Institutional Evaluation Programme

Performance in Research, Performance in Teaching – Quality, Diversity, and Innovation in Romanian Universities Project

Iuliu Hațieganu University of Medicine and Pharmacy

EVALUATION REPORT

January 2013

Team:
Ferdinand Devínsky, chair
Christina Ullenius
Simon van Heyningen
Marko Stojanovič
Andrée Sursock, team coordinator

Table of contents

1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of Iuliu Haţieganu University of Medicine and Pharmacy. The evaluation took place between April and December 2012 in the framework of the project "Performance in Research, Performance in Teaching – Quality, Diversity, and Innovation in Romanian Universities", which aims at strengthening core elements of Romanian universities, such as their autonomy and administrative competences, by improving their quality assurance and management proficiency.

The evaluations took place within the context of major reforms in the Romanian higher education system, and specifically in accordance with the provisions of the 2011 Law on Education and the various related normative acts.

Whilst the institutional evaluations took place in the context of an overall reform, each university is assessed by an independent IEP team, using the IEP methodology described below.

1.1. The Institutional Evaluation Programme

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an independent membership service of the European University Association (EUA) that offers evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture. The IEP is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

The distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme are:
- A strong emphasis on the self-evaluation phase
- A European and international perspective
- A peer-review approach
- A support to improvement

The focus of the IEP is the institution as a whole and not the individual study programmes or units. It focuses upon:
- Decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management
- Relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision-making and strategic management as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms.

The evaluation is guided by four key questions, which are based on a 'fitness for (and of) purpose' approach:

- What is the institution trying to do?
- How is the institution trying to do it?
- How does it know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

1.2. Iuliu Hațieganu University of Medicine and Pharmacy and the national context

Iuliu Hațieganu University of Medicine and Pharmacy (UMF-Cluj) is located in the city of Cluj-Napoca, the fourth most important city in Romania. Home to a dozen higher education institutions, Cluj-Napoca is also an important medical centre that attracts patients from across the region.

A new higher education law was passed in 2011. The law introduced several important changes to the organisation of the universities, which will be discussed in this report.

Recently, large numbers of academics have retired across Romania because they reached retirement age. Due to the economic downturn, hiring restrictions in the public sector have been in effect for the past three years and many posts have not been filled. Following a period of a hiring freeze, universities have been recently allowed to replace one out of seven departures. The employment situation is reportedly leading to stress and overwork in some parts of UMF-Cluj.

UMF-Cluj employs 833 full-time academic staff members, of which 492 are women; at professoriate level, the gender breakdown is 50 per cent. In addition, 514 administrative staff members work at the university.

UMF-Cluj enrols 6105 full-time undergraduates, 170 master students, 242 doctoral students and 2347 medical residents. The students are distributed across three faculties: medicine, pharmacy and dentistry. In addition to teaching in Romanian, the university offers sections in French and in English. Medicine is the largest faculty and is clearly dominant in the decision-making process. Dentistry is the second largest and pharmacy, the smallest faculty, is responsible for about half of the university's research publications.

1.3. The self-evaluation process

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by a group led by Vice-Rector Felicia Loghin. The group was formed on the basis of the "Senate Subcommittee on Evaluation", with the addition of the financial director. It had a short six weeks in which to write the self-evaluation report and only one week to consult the academic community. About 50 comments were

received, and focused on the following topics: scientific research publications; participation in conferences; the student organisations and the percentage of students involved in governance.

The self-evaluation group reported that the most difficult areas in developing the report included the issue of strategic management due to different views held about the research strategy, human resources issues and how legislation could be changed to afford greater flexibility. The self-evaluation group also noted that the self-evaluation process revealed the need for a student-centred educational strategy and the importance of viewing students as partners in the educational process.

The self-evaluation report was informative and descriptive with a vast number of annexes (66). The SWOT analysis identified bureaucracy and the lack of integration between human resources and financial management as two internal weaknesses. The self-evaluation report related all other weaknesses to external factors. Whilst the evaluation team recognises the difficult economic situation that has been prevailing in Romania and can easily imagine the negative impact on the higher education system of hundreds of professors retiring *en masse* recently, it would have appreciated information and analysis of the university's finances and its internal allocation of resources. Additional data and materials, including a detailed financial report, were provided to the evaluation team after these were requested.

The evaluation team recognises the time constraints under which the self-evaluation report was written but would have valued receiving a more analytical and self-reflective report. Unfortunately, the self-evaluation report was not translated into Romanian before the first visit; it was not distributed across the university or accessible on the Intranet. This meant that some of those the evaluation team met during the first visit had limited knowledge of the university-wide issues and strategic objectives. This seems to indicate some communication problems across the university and reflected the fact that the preparation of the self-evaluation was a top-down process.

1.4. The evaluation team

The self-evaluation report of UMF-Cluj, along with 66 annexes, was sent to the evaluation team (henceforth the team) on 26 April 2012. The two site visits took place from 23 to 25 May 2012 and from 23 to 26 October 2012, respectively. In between the visits, UMF-Cluj provided the team with some additional documentation as requested.

