

# Student Insights into Learning Experiences

## Study case: USAMV Bucharest

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### **Abstract**

*This article analyses the perceptions of students and graduates regarding the quality of learning experiences within the undergraduate programs at USAMV Bucharest. The study focuses on nine key factors integrated into the educational journey, including course content and structure, teaching quality, the university's reputation to employers, practical orientation of courses, knowledge acquisition levels, skill development, usefulness of career counseling services, available employment opportunities during studies, and the quality of university facilities.*

*Through the analysis of responses from 582 students and graduates, the research reveals a comprehensive overview of their satisfaction levels which underlines valuable insights into the multifaceted aspects of student satisfaction and provides a foundation for further enhancements in the educational landscape of USAMV Bucharest.*

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**JEL classification:** I25, J21, J44

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### **1. Introduction**

USAMV Bucharest, with its robust academic infrastructure, offers a large number of undergraduate programs tailored to meet the diverse needs of students. Embracing two main domains of study - engineering and biological /biomedical sciences - the university's academic portfolio encompasses 14 specialized domains, including Agronomy, Horticulture, Civil Engineering, Veterinary Medicine, and Biotechnology, among others.

Embedded within the core mission of USAMV Bucharest is the unwavering commitment to nurturing a positive and relevant learning environment for its students. This commitment manifests through various channels, including hands-on learning experiences, practical training initiatives, and a strong emphasis on entrepreneurship and innovation.

To further refine its educational landscape, USAMV Bucharest continuously seeks to understand and address the perspectives and needs of the students. In line with this objective, this article endeavors to delve deeper into the student learning experiences at USAMV Bucharest. By exploring firsthand insights, this article aims

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to identify the strengths and opportunities for improvement within the university's educational programs.

## **2. Literature review**

Understanding the learning experiences of students is essential for university in order to create effective educational environments that foster academic success and personal growth. A review of existing literature reveals various factors that influence student learning experiences, ranging from pedagogical approaches to institutional support systems.

### **Pedagogical approach**

The impact of different pedagogical methods on student learning experiences has been explored by numerous studies. The effectiveness of different educational strategies has been a focal point in educational research, aiming to optimize student engagement, comprehension, and critical thinking skills. Biggs and Tang (2011) underscore the significance of constructive alignment as a foundational principle in pedagogy. This approach emphasizes the alignment between learning outcomes, teaching activities, and assessment methods. By ensuring coherence across these elements, it can be created a conducive learning environment that fosters deeper engagement and understanding among students. In this way, students are guided through a structured learning journey that facilitates meaningful connections between course objectives and instructional practices.

The work of Chickering and Gamson (1987) highlights the transformative potential of active learning strategies in enhancing student learning experiences. Active learning methodologies represent a paradigm shift in education, moving away from traditional lecture-based formats towards dynamic, participatory approaches that prioritize student engagement and critical thinking. Active learning approaches, such as collaborative learning and problem-based learning, encourage students to actively participate in the learning process. By engaging in hands-on activities, discussions, and problem-solving tasks, students are challenged to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts, thereby promoting deeper levels of comprehension and critical thinking. These interactive pedagogical methods not only cultivate a dynamic learning environment but also empower students to take ownership of their learning journey. Research by Zepke and Leach (2010), Palmer et al. (2017), and Prince (2004) underscores the transformative impact of active learning strategies in enhancing student learning experiences. Zepke and Leach (2010) promote the idea of involving the students in collaborate learning in order to create the context for collective knowledge construction, peer feedback. Moreover, collaborative learning cultivates essential teamwork and communication skills that are vital for success in both academic and professional contexts. Experiential learning is promoted by Bonwell and Eison (1991) and Palmer (2017) as through active participation in these activities such as hands-on experiments, simulations, case studies, and real-world projects, students not only acquire theoretical

knowledge but also develop problem-solving abilities, critical thinking skills, and metacognitive awareness. Prince (2004) underlined the impact of inquiry based learning as this approach promotes intrinsic motivation and intellectual curiosity among students and cultivates research skills, information literacy, and the ability to evaluate and synthesize complex information, preparing students for lifelong learning.

In summary, pedagogical approaches play a pivotal role in shaping the learning experiences of students. Through constructive alignment and active learning strategies, instructors can create engaging and meaningful learning environments that empower students to achieve academic success and develop essential skills for lifelong learning.

