

University of Pharmacy and Medicine Gr. T Popa (UMF)

FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION REPORT

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Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Governance and Institutional decision making	6
3. Teaching and learning	9
4. Research	11
5. Service to Society	12
6. Quality Culture	13
7. Internationalisation	15
8. Conclusion	17
9. Summary of the recommendations.....	18

1. Introduction

This report is the result of a follow-up evaluation of University of Medicine and Pharmacy Gr. T Popa (UMF). European University Association's (EUA) Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) originally evaluated the university in 2012 with the report submitted to the University in November 2012. In 2015 the University subsequently requested that IEP carry out a follow-up evaluation.

1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme and follow-up evaluation process

IEP is an independent membership service of the 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).

In line with the IEP philosophy as a whole, the follow-up process is a supportive one. There is no prescribed procedure, and it is for the institution itself to set the agenda in the light of its experiences since the original evaluation. The institution is expected to submit its own self-evaluation report, which will describe the progress made, possibly indicating barriers to change.

The rationale is that the follow-up evaluation can assist the institution in evaluating the changes that have been made since the original evaluation: What was the impact of the original evaluation? What use has the institution made of the original evaluation report? How far has it been able to address the issues raised in the report? The follow-up evaluation is also an opportunity for the institution to take stock of its strategies for managing change in the context of internal and external constraints and opportunities.

As for the original evaluation, the follow-up process is also 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 the institution know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

1.2 University of Medicine and Pharmacy Gr. T Popa's profile

The first medical school in Romania was created in Iasi, in 1879, within the first modern university in the country. The faculty of medicine became a jurisdictionally independent Institute of Medicine and Pharmacy. Since 1990, the institution operates as the University of Medicine and Pharmacy (UMF) and bears the name of one of its faculty members, Grigore T. Popa, a world renowned scientist.

Since 1965, UMF comprises the faculty of medicine, the faculty of dentistry, and the faculty of Pharmacy, whilst the faculty of bioengineering was founded in 1994. According to the university's Self Evaluation Report (SER), since its inception, UMF has held its position at the forefront of medical and health sciences education and research within the national realm. Although limited during the communist regime, UMF's international outreach in both research and education started to develop after 1990 and has been a strategic focus ever since. Under the national education law of 2011, UMF was classified as a teaching and advanced research university.

UMF is a public institution with legal personality, governed by the Romanian Constitution, national education laws and the university charter. It is the only medical university in the northeast region of Romania, located in the city of Iasi, centre of the region and one of the largest municipalities in Romania. UMF's main campus is located in the city centre whilst several other buildings for research and education, as well as student housing, are located in the surrounding area.

The northeast region is the largest and most populated region of Romania. However, the region's GDP is only 71.7% of the national level. Thirty-three percent of the region's contribution to the national GDP comes from the education and health sectors. Due to low costs and the highly qualified workforce, the northeast region of Romania is considered to be one of the most appealing areas for investment in Europe (according to the National Agency for Employment, National Statistics Institute). Iasi is the largest university centre in the region and, as one of the 10 largest employers in the city of Iasi, UMF is a significant driving force in the region's economy and development.

UMF's research activities take place within nationally accredited research structures comprising two research platforms, 10 research centres and laboratories. UMF has a total of 1,446 academic staff, and 315 administrative staff. The number of students registered for bachelor degrees, master degrees, PhDs and residency studies is 11,106.

1.3 The evaluation process

The follow-up evaluation took place three months after the newly appointed Rector took up post. The follow-up evaluation was requested by the former Rector, who himself had been in post for one year following the replacement of the Rector who was in place at the time of the original evaluation in 2012. The review therefore considers a period that spans the leadership of three Rectors.

The SER of the university together with the appendices, was sent to the evaluation team in April 2016. The visit of the evaluation team took place from 25 to 27 May 2016.

The evaluation team (hereinafter named the team) consisted of:

- Juan Viñas Salas, Chair, Former Rector, Lleida University, Spain

- Lennart Olausson, Former Rector, Malmo University, Sweden
- Samin Sedghi Zadeh, Student, University of Turin, Italy
- Andy Gibbs, Team Coordinator, Glasgow Caledonian University, Scotland

The team thanks the Rector, Prof. Viorel Scripcariu for his warm welcome and access to his team, staff, students and facilities, The Self Evaluation Team, especially the Chair and former Rector, Prof. Dragos Pieptu for their work in providing the self-evaluation report. The team is grateful to all staff and students who participated in interviews and meetings as well as translators and staff who provided hospitality.