The evaluation team consisted of:
- Ferdinand Devínsky, Team Chair, Professor of medicinal chemistry, former Rector, Comenius University in Bratislava, former member of the Slovak Parliament and of the Council of Europe, Slovakia
- Marko Stojanovič, student in geoeconomics, Megatrend University, Belgrade, Serbia

- Christina Ullenius, Professor of organic chemistry, former Rector, University of Karlstad, former vice-president of EUA, Sweden
- Simon van Heyningen, Professor of learning & teaching, former Vice-Principal, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom
- Andrée Sursock, Team Coordinator, PhD in anthropology, former Deputy Secretary General, Senior Adviser, European University Association (EUA), Belgium

The team is most grateful for the hospitality shown by Rector Alexandru Irimie and very appreciative of the frank and open atmosphere of dialogue that prevailed during the site visits. It wishes to thank most sincerely all the colleagues and students who attended the meetings that were organised during the two site visits. The team wishes to thank most particularly Vice-Rectors Felicia Loghin and Ioana Neago for their active engagement in the evaluation process and their very efficient and gracious response to all requests, big and small. Their attention to every detail ensured the appropriate working conditions to the team.

2. Governance and institutional decision-making

2.1. Decision-making processes and university structures

At university level, the team was told that the two key decision-making bodies are the administrative council and the senate.

By law, the administrative council includes the rector (as chair), the vice-rectors, the deans, the director of the Council of Doctoral University Studies (who is also a vice-rector), the director general and a student representative. The university's administrative council invites the senate president to all its weekly meetings on an *ad-hoc* basis.

The statutory members of the senate are about 40 elected faculty members and students; the administrative council is invited to attend the senate meetings on an *ad-hoc* basis. Representation of students in the senate is allocated on the basis of faculty enrolment: six from medicine, two from dentistry, two from pharmacy, one each from the English and the French sections. The same principle of proportional representation applies to faculty members and leads to an overwhelming representation of the faculty of medicine in this body. The senate meets monthly and the minutes of the meetings are published on the university website.

The senate's ten commissions coordinate and control a variety of activities, nine of which overlap with the administrative council and the vice rectors. The tenth is the ethics commission. Every commission includes three teachers and one or two students and works closely with the corresponding vice-rector. The largest commission is focused on student issues and comprises three faculty members and four students. All commissions discuss proposals that come from the administrative council or the senate.

The team was told that the senate is the highest decision-making body and that the administrative council (chaired by the rector) reports to the senate. In the team's view, this results in a discrepancy between the formal and informal decision-making processes. Thus, the rector is legally responsible for the financial and management decisions and the university charter gives him the power to shape the strategy but the senate can veto the rector and the academic council. Moreover, the management contract between the senate and the rector does not mention any responsibility of the senate towards the university or in providing support to the rector.

Potentially, this situation could lead to tensions – even paralysis – between the highest governing body and the senior leader of the university. Such potential tension is mitigated in UMF-Cluj by the informal practice of including the senate president in the administrative

council meetings and the administrative council in the senate meetings. In addition, there seems to be a culture of consensus and compromise that leads the university to postpone difficult decisions until consensus is found.

The general impression is that the new processes introduced by the 2011 law are challenging the historical organisational culture. Thus, the team was told that, since the chronology has been changed (the rector is elected before the deans are appointed), the flow of the decision-making process has been reversed and has become more top-down. For example, in the past the university's strategic plan was built on the basis of the departmental and faculty plans. Today, the team was told that it is the reverse: the university leads and the faculties should adjust their strategic plans to the overall strategic orientation. It is still early days in this transition, however, and this reversal of responsibilities does not seem to be fully at work yet. Nevertheless, the university appears to be highly centralised.

The faculties manage their own academic issues: teaching, research and student life. They report to the administrative council, the rector and the senate. The flow of decision is as follows: the faculty councils arrive at decisions that are sent to the senate; if these are approved, they go to the administrative council for execution. Faculties cooperate with the vice-rectors on specific issues (e.g. the vice-rector for research meets with the vice-deans for research once a month). According to the 2011 higher education law, faculties are now structured in departments; this development seemed to be widely welcomed by the deans.

The team received contradictory evidence about students' involvement in governance. Most students were positive; a few were less so. The team heard that there are no formal ways of eliciting their opinion at departmental level, although students do contribute informally and their opinions are heard. There are regular, formal meetings with their faculty deans (one student representative mentioned such weekly meetings extending from one to four hours). A few students complained that their influence is limited in the senate since they constitute "only a quarter of that body" and that they are "are not informed in due time of issues". In general, administrative information to students seems to need attention.

➢ The team recommends that greater attention be paid to the flow of information to students. Whilst this is a common challenge to most universities worldwide, it would be important to try addressing it nevertheless, particularly now that new web-based techniques are available that are particularly attractive to that generation (social networks, etc.).

2.2. Management of human resource and financial resources

The team was told that all senior **academic** officers (including vice-deans) have job descriptions although none holds a full-time position. The new law allows a reduction of the

teaching load for those involved in administration but this does not seem to have been implemented yet – probably because so many academic posts have remained unfilled (cf. Section 1.2).

