively seek possibilities to support and encourage students to participate in international mobility programmes. 	
<p>4.5. REQUIREMENT: Students are involved in the decision-making process at different levels of the higher education institution.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>As stated in the SER and also confirmed during the interviews, students are involved in the decision-making processes at various levels of the University. Furthermore they are not only formally involved but they also assured to the committee that the management of the faculty and the University considers their feedback and also implements their suggestions. Master’s degree student representatives are included in the Council of the Faculty of Law, in the University Senate but also in the Quality Committee of the Faculty.</p>	
<p>4.6. REQUIREMENT: A system has been established for the detection and prevention of academic fraud.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>To prevent and exclude plagiarism in master thesis, MSU is testing a special program that determines whether the master thesis overlap with</p>	

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<p>other existing works and to what extent overlaps. In this order the master thesis is presented with a CD copy which, after inspection, shall be kept in the archives of MSU. The committee welcomes this approach and recommends also to the Department to participate in this initiation, although this approach is only one aspect of plagiarism detection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendation: All of the study programmes under evaluation lack a systematic approach towards academic fraud. In many cases the discovery of academic fraud lies upon academic staff (for example thesis supervisors). Therefore, the committee urges the Faculty to adapt a unified and more systematic approach towards preventing plagiarism and actively seek opportunities how to teach students about anti-plagiarism and academic ethics (e.g course for academic writing, master’s seminars etc). 	
<p>4.7. REQUIREMENT: Higher education institution has a tracking mechanism of graduates’ employment and is monitoring the evolution of graduates’ career.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>Although in MSU there is the Centre for Career Guidance and Employment that is responsible for tracking professional development, the assessment committee was not able to confirm that there actually was a system in place for keeping touch with the graduates. Much of the communication with graduates and the monitoring of graduates career is taking place informally and is based on individual connections and relationships between the alumni and the (teaching) staff. According to the SER, such personal research is done by the didactic staff of the Department of Constitutional Law and Administrative Law.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendation: The committee recommends to consider organising annual events e.g. conferences, seminars or other types of networking meetings with the alumni of the faculty. Also the collecting feedback from graduates could be more regular and systematic. 	
<p>4.8. REQUIREMENT: The competitiveness of the graduates of a study programme is demonstrated by employment rate according to obtained qualification; unemployment rate; employment rate in other fields than the one studied within the programme.</p>	
<p><u>Comments:</u></p> <p>The committee was able to confirm that the students in the programme are prepared with the necessary skills and qualifications and also needed in the labour market. The chair is responsible for the implementation of the master’s degree program, monitors by its own means the employment of graduates and their career development. Usually, this is materialized in writing recommendations to soliciting employers, as well as in maintaining collaboration links depending on requirements.</p>	

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According to the SER, the rate of employment of the graduates of the study programme according to the specialization is 89.7%. The rate of employment in other fields than the one studied within the programme is 4.3% and the unemployment rate is 5.1%. Taking into account the national context, these rates indicate clear competitiveness of the graduates.

However, the SER nor the additional documents provided more detailed data on the employment rate of the graduates. It is recommended that the collecting of the data regarding the employment of graduates should be more regular and systematic.

4.9. REQUIREMENT: There is a system in place for monitoring academic progress. Graduation of students per each year meets the legal requirements. Effective measures are implemented to reduce the drop-out rates.

Comments:

According to the SER, there exists a database in SUM where all the academic results of the master students are included. The professors notify of the study results methodic worker from Dean's office who adds all necessary information to the register that reflects all final evaluations of the students.

Starting from 2006 until present 126 students have been enrolled in the study programme and 109 students have graduated. The dropout rate is decreasing (2012 – 22%, 2013 – 13%, 2014 – 4,3%, 2015 – 7,6%). The medium rate of leaving studies in this study program is 13.4%

Graduation of students per each year meets the legal requirements. Monitoring of students' academic process is satisfactory and complies with the regulations and procedures in place. However, it would be in the interests of the Department to formally collect and analyse the causes for dropping out.

5. RESOURCES	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements
mark with 'X'		X	
<p>Collected evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-evaluation report (SER); • Annexes of SER; • Internal regulations; • Additional documents received during the site visit; 			

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- Interviews with the management, teaching staff, students, graduates, employers.

The budget planning in general is sustainable. However, the Faculty is underfinanced, which according to the understanding of the committee is the reason for many shortcomings described above, e.g. the general salary level of the academic staff, the state of library and the general infrastructure of the Faculty, the low level of academic mobility etc. It would be advisable for the University to try to find some additional resources in order to mitigate the possible risks to the financial sustainability and also upgrade the infrastructure and the library of MSU and also support the mobility of both teaching staff and the students.

The number of master's degree students on the program is slightly decreasing but stable which indicates the sustainability of the study programme.

As the Faculty in general was at least partially under renovation, it was not possible for the committee to assess the conformity to the requirements of the teaching and learning environment as a whole. There was dissatisfaction among the students with the learning environment.

ICT devices are available for both Faculty members and students. The computer rooms look modern and meet the basic contemporary standards. The staff and the students are relatively motivated to use ICT techniques. The positive trend is the using of *Moodle* platform providing the students with information regarding the courses online. Still, the existing ICT solutions should be further developed in order to guarantee the existing resources to be fully utilised and to take the usage of modern technologies to the next level, e.g., full e-courses, webinars, video lectures and comparable.