2. Governance and Institutional decision making

It is evident that there has been progress on implementing recommendations made in the 2012 IEP evaluation report. In the first instance, the original report recommended that “the senate needs to be proactive whilst at the same time building a co-operative relationship with the Rector focused on strategic planning for the institution”. It is clear both from the SER and in discussion with the Rectorate team and Senate representatives, that the relationship is good and that the Senate is functioning effectively. The Senate was described, both in the SER and various meetings, as a positive entity for decision making, monitoring and implementing plans. In this context, the recommendation from the previous report, to reconsider the size of the Senate, was considered by the team not only to be redundant but also outside of the scope of what the university could implement, given current legislation.

The team heard from a variety of sources, including the Rector, his team, Senate representatives and Deans that a change of management style was being introduced, moving to one that is more transparent and participative, characterised by the Rector and others as being bottom up, rather than top down. The 2012 evaluation noted that the university had made great efforts in developing a management system that is inclusive and avoids an overt top down approach. The SER notes that “strategy is developed and implemented in a participative way”. The team concluded that the desire to introduce a bottom up approach has been a consistent feature of the university since at least 2012 and the recommendations in this report aim to provide comprehensive steps for achieving this. In discussion, the Rector indicated that he wished to see culture change within the university and that the time was ripe for this.

Across the five key areas evaluated (governance and leadership, teaching and learning, research, quality culture and internationalisation), the team noted a lack of specificity, expressed in conversation with the Rector and his team, in what the university wanted to achieve and that the goals were stated in very vague terms, for example, better teaching, better and more research, better approach to quality, more international partners in research and teaching as well as increasing the numbers of international students. These goals broadly coincided with those stated four years earlier. In each of the key sections below the team recommends greater specificity and clarity of vision. The team were told that the Rector’s Strategic Plan, which details greater specificity, has been shared with the academic community. The team welcome this plan, which although was not seen, was said to contain more specific details about the actions they want to implement, the specific objectives they want to achieve, the key milestones together with a clear timetable. The team believes that this and the measures below will spell out the activities required and the expected behaviours and help to realise the desired culture change.

The SER outlined that “culture change involves an effort that may encounter difficulties caused by the inertia of the employees – at all levels – to keep the previous habits.” The team agree that this is often problematic. The strategic plan mentions as a challenge the moral

crisis within the Romanian society, to which the changing of social priorities and values system belong. The team is aware that the University has faced some challenges in recent years which is why recommendations are proposed to support the Rector's aim to achieve greater transparency. The strategic plan also notes the resistance to change and the maintenance of personal and group interests as priority in the context of outdated mentalities. To refute these, to promote a message externally and to provide guidance for employees and managers, the team recommends that the university **clarify values and expected behaviours**. This could take the form of a clear statement which **promotes the values of the university with measures to ensure these are implemented both in deed and policy**.

To support this the team recommends to **further develop the conditions for transparency in all university activity**. Amongst steps to support this is the recommendation, outstanding from the 2012 evaluation, to **introduce equality in representation in university decision making bodies, especially for French/English language and nursing students**. The university has a duty to find a way to involve students, and they should consider the best way to introduce students' representation and the benefits that derive from this. This recommendation is discussed in more detail in section seven of this report.

One of the possible new structures that the university could consider to help it gain more social credibility and transparency is a role similar to that of ombudsman, which exists in many universities. The ombudsman can act independently and receive complaints and information from the whole university community. The team suggests that **the creation of a role with similar functions to an ombudsman would aid transparency**.

The university provided an Executive Summary of the Strategic Plan 2016-2020, signed by the Rector in March 2016. The plan contains many initiatives to modernise the university and its activities, setting these in short and medium through to long term aspirations. The team was impressed by the scope and ambition of the activities outlined in the plan. While appreciating the content of the plan, the team found it problematic to easily identify the key priorities within the 18 page document. The team suggest that it may be useful to provide a one-page summary which **prioritises and indicates the key goals in the strategic plan**. Additionally, the team noted the recommendation of the 2012 evaluation to define performance indicators for all goals and objectives in the strategic plan and regularly monitor progress detailed in an action plan. The team would adapt this slightly to now recommend that the university **defines SMART objectives for all goals and objectives in the strategic plan 2016-2020 and regularly monitor progress detailed in an action plan**.