The team gained the overall impression that **administrative** staffing does not appear sufficient. Thus, some senior administrative posts are filled by academics (e.g. the senior quality and the senior international officers are academics). This is often the case in universities that lack enough administrative staff at the right level.

In addition, the qualification of some senior administrative staff seemed insufficient and, as a result, some necessary administrative functions are missing. As examples, the university does not know the full cost of its activities and does not seem able to analyse, anticipate, and plan its administrative staff resources.

Furthermore, there seem to be an emphasis on collective decision-making even when it is not strictly necessary or desirable. Thus, merit pay and bonuses are discussed and approved in the senate.

On the financial side, several features can be noted:

- All income (whether public or private) and all expenditures flow through the university's accounting office.

- It is possible to transfer surplus to the following budget year without any limitation (percentage or origin of funding) and the university is enjoying a surplus every year.

- Faculties are given itemised funding. The new higher education law foresees that the faculties would have a budget, including the capacity to raise funds through contract research and tuition fees (although both the higher education law and the administrative law requires the rector's signature on all expenditures). This has not been implemented yet. The new higher education law does not specify an internal allocation method. Like many other universities in Europe, UMF-Cluj does not know the cost of individual programmes and courses; therefore, it is difficult to calculate the precise funding of each faculty. At the time of this evaluation, new principles for the internal allocation at UMF-Cluj have not been decided yet, whilst there is a great deal of focus on the selection of a computer software programme to administer this function.

- Romanian universities must submit a budget to the authorities twice a year and list all planned expenditures, although it is possible to address emergencies in a timely fashion. If an unexpected purchase is needed and cost more than 1800 Lei, authorisation from both the Ministry of Education and Treasury is required even if funds are available. Approval of large acquisitions is reported to take up to six months.

Thus, there is a disparity between the university's autonomy to gain its funding and its constrained autonomy to spend it in the way that best serves its academic project. But the team notes the careful way in which UMF-Cluj manages its finance and its positive balance sheet that includes a surplus allowing some degree of long-term planning. The team recommends that UMF-Cluj:

➢ Review key administrative functions such as finance and human resources, to ensure that the university:

  o Know its full cost
  o Develop fair and transparent rules for the internal budget allocation in order to prevent any tensions
  o Approve individual salaries in a way that is transparent and fair without having to discuss individual cases in the senate
  o Engage in strategic human resource management (e.g. long-term planning and skills development)

➢ Consider strengthening administrative capacity through administrative staff development and targeted recruiting, with the long-term objective of ensuring that senior administrative positions are filled by qualified administrative staff, and that senior academic staff (e.g. rector, vice-rectors) are given the mandate of monitoring (rather than administering) the activities, in cooperation with the general administrator.

2.3. Mission, vision and strategic planning

UMF-Cluj's self-evaluation report states the university's vision as wishing to "continue to be among the best medical universities that educate competent health professionals for Romanian and international communities". The self-evaluation report notes that, as "a student-oriented research university", UMF-Cluj "aims to be a national leader in the education and development of the next generation of physicians and scientists…"

Such aims are certainly inspiring and mobilising, especially the commitment to regarding students as partners rather than "consumers". The team notes, however, that the mission and vision statement is not available as a stand-alone document, thus limiting its internal and external visibility and impact.

Commonly, an organisation can seek to achieve its mission and vision through four strategic steps such as:

• Identify a series of objectives or goals
• Put in place a plan to achieve these objectives or goals

- Put in place structures and processes through which to achieve these activities
- Create activities that fulfil the objectives

The team notes that to be a "national leader" or to be the "best medical university" (as stated in the mission and vision statement) requires more specification and definition of concrete steps to reach the target, particularly because the contract signed between the senate and the rector (cf. section 2.1) explicitly mentions as one of the minimal performance criterion: "to increase the role of leader among European and national universities". It is not clear how this criterion will be measured and what would be the consequences if the senate decides that this objective was not achieved.

The translation of the mission and vision into activities, such as teaching and research programmes, is commonly expressed in a strategic development plan. UMF-Cluj presented a forty-page document entitled "Be Among the Best" as its strategic plan for the years 2012 – 2015 accompanied with another eleven-page annex entitled "Strategy for Research". Whilst both documents described important goals and some very attractive projects they lacked clear priorities and a detailed financial plan, which must be an inseparable part of the strategic plan.

Nevertheless, there seems to be a consensus on two priorities: strengthening research through equipment upgrade and developing human resources (recruitment and promotion of younger staff). The team gained the impression, however, that UMF-Cluj is attempting to do too much and in too many areas in a relatively short time, particularly given the financial situation that shows that existing resources would support a limited number of strategic objectives. Fortunately, the university's senior management team is aware of this problem and understands that the operational plan should be tightly connected to the financial planning of the university.

In view of the previous analysis, the team recommends the following:

➢ Produce a new mission statement that elaborates more precisely the objectives. This mission statement should be a separate document that would be easy to find on the university website and could perhaps be attached to the university charter. Such a document would serve to keep UMF-Cluj on the right track during turbulent times of change. It should support the aspiration of the university to strengthen its teaching and research for the benefit of the region and the country and reflect its commitment to the European Higher Education Area and Romania's recent accession to the European Union. It would serve as a framework for the preparation of the mission statements of individual faculties, which, whilst reflecting the specific characters of individual units, would be consistent with the university's general mission.