There is almost no foreign literature in the field of law and the books available are rather out-dated. The University should pay attention to the modern sources of information when replenishing the library, investing in international academic databases, training the librarians, teaching staff and students of being able and motivated to use the resources. The library needs major investment, especially regarding field specific legal literature in English, French or German. It is recommended to increase the awareness of students and academic staff of international databases and motivate them to use the few available.

Commendations:

- The classrooms are equipped sufficiently, the equipment is being renewed.
- The use of *Moodle* platform providing the students information regarding the courses online.

Recommendations:

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- It would be advisable for the University to try to find some additional resources in order to mitigate the possible risks to the financial sustainability and also upgrade the infrastructure and the library of MSU and also support the mobility of both teaching staff and the students.
- The University should pay attention to the modern sources of information when replenishing the library, investing in international academic databases, training the librarians, teaching staff and students of being able and motivated to use the resources. The library needs major investment, especially regarding field specific legal literature in English, French or German.
- It is recommended to increase the awareness of students and academic staff of international databases and motivate them to use the few available.
- The existing ICT solutions should be further developed in order to guarantee the existing resources to be fully utilised and to take the usage of modern technologies to the next level, e.g., full e-courses, webinars, video lectures and comparable.

5.1. REQUIREMENT: The financial resources of a higher education institution are adequate for conducting studies, development activities related to studies and supporting the development of the teaching staff.

Comments:

According to the SER, the institution's financial resources are sufficient for study organization ([Appendix B. 5.1.2](#)). According to the plan of strategies and policies for quality assurance within the University master studies and action plan there are an amount of planned and implemented activities, which aim campus, economic activities and human resources, including staff training at the workplace ([Appendix B 5.1.1](#)).

The committee understands that in general the faculty seems underfinanced, which according to the understanding of the committee is the reason for many shortcomings in the Department, e.g. the general salary level of the academic staff, the state of library and the general infrastructure of the faculty, the low level of academic mobility etc.

- **Recommendation:** It would be advisable for the University to try to find some additional resources in order to mitigate the possible risks to the financial sustainability and also upgrade the infrastructure and the library of MSU and also support the mobility of both teaching staff and the students.

5.2. REQUIREMENT: Trends in the number of students and graduates, and the budget of a higher education institution in the last three to five years indicate sustainability.

Comments:

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According to the trends presented to the committee, the number of students and graduates in the last 5 years has been slightly decreasing but still shows lasting stability (see below):

Years	Admission	Graduation
2010-2012	19	16
2011-2013	27	25
2012-2014	29	23
2013-2015	17	15
2014-2016	18	

From year 2010 to 2014, the revenues have increased by approximately 10% and so have the expenditures - by approximately 16%. The committee finds that these numbers clearly show the sustainable character of budget planning.

5.3. REQUIREMENT: Teaching and learning environments have been developed according to the teaching and learning objectives, include all facilities necessary for conducting studies in a given study programme and are of adequate capacity considering the number of students (auditoriums, seminar rooms, laboratories, rooms for students independent work and recreation, video projectors, internet etc.).

Comments:

The Faculty Administration and the Department have headquarters in 2A and 2B blocks in central University campus ([Appendix B 5.3.2](#)). Activities related to the training process are carried out in central, 1, 2B, 3, 4, 4A blocks.

The committee witnessed that the faculty in general was at least partially under renovation, therefore it is currently not possible to assess whether the outcome of the works will meet all the requirements.

During the interviews with the students, dissatisfaction was expressed with the learning environment.

5.4. REQUIREMENT: Both the conduct of studies and other activities of a higher education institution are supported by up-to-date information technology solutions, including the study information system, e-learning opportunities, and communication portals for students and teaching staff.

Comments:

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In general, the number of computers is sufficient. ICT devices are available for faculty members and students. The computer rooms look in general modern and meet the basic contemporary standards. The staff and the students are relatively motivated to use ICT techniques.

However, the availability and the knowledge of Faculty members regarding electronic legal databases should be increased. The committee found no evidence during the assessment visit that the basic legal databases are available for use from Faculty computers. The positive trend is the using of *Moodle* platform providing the students with information regarding the courses online.

- **Recommendation:** The existing ICT solutions should be further developed in order to guarantee the existing resources to be fully utilised and to take the usage of modern technologies to the next level, e.g., full e-courses, webinars, video lectures and comparable.

5.5. REQUIREMENT: The students are provided with dormitories and medical service.

Comments:

SUM has dormitories for students (Annex B. 5.5.). Master law students stay in the dormitory no.19 on Flower Street 4/2, Chisinau. Law Faculty students receive medical services at University Medical Center located on Pan Halippa str. 6/5 Chişinău.

5.6. REQUIREMENT: A library supports the conduct of studies ensuring that up-to-date information sources are available, and provides students with the opportunities for independent work.

Comments:

According to the SER, the library is equipped with 1,809,725 of books, 1445 PhD theses; 4074 rare books, 523 places for reading rooms (capacity that can simultaneously serve more than 20% of the students of the Faculty of Law of USM) and 4359 m² of functional space.

However, in the light of this data, the most significant problem related to library is that there is almost no foreign literature in the field of law. The books available are rather out-dated. The visit to the library proved that the literature in the field is inadequate and needs fundamental strategic re-planning. The students and academic staff are not aware of international databases and therefore not motivated to use the few available. Also, the librarians need training to give advice to the students on how to access electronic academic materials.

- **Recommendation:** The library needs major investment, especially regarding field specific legal literature in English, French or German.



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The University should pay attention to the modern sources of information when replenishing the library, investing in international academic databases, training the librarians, teaching staff and students of being able and motivated to use the resources.