The strategic plan addresses one of the recommendations of the 2012 evaluation that "Pluri-layered sources of decision-making and sharing responsibilities have to be more transparent and effective". The plan recognises the lack of a real decision-making authority within the faculties, and especially within the departments, and a related limit to the lines of accountability. The university expects that an increase in the number and relative autonomy

of departments which took place earlier this year will improve communication, decision making and transparency. Additionally, the plan indicates an intention to train Deans and Department Directors as group leaders. These steps, together with the proposed monitoring of the achievement of objectives set through the management strategic plan, continuously correcting and adapting them to the evolution and changes in the relevant department or faculty, will create a good resource to **maintain a management system for priorities and goals.**

The Rector indicated that managing internal and external communication was a key priority for the future. In particular, improving communication between faculties, departments and within the disciplines of the departments, between Dean's offices and the Rector's office. The SER stated that "in promoting transparency of the decisional act, the University has created a monthly Newsletter to inform in real time the academic community about all decisions, debates, regulations or any event in the life of the University." The team agree that enhancing communication can build internal and external confidence, engagement and reputation; however they believe that it is more useful in bringing about culture change when accompanied by the actions above which focus on goals, roles, processes, values, practices, attitudes and assumptions.

The team heard that the Rectorate team wishes to communicate everything, internally and externally. The team concluded that this is an unachievable expectation. The recommendations above suggest an approach which gives a clearer focus to what could usefully be communicated to bring about culture change. The team recommends that, in this context, the university **identifies internal and external communication needs and develops a communication strategy based on university values and priorities.**

The Rectorate team expressed disappointment that the university was not placed higher in international rankings. Although not focused on rankings, the 2012 evaluation highlighted this by mentioning that "whilst external verification has confirmed UMF's position as a teaching and advanced research university at national level, it was less clear, beyond visibility and market presence, the measures and metrics by which it would achieve its goal to be a key player in international research." The current team agree with this and concluded that whilst internal incentives stimulated activity, unless this was directly linked to the measures and metrics which would improve rankings, the overall result would be a growth in diverse unfocused activity which rewarded staff internally but had little effect on the university's positioning.

As part of the communication strategy, the team recommends that the university **allocate responsibility for reviewing rankings to one of the Vice Rectors.** As part of this, rankings of relevance to UMF goals should be identified, as different rankings use different metrics. Once identified, data submission requirements should be ascertained as often the way information is presented affects its interpretation in the rankings. Once this has been addressed, a strategy to improve rankings can subsequently be developed.

3. Teaching and learning

The team noted the implementation of the 2012 recommendation to develop library provision to ensure it is in line with the needs of students and researchers.

The SER reported and it was confirmed in discussions with teachers and students that didactic methods are based on a professor-student partnership and students report that teachers are supportive and helpful in these relationships. Additionally, the SER indicated that “the university uses modern study in methods offered by the new technologies (simulations, demonstrative films, etc.), based on modern teaching principles like interactive presentations, without neglecting traditional teaching methods and auxiliary materials.”

Students are satisfied with the teaching and whilst the team does not doubt this, it was unclear to the team what was meant by modern teaching methods. The 2012 evaluation indicated that it was also unclear to the team then how the university defines “modern learning principles” and whether the teaching was based on the need to justify teacher contact time or the learning needs of the students. This view is shared by the current team. It is noted that the issue of independent study time partially addresses one of the 2012 recommendations, and the team restates it here, encouraging further efforts to **balance autonomous study time/student workload with teachers’ contact time in teaching and learning and e-learning approaches in the spirit of the new philosophy of sharing responsibilities in study achievements.**

It was also noted that the Self-evaluation Group (which did not include any students) provided no critical reflection on teaching and learning and in meetings, students displayed a comprehensive lack of critical reflection, which the team would expect from higher education students, particularly those engaged in second and third cycle studies.

The university has a number of internal incentive schemes to promote excellent teaching, which go some way towards meeting the 2012 recommendation to “reward excellent teaching”, the definition and vision of excellent teaching was unclear to team members and appeared to be based on criteria set internally without any reference to contemporary practices and norms across Europe or other external criteria. These norms and contemporary practices include the concept of student-centred learning, which is not mentioned in the SER nor the strategic plan