➢ Initiate a university-wide discussion to reach agreement on a limited number of carefully chosen strategic priorities and attainable goals, and a detailed and realistic

financial plan with concrete sums allocated to each project. Similarly the faculties should elaborate their own individual strategic plans in line with that of the university.

➢ In order to strengthen the university's internal cohesion, it is essential to have one or two university-wide projects that involve all faculties and departments. Examples could be the curricular reform envisaged in the strategic plan to introduce systematically curricula that are compatible with those used in the European Higher Education Area; interdisciplinary research that would involve all three faculties; or the design and implementation of a programme to promote undergraduate students' involvement in research activities.

➢ Although the university accepted the rector's strategy and vision – as evidenced by his successful election – the Strategic Plan should be reviewed and refined every year. This is a live document that should be adapted regularly to the new circumstances and to the analysis of past successes and failures.

3.   Teaching and learning

The university's strategic plan includes the goal of undertaking a curricular reform aimed at transforming existing study courses and introducing a portfolio of academic programmes that are in line with the new higher education law, current educational trends, the Bologna Process and, of course, the EU directives for the regulated professions. The team has understood that this is a radical shift from existing practices and there are some pockets of resistance within the university.

This section will not attempt to describe all of the university's teaching activities but to highlight some of the existing practices that UMF-Cluj seeks to reform. The team's recommendations are offered in this positively changing context.

The team praises UMF-Cluj for establishing two units that will greatly strengthen learning and teaching. These are:

- The *Department of Curriculum Development*, which will implement an ambitious curricular reform. This department was open as a transitory solution when the department of medical education lost its accreditation and closed. The plan is to reorganise and reopen it with the help of a new recruit (a recently retired medical professor from Vienna) and two professors from the nearby University Babes Bolyai. The major objectives are (1) to extend to pharmacy and dentistry the shift to competence-based and problem-based learning that was started two years ago with medicine (each professor will be asked to identify a set of ten objectives and evaluate them); and (2) to shift from an apprenticeship model to a structured rotation model to expose students to a broader range of clinical areas.

- The *Medical Simulation Centre*, which will help to address the need for more interactive courses and practical skills development. The simulation centre is also equipped with instruments to update medical doctors' skills (e.g. in laparoscopic surgery) as part of the lifelong learning activities of UMF-Cluj.

These are two excellent developments that will serve to strengthen the learning of both students and medical doctors.

The Team was impressed that UMF-Cluj is able to deliver medical and dental training in three different languages (English, French and Romanian) and that its international reputation is growing as shown by the progression of its international student enrolment. This international progression could have continued to grow if the university had not decided – wisely – to put a ceiling on it in order to ensure quality of delivery.

International students are required to learn Romanian in order to interact with patients. The team was told, however, that the oral language examination does not seem to be filtering out those who gained limited language mastery; these students have to rely on their peers to take medical histories and interact with patients.

Students from across the institution are generally very satisfied with UMF-Cluj as their university of choice. However, they expressed concerns with heavy workloads. The strategic plan states that students should devote at least 40 hours per week to their studies, including contact hours. This is a significant burden, not only to them but also to the academic staff. Students also criticised the frequent use of multiple-choice examinations.

In addition, the team observed that there seems to be a limited amount of interfaculty teaching cooperation and limited flexibility in the curriculum, which reduces the possibilities for students to take elective courses. Although students are exposed to a degree of teamwork (e.g. in the simulation centre or in their clinical rounds), they are not taught "soft skills" such as presentation skills, grant writing, etc., that would further their professional development.

The library provides an attractive setting and a stock of about 100000 books, plus online resources and the university is member of the European Association for Health Information and Libraries (EAHIL). The team did not have the time to browse the online resources but noted that the open-stock books were not always the most up-to-date editions.

Lifelong learning activities have been successful in attracting alumni as well as international participants. There seems to be good quality control in this area and strong motivation to make it a self-funded activity. UMF-Cluj has invested in costly equipment and teachers are selected carefully based on evaluations and observation. However, registration numbers have levelled off recently. Whether this is due to the economic downturn or other reasons is not clear.

The team praises UMF-Cluj for its efforts to shift from teacher-centred to student-centred education and to identify learning outcomes, in line with the developments in the European Higher Education Area. The general impression that the team gained is that there is a real willingness to improve the teaching and learning and to offer the best possible education opportunities to the students. Clearly, UMF-Cluj is committed to its students. It is in this positive context that the team recommends to UMF-Cluj the following:

➢ Undertake a detailed review of teacher's workload and, in some specialisms, lower the number of teaching contact hours to an acceptable amount. This will reduce the students' workload and create some space for academic staff to engage in other activities, such as research.

➢ Improve the balance between practical and theoretical courses by involving external specialists as teachers. This would increase the practical training opportunities and

decrease the teaching load of the regular staff who can then be freed to engage in research.

