According to the Law of National Education (Law 1/2011) universities and other higher education institutions are autonomous and have the right to establish and implement their own development policies, within the general provisions of the in-force legislation. The Ministry of National Education coordinates the activity of the universities and other higher education institutions, complying with their autonomy.

The university autonomy is correlated with the principle of personal and public accountability for the quality of the entire teaching and scientific research activity accomplished by the higher education institution. The university autonomy encompasses the domains of management, structuring and functioning of the higher education institutions, teaching and scientific research activities, administration and financing. From the financing point of view, the university autonomy is accomplished through the right to manage the funds from the state-budget and other sources, according to the provisions of the law and personal accountability. Public higher education is financed from the state budget based on financing contracts signed between the Ministry of National Education and the higher education institutions. The entire material basis of higher education is the property of and administrated by the higher education institutions.

In Romania the national education system has an open character. At the higher education level, the open character is ensured through the University Charter. The University Charter is adopted by the university senate and establishes the assembly of rights and obligations, as well as the norms that regulate the university community activity within each area.

Higher education is accomplished through universities, academies of study and post-university studies institutions. The mission of the higher education institutions is either education and research or only education. Specialisations and specialisations groups’ nomenclature are established by the Ministry of National Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family, the higher education institutions as well as other interested players. Higher education institutions usually include several faculties, university colleges - colegiu universitar, departments, chairs and units for scientific research, design and micro-production.

The enrolment quota financed from the state/local budget(s) for all education levels is established yearly through Decisions of the Government.

According to the Law of National Education (Law 1/2011), only high school graduates holding a diploma de bacalaureat can be admitted in higher education. The higher education institutions establish the admission methodology, according to the general criteria established by the Ministry of National Education. The selection and admission procedure can rely on: the average mark obtained by the candidates at the national exam – examenul de bacalaureat and at various subjects studied during high school, as well as the mark obtained at an entrance examination entirely organised by the higher education institution.

Higher education institutions are authorized to accept a number of students exceeding the number of placements financed from the state-budget, subject to students’ agreement to support the costs for the education provided (Law 441/2001).
All students benefit of free medical and psychological assistance in universities’ or other public medical and psychological units. Students also benefit throughout the entire year of 50% reduction of the cost for internal public transportation (except air-travel) as well as for entrances to museums, concerts, theatres, opera, movies and other cultural and sports events organised by public institutions. Orphaned students benefit of free internal public transportation (except air-travel). As for all education levels, scholarships and other forms of financial/material support are granted according to specific criteria.

Starting with 2005/06 academic year, all higher education institutions, private and public, are obliged by the 2004 Law to implement the new 3-cycle structure: Bachelor, Master and Doctorate. Students enrolled in the first year in 2005/06 began their studies based on the 3-cycle structure.

Official regulations related to the new structure apply to all types of institutions (accredited or temporarily authorised), branches and fields of study, except the courses related to professions regulated at European Union level. Each cycle has its own admissions and graduation procedures.

Special norms concerning the study conditions applicable to regulated professions adopted at European level have been established within the Romanian higher education system. The first (Bachelor’s) cycle includes a minimum of 180 and a maximum of 240 transferable study credits equivalent to ECTS, and lasts three to four years, depending on the field and area of specialisation. The second Master includes a minimum of 60 and a maximum of 120 transferable study credits (in exceptional cases and depending on the length of the first cycle, the lower limit may be 60 transferable study credits), and lasts one to two years. Both cycles should enable the accumulation of at least 300 transferable study credits.

The in-force legislation consents to and provides the general framework for the establishment of private education institutions of all levels, including universities and other higher education institutions. In order to be recognised as part of the national education system, private education institutions have to be accredited through specific procedures established by the law. Establishment of public or private higher education institutions is possible only through dedicated laws, according to the higher education institutions accreditation and diploma recognition procedures. Diplomas and certificates emitted by the accredited private education institutions produce the same effects as the ones emitted by the public education institutions. Organizing bodies of private education institutions are entirely responsible for the administration and financing of the activities within the established legal framework.

The persons belonging to the national minorities have the right to study and be instructed in their mother tongue at all levels and forms of education as well as in all types of education – providing there is a sufficient demand. In consequence, study lines in Hungarian and German for students belonging to these national minorities are organised in several higher education institutions. Besides this, certain higher education institutions organise departments for initial teacher training for teaching the languages of national minorities in Pre-tertiary education. At the same time, the Law of National Education (Law 1/2011) states that learning of Romanian, as the official language, is compulsory for all Romanian citizens, irrespective of their nationality.