### **Institutional Support Systems**

The role of institutional support systems, including academic advising, counseling services, and extracurricular activities, has also been widely studied in the context of student learning experiences. Tinto (1993) discusses the concept of academic and social integration, suggesting that students who feel connected to their academic programs and campus community are more likely to persist and succeed. Furthermore, effective academic advising fosters a sense of accountability and responsibility among students, empowering them to take ownership of their educational goals and academic progress. By cultivating meaningful relationships with advisors, students gain access to valuable mentorship and support networks that contribute to their overall academic success and well-being. In addition to academic advising, counseling services play a crucial role in addressing the social and emotional needs of students. Counseling centers provide a safe and confidential space for students to seek assistance with personal, interpersonal, and mental health concerns. By offering individual counseling, group therapy, workshops, and crisis intervention services, counseling centers support students in managing stress, coping with challenges, and developing resilience. Moreover, counseling services contribute to the promotion of social integration by fostering a sense of belonging and community among students. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) highlight the importance of supportive learning environments in facilitating student engagement and satisfaction, emphasizing the role of counseling services in promoting holistic student development.

Extracurricular activities complement academic experiences by providing students with opportunities for personal growth, leadership development, and social interaction outside the classroom. Participation in clubs, organizations, volunteer activities, and campus events enriches students' college experiences and enhances their sense of belonging to the campus community.

### **Cultural and Contextual Factors**

Cultural and contextual factors play a significant role in shaping student learning experiences. Studies have explored how factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and language proficiency impact students' perceptions of their educational environments and their ability to succeed academically (Hurtado et al., 2012; Steele, 1997). Additionally, research has examined the influence of technology and digital learning resources on student engagement and learning outcomes, highlighting the need for institutions to adapt to the changing educational landscape (Hilton III et al., 2016).

### **Student Perspectives:**

Central to understanding learning experiences is capturing the perspectives and voices of students themselves. Qualitative studies have provided valuable insights into the lived experiences of students, shedding light on their motivations, challenges, and aspirations within educational settings (Kuh et al., 2005; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). By amplifying student voices, institutions can gain a deeper understanding of the factors that shape learning experiences and tailor their approaches to better meet the needs of their diverse student populations.

The literature review on student learning experiences underscores the multifaceted nature of education and the importance of considering various factors, including pedagogical approaches, institutional support systems, cultural and contextual influences, and student perspectives.

## **3. Methodology**

To evaluate the perceptions of students/graduates of USAMVB regarding the quality of learning experiences within undergraduate studies, a questionnaire was administered consisting of three sections. The questionnaire targeted a sample of 600 USAMVB students and graduates, resulting in 582 responses.

### **Section 1: Demographic Information**

The first section of the questionnaire included demographic data of the respondents for sample analysis purposes. This section aimed to gather information such as age, gender, residence, educational status, faculty of study, program of study completed or in progress, and current employment status. Seven closed-ended questions were included to capture these demographic details.

### **Section 2: Assessment of Learning Experience**

The second section comprised two main items, each containing 9 and 8 sub-items, respectively, rated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. The first item

assessed the level of satisfaction regarding the quality of learning experience by correlating various factors:



**Figure 1. Dimensions of learning experience**

*Source:* Own contribution

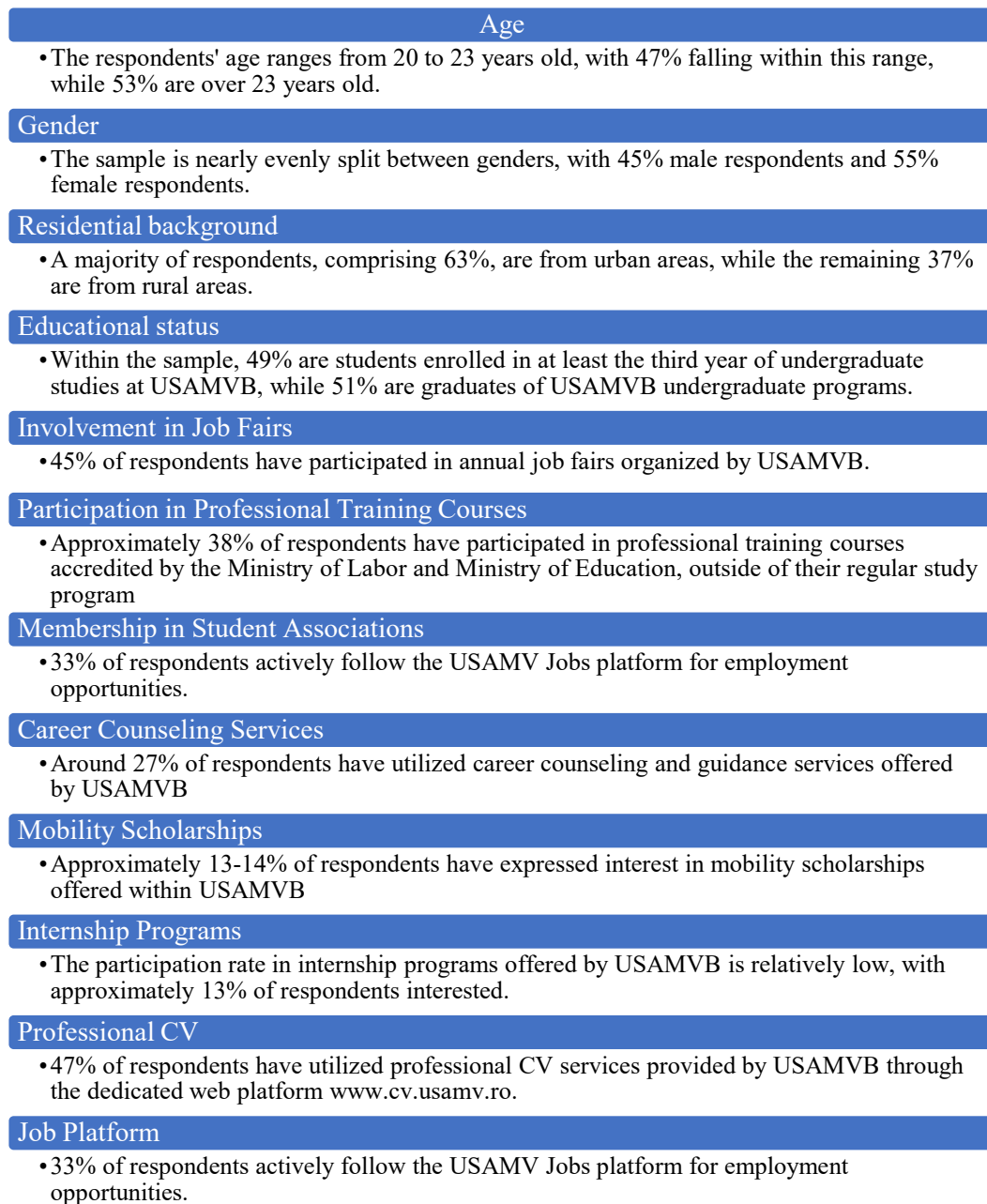
This section aimed to gather detailed feedback from respondents regarding their perceptions of the learning experience at USAMVB across the 9 dimensions.

#### **4. Data Analysis and Findings**

The data collected from the questionnaire responses were subjected to thorough analysis using statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics and inferential analysis. Descriptive statistics were utilized to summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample, while inferential analysis was employed to explore relationships between variables and draw conclusions from the data.

##### **Profile of the Sample Group**

The sample group consists of 582 respondents, characterized by the following demographics and characteristics:

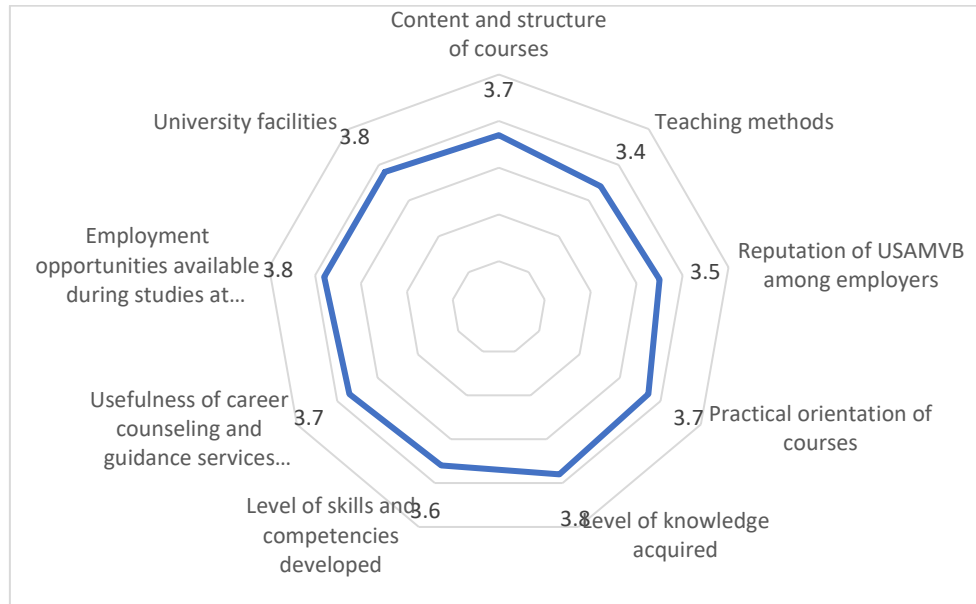


**Figure 2. Profile of the sample group of the study**

*Source: Own contribution*

### Evaluation of the learning experience factors

The analysis of each item reveals scores ranging from 3.4 to 3.8, with response options distributed on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 represents "very dissatisfied" and 5 represents "very satisfied"). These scores reflect a moderate to good perception regarding students' learning experience in various aspects of their field of study. While there is no extreme satisfaction, the scores suggest that the majority of respondents are relatively satisfied with the quality of their learning experience, with room for improvement in certain areas to achieve higher levels of satisfaction.



**Figure 3 Evaluation of the learning experience based on 9 factors**

*Source: Own contribution*

Overall, the analysis of learning experience items indicates a generally positive perception among students, with strengths in knowledge acquisition, foreign language communication, and digital skills. However, there are areas, such as teamwork and entrepreneurial skills, where enhancements could further enrich the educational experience and prepare students for success in their chosen fields.

Upon refining the analysis of satisfaction level in learning experience on each item in relation to the employment status and educational status of students/graduates, the results indicate similar scores, with a difference of less than one point, ranging between 3.3 and 4.1 on average. The differences in perception regarding satisfaction with the learning experience among students/graduates based on their employment status highlight a unified opinion with averages falling between 3 and 4 on the Likert scale.

As such, participation in career counseling and guidance services, as well as professional training courses offered by USAMV outside of the regular study program, emerge as factors positively influencing the evaluation of most aspects related to the quality of the learning experience. This indicates that students who engage with these support services and opportunities tend to rate their learning experience more favorably across various factors.

Moreover, the analysis of differences in perception regarding satisfaction with the learning experience among students/graduates based on their educational status (student, undergraduate, master's student, doctoral student) indicates the same conclusion, with a unified opinion with averages falling between 3 and 4 on the Likert scale.

As for the overall average, the score given by students is similar to the score given by graduates (average 3.6), with the highest score being provided by the category of master's students (average 3.9). This suggests that engagement with career counseling, guidance services, and professional training courses can positively influence the perception of the learning experience, regardless of the educational or employment status of the individual.

## **5. Conclusions**

The analysis indicates a generally positive perception among students and graduates regarding their learning experience at USAMV. Strengths in areas such as knowledge acquisition, foreign language communication, and digital skills contribute to this positive outlook. Despite the overall positive perception, there are areas identified for improvement, particularly in teamwork and entrepreneurial skills. Enhancing these aspects could further enrich the educational experience and better prepare students for success in their chosen fields. Also, the findings highlight the significant influence of support services such as career counselling, guidance, and professional training courses on the perception of the learning experience. Engagement with these services positively affects the evaluation of various aspects related to learning, emphasising their importance in enhancing the overall educational journey.

The refinement of analysis based on employment status reveals consistent scores across various factors related to the learning experience. Regardless of employment status, students tend to rate their learning experience similarly, with engagement in career counselling, guidance services, and professional training courses emerging as positive influencers. Similarly, the analysis based on educational status indicates a unified perception of the learning experience among students and graduates. Despite differences in educational attainment, the satisfaction levels remain consistent, with master's students expressing slightly higher satisfaction on average.

In conclusion, while the overall perception of the learning experience at USAMV is positive, there is room for improvement in certain areas. The consistent satisfaction levels across different demographics underscore the effectiveness of



support services in shaping a positive educational experience for students and graduates alike. Implementing strategies to enhance teamwork, and entrepreneurial skills, and further promoting engagement with support services can contribute to further enriching the educational experience at USAMV Bucharest.

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