> Increase the flexibility of study programmes and develop joint programmes across faculties. These should go beyond merely sharing electives, i.e. they should aim to reduce duplicative teaching by establishing as many "service courses" as possible beyond the current ones (service courses are taught by one faculty to students from all other faculties).

> Make greater use of international resources in medical education, develop examinations in line with the identification of learning outcomes and minimise the use of multiple-choice exams.

> Review the Romanian language test to ensure its effectiveness in identifying students who are unable to communicate with patients.

> Provide "soft skills" development to the students: e.g., presentation skills, grant proposal writing; writing academic papers; CV preparation and other professional skills.

> Analyse the lifelong learning activities from two vantage points: their real costs and the reasons for the recent decline in the number of registrations. This is an area where evidence-based decision-making is particular important in order to respond as closely as possible to societal needs and to keep the university's balance sheet in order.

4.   Research

As mentioned in Section 2.3, developing research is one of UMF-Cluj's main priorities. This section analyses current initiatives and activities, starting with doctoral education.

4.1.   Doctoral education

At the moment, there is one doctoral School affiliated with the faculty of medicine. The plan is to open two other schools that would be affiliated with each of the other two faculties, with the objectives of creating focus for research and showcasing the best researchers. The long-term vision is to grow and strengthen an institutional research culture in all three major disciplinary fields and develop interdisciplinary research.

The new law is reported to have strengthened some aspects of doctoral education by providing clearer objectives for doctoral schools, including providing one year of courses. UMF-Cluj has introduced one year of research methodology and soft skills development (e.g. how to get published, European research law, research ethics). It is mandatory to attend all courses and take the examinations. The doctoral school organises a summer session that is particularly appreciated, in partnership with its peer institutions in Timisoara and Iasi. There is also some cooperation with the other universities located in Cluj.

After earning 60 credits, students engage in three years of research and work with their supervisors. The new law tightened the qualification criteria for supervisors (age and academic profile) and set a ceiling of maximum eight students per supervisor. As a result, the potential number of doctoral students was reduced although recently a few more academic staff obtained their habilitation to supervise. The law no longer allows the status of part-time doctoral student; at UMF-Cluj, it concerns 277 part-time doctoral students and is being phased out.

The team was told that the new law has altered the administrative structures of doctoral schools; at UMF-Cluj, the director of the doctoral school is also an *ad-hoc* member of the Senate Commission on Scientific Research.

The attractiveness of doctoral education among medical students was reported to be low. Although no study has been done of medical brain drain, the statistic being bandied about is that 80% of Romanian medical students intend to leave the country. In addition, the Ministry limits the number of PhD places. Thus, UMF-Cluj 100 funded places in 2009 and 71 places this year. The state stipend is about EUR 150. Doctoral students reported a number of ways in which they fund their education: through teaching or research assistantships; working in clinical settings; applying for competitive funding offered by the university.

The team was told that possibility of doing an MD/PhD is particularly challenging in Romania because the law does not define what is a medical PhD and – although medical and veterinary students are given one extra year to finish – this is not enough. In addition, according to the current doctoral students, the PhD is not particularly attractive to many of their peers who are oriented toward clinical rather than research careers.

These two sets of issues are difficult for a University such as UMF-Cluj whose biggest faculty is the medical faculty. The team notes the following good initiatives to increase the attractiveness of doctoral training:

- The university considers that it is strategic to ensure no demographic gap in doctoral training. To this end, UMF-Cluj established 50 doctoral scholarships of EUR 2000 each and obtained EUR 450 stipend for 30 doctoral students from European funds. When the money did not come, the university ended up funding these students.

- The university built a kindergarten three years ago and doctoral students have the possibility to stop for a two-year parental sabbatical.

- A charter for doctoral education was developed recently by the former Vice-Rector for research, in partnership with the senate commission

The doctoral students that the team met were all former undergraduate students at UMF-Cluj. They noted the significant evolution of the research activities in the university in the past ten years even if they do encounter some difficulties in funding their research (they report that they are now able to manage their living expenses).

Undergraduate students also expressed interest in increasing their own involvement in research but noted the lack of structured information. They report, however, that the university is starting to address these challenges. However, one structural obstacle to student's involvement in research are their workloads and that of their teachers, as was mentioned above (cf. section 3).

The team views the doctoral school as a positive step in building research capacity and in growing a research culture at UMF-Cluj. The creation of three doctoral schools would allow the university to identify several centres of excellence and to apply for more money but careful consideration should be given to the adverse consequences of having three doctoral schools, instead of one interdisciplinary school. These include duplication of resources and bureaucracy and perhaps reduced opportunities for interdisciplinary work. In addition, the team recommends the following:

➢ Reach out to undergraduates and communicate undergraduate research opportunities.

➢ Re-establish stipends for doctoral students.

> Consider how to meet the doctoral students' highest priority namely, research funding.

4.2. Research activities and research infrastructure

The most ambitious research plan at UMF-Cluj is to open a genome research centre. The building and equipment for genomics already exist and are of excellent quality. The centre has been established with funding from the university and some external grants. Theoretically, the three faculties are involved in this centre and each has its own research priorities but there seem to be some concerns that resources might not to be shared equally across the three faculties. The major challenge facing the centre is that it is currently unable to recruit new staff in the required numbers because of hiring restrictions.

Apart from this new centre, the research equipment seems to be insufficient in number and quality. The teaching laboratories would require updating. Academic staff members also note that their teaching workload is very high. They expressed concerns that the university suffer from a significant shortage of staff (40%) and that PhD students, who constitute one-third of the teaching assistants, have to finalise their thesis and publish two ICI articles. Thus, there are very stringent legal requirements for both research and teaching and sabbaticals are reported to be unavailable.

Whilst the leadership has a strategy to increase the university's research profile, the rank-and-file academics are feeling the pressure of maintaining the status of UMF-Cluj as a research-intensive university in Romania, in a difficult economic and demographic context, and with a number of generic (e.g. teaching loads) and specific challenges that are linked to clinical fields such as medicine and dentistry (e.g. lack of Romanian journals in some fields).

The team notes that there are some interdisciplinary research activities within UMF-Cluj and some cooperation between the university and other universities in Cluj. In addition, the local pharmaceutical company met by the team mentioned that it plans to develop its research and development activities in Cluj. In this context, the team recommends that UMF-Cluj;

> Consider how cooperation could be increased to address the lack of up-to-date research infrastructures and equipment and to develop innovative research projects. This cooperation concerns inter-faculty (within UMF-Cluj) and inter-university cooperation across the city as well as partnerships with the pharmaceutical industry.

5. Service to society

The team met a number of external stakeholders (local authorities, public health authority, pharmaceutical company, etc.) who were very positive about UMF-Cluj. They spoke of the university as "an emblem for the city" and mentioned that the community looks positively at the university.

About 50% of students are reported to volunteer for the national emergency systems (such as the emergency rooms, ambulance service), free dental service, health programmes in primary schools, etc.

The public health authority claims that the partnership with the university is excellent. The insurance representative mentioned that its organisation has had a partnership with the university for twelve years through contractual work and expertise.

Both the pharmacy and dental associations provide students' internships. They receive professional training from the university; attend scientific events organised by the university; and try to attract university staff to their own projects (e.g. project to develop quality assurance processes for pharmacies, annual conferences of the associations).

The team praises UMF-Cluj for the good relationships it maintains with a wide range of external stakeholders

➢ The team recommends that the university involve external stakeholders in a more systematic way, particularly when it reviews its curricula.

6. Quality culture

UMF-Cluj created a Quality Management Unit a few years ago, following instructions from ARACIS, the national Romanian evaluation agency. According to Romanian law, all universities must have a quality assurance (QA) commission.

At UMF-Cluj, the Quality Management Unit is under the vice rector for QA and international relations and is staffed by a sociologist and psychologist. Its main tasks are:

- The evaluation of teaching staff, which includes a self-assessment as well as assessment by students, peers and department head.
- Preparation of the ARACIS reviews.
- Exit questionnaire to students at the end of the first cycle.
- Preparing students for their entrance examination (this a fee-paying workshop).

Future plans include the evaluation of doctoral studies, which will be developed as soon as ARACIS decides on the direction of its future activities in this area, and the evaluation of the residency programme. The Quality Management Unit will also produce a three-year report about the QA results, to be endorsed by the rector, thus signalling that the top university leadership is supporting the quality assurance process.

Section 6.1 provides an overview of quality assurance at UMF-Cluj whilst Section 6.2 is focused on the evaluation of teaching.

6.1. Overview of quality assurance processes at UMF-Cluj

- An ISO process for the administrative services is in use and is reported to have brought improvements. ISO was also initially introduced for academic activities but was stopped because it was found to be unsuitable to this area.

  Administrative staff members are evaluated once a year through a questionnaire distributed to the department heads. The team was told that – theoretically – poor performers are offered staff development and career advice but that, as a matter of practice, this has not been the case.

- Each academic staff is requested to submit an annual scientific report. These provide the basis for the faculties' annual research reports.

- There are no processes in place to evaluate the governance of the university.

The team praises the university for the creation of the Quality Management Unit. It recommends:

> ➢ Building the capacity and expertise of this department through training and the provision of substantial financial and human resources such as internships.

> ➢ Introducing the quality assurance system at all levels of the university and training the faculty staff responsible for quality assurance would help the university to monitor itself and to improve.

6.2. Quality assurance of teaching and learning

The assessment of teaching staff is done as follows:

- There are two standard questionnaires – one for practical courses and the other for theoretical ones. These questionnaires are the same for all of courses within their category. The initial questionnaires contained 57 questions. This has been cut in half and the wording of the questions was improved following students' feedback.

- The questionnaires are online and, depending on the faculty, yield a 40% to 55% response rate. This process results in 130 000 evaluation questionnaires a year.

- Department heads get the results for their individual department; deans get the aggregate results for their faculties and these seem to be discussed in the faculties' pedagogical commissions; the rector gets the aggregate results for the whole university and these are discussed in the senate. It is the responsibility of the deans to intervene in case of poor performance but if a dean decides to take no action, the consequences of this decision are unclear.

- The annual QA reports are posted on the university's website.

- The Quality Management Unit holds student focus groups and meetings with student representatives to discuss the evaluation questionnaires and the annual report.

Despite these processes, the students noted the uneven teaching quality and mentioned that some demotivated teachers (some of whom are reported to fail showing up to all their classes) are left to their own devices. Students do not know how the results of the questionnaires are used. Although some of the older students report general improvement over the years, they do not know if weaknesses of individual teachers are addressed and if there is any staff development.

In the team's view, there is clear evidence of a willingness to monitor the quality of teaching and to ensure the quality of the QA mechanisms. It commands the university for reviewing on an ongoing basis and improving the student questionnaire. In order to ensure that internal

quality assurance leads to positive results, the process could be further improved in the following ways[1]:

- ➢ Consider introducing some variety in the questions so as to maintain the interest of the students and the staff. This can be done in several ways, for instance:

    - o The questionnaire could have, say, three university-level questions and allow a faculty or a department to add some questions. Teachers can then add their own questions. In all cases, the questionnaire would be limited to a set number of about 12 questions.

    - o The Quality Management Unit would provide teachers with a set of questions to choose from; they would be encouraged to select between five to ten questions and to vary their questions in order to get different perspectives.

- ➢ Consider introducing other ways of collecting feedback. For instance, teachers could be encouraged to do a quick evaluation, three weeks within a course, and ask students: "What classroom activities or assignments have been most effective in helping you learn this semester, and why?" and "What classroom activities or assignments have been least effective in helping you learn this semester, and why?" Students are asked to respond anonymously and write a paragraph for each question. The results need not be communicated to the administration and should be used by the teacher to improve his/her teaching.

- ➢ Consider how results are used:

    - o Two principles are important in this respect: (1) the teachers must feel some ownership of the process in order to bring about real improvement and (2) students must be informed about the use of the questionnaires. A way of combining both principles would be to send the questionnaire results to the teachers, who would analyse them and explain to their students what changes were brought about as a result of their feedback.

    - o The pedagogical teams in each department and the department of curriculum development should use the results of the questionnaires as one source of evidence for improving teaching (pedagogy and content).

- ➢ The evaluation of the quality of teaching was focused on the evaluation of teachers. This can lead to a fragmented view of the quality of teaching. Other aspects that constitute good teaching should be considered as part of quality management: e.g. course design, the balance between lectures and seminars, digital course material,

---

[1] Many of the recommendations in this section are based on a series of studies published by EUA: *Examining Quality Culture*, Parts I, II and III: http://www.eua.be/Publications.aspx

course literature, how theory and practice are combined to increase understanding, etc. These aspects should be explicitly linked to the formal quality assurance mechanisms, which could be further enlarged to include other instruments such as alumni questionnaires and the involvement of employers in curricular developments.

7.   Internationalisation

UMF-Cluj considers internationalisation as a strategic aspect as evidenced by:

- A number of bilateral agreements it maintains with universities abroad

- Activities in Romanian networks such as the network of medical faculty deans

- The success of the English and French sections in attracting international students to UMF-Cluj

- The establishment of MedESN, the Erasmus Student Network

The team was told that there has been an intensification of internationalisation in the past twelve years and attention paid to ensure that internationalisation contributes to the quality of UMF-Cluj rather than undermines it.

In order to strengthen further its internationalisation and increase student and staff mobility, the team recommends the following steps:

- Enhance international exchanges by reviewing possible barriers to mobility, such as the flexibility of study programme and the transferability of ECTS from abroad so that students would not need to take additional examinations upon their return to the university. This would require convincing all academic staff that the reforms linked to the Bologna Process are positive and – possibly – centralising the recognition of ECTS earned aboard in order to ensure standard treatment.

- Strengthen student exchanges through such international programmes as ERASMUS and ensure that all students have liability insurance for their period of practical training if they chose to do it abroad.

- Develop an international strategy with clear priorities (such as targeted countries) and ways of building upon the university's international alumni and Romanian alumni who have gone abroad. This would be an effective way to turn brain drain into "brain circulation".

- Develop indicators to measure the impact of international activities.[2]

---

[2] See for instance: www.impi-project.eu and www.impi-toolbox.eu for indicators developed by CHE Consult in Germany; NUFFIC developed a checklist (www.nuffic.nl/international-organizations/services/quality-assurance-and-internationalization) and a mapping tool (www.nuffic.nl/mint) for international activities.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the evaluation team praises UMF-Cluj for its commitment to teaching quality and its aspiration to develop further its research culture and its international activities. The team believes that the university has strengths that can be further developed despite the difficult national context.

In summary, the team wishes to highlight the key recommendations in the following six areas.

8.1.   Governance and institutional decision-making

➢ Greater attention should be paid to the flow of information to students. Whilst this is a common challenge to most universities worldwide, it would be important to try addressing it nevertheless, particularly now that new web-based techniques are available that are particularly attractive to that generation (social networks, etc.).

➢ Review key administrative functions such as finance and human resources, to ensure that the University know its full cost, develop fair and transparent rules for the internal budget allocation in order to prevent any tensions, approve individual salaries in a way that is transparent and fair without having to discuss individual cases in the senate, and engage in strategic human resource management (e.g. long-term planning and skills development).

➢ Consider strengthening administrative capacity through administrative staff development and targeted recruiting, with the long-term objective of ensuring that senior administrative positions are filled by qualified administrative staff, and that senior academic staff (e.g., Rector, Vice-Rectors) are given the mandate of monitoring (rather than administering) the activities, in cooperation with the General Administrator.

➢ Produce a new mission statement that elaborates more precisely the objectives. This mission statement should be a separate document that would be easy to find on the university website and could perhaps be attached to the university charter. Such a document would serve to keep UMF-Cluj on the right track during turbulent times of change. It should support the aspiration of the university to strengthen its teaching and research for the benefit of the region and the country and reflect its commitment to the European Higher Education Area and Romania's recent accession to the European Union. It would serve as a framework for the preparation of the mission statements of individual faculties, which, whilst reflecting the specific characters of individual units, would be consistent with the university's general mission.

➢ Initiate a university-wide discussion to reach agreement on a limited number of carefully chosen strategic priorities and attainable goals, and a detailed and realistic

financial plan with concrete sums allocated to each project. Similarly, the faculties should elaborate their own individual strategic plans in line with that of the university.

➢ In order to strengthen the university's internal cohesion, it is essential to have one or two university-wide projects that involve all faculties and departments.

➢ Although the university accepted the rector's strategy and vision – as evidenced by his successful election – the strategic plan should be reviewed and refined every year. This is a live document that should be adapted regularly to the new circumstances and to the analysis of past successes and failures.

8.2. Teaching and learning

➢ Undertake a detailed review of teacher's workload and, in some specialisations, lower the number of teaching contact hours to an acceptable amount. This will reduce the students' workload and create some space for academic staff to engage in other activities, such as research.

➢ Improve the balance between practical and theoretical courses by involving external specialists as teachers. This would increase the practical training opportunities and decrease the teaching load of the regular staff who can then be freed to engage in research.

➢ Increase the flexibility of study programmes and develop joint programmes across faculties. These should go beyond merely sharing electives, i.e. they should aim to reduce duplicative teaching by establishing "service courses" whereby one faculty teaches a general course (e.g. chemistry, languages, etc.) to students from all other faculties.

➢ Make greater use of international resources in medical education, develop examinations in line with the identification of learning outcomes and minimise the use of multiple-choice exams.

➢ Review the Romanian language test to ensure its effectiveness in identifying students who are unable to communicate with patients.

➢ Provide "soft skills" development to the students: e.g. presentation skills, grant proposal writing; writing academic papers; CV preparation and other professional skills.

➢ Analyse the lifelong learning activities from two vantage points: their real costs and the reasons for the recent decline in the number of registrations. This is an area where evidence-based decision-making is particular important in order to respond as

closely as possible to societal needs and to keep the university's balance sheet in order.

8.3. Research

➢ The recommendations aimed at strengthening and growing the research culture at the university by reaching out to undergraduates and communicating undergraduate research opportunities, re-establishing stipends for doctoral students and considering how to meet the doctoral students' highest priority namely, research funding.

➢ Consider how to address the lack of up-to-date research infrastructures and equipment and the need to develop innovative research projects through different types of cooperation: inter-faculty (within UMF-Cluj), inter-university across the city as well as partnerships with the pharmaceutical industry

8.4. Service to society

➢ The team recommends that the university involve external stakeholders in a more systematic way, particularly when it reviews its curricula.

8.5. Quality culture

➢ Building the capacity and expertise of the quality assurance department through training and the provision of substantial financial and human resources such as internships.

➢ Introducing the quality assurance system at all levels of the university and training the faculty staff responsible for quality assurance.

➢ Improving feedback by introducing some variety to the student questionnaires, introducing other ways of collecting feedback and improving the use of results.

➢ The evaluation of the quality of teaching was focused on the evaluation of teachers. This can lead to a fragmented view of the quality of teaching. Other aspects that constitute good teaching should be considered as part of quality management: e.g. course design, the balance between lectures and seminars, digital course material, course literature, how theory and practice are combined to increase understanding, etc. These aspects should be explicitly linked to the formal quality assurance mechanisms, which could be further enlarged to include other instruments such as alumni questionnaires and the involvement of employers in curricular developments.

8.6. Internationalisation

➢ Enhance international exchanges by reviewing possible barriers to mobility, such as the flexibility of study programme and the transferability of ECTS from abroad so that

students would not need to take additional examinations upon their return to the university. This would require convincing all academic staff that the reforms linked to the Bologna Process are positive and – possibly – centralising the recognition of ECTS earned aboard in order to ensure standard treatment.

➢ Strengthen student exchanges through such international programmes as ERASMUS and ensure that all students have liability insurance for their period of practical training if they chose to do it abroad.

➢ Develop an international strategy with clear priorities (such as targeted countries) and ways of building upon the university's international alumni and Romanian alumni who have gone abroad. This would be an effective way to turn brain drain into "brain circulation".

➢ Develop indicators to measure the impact of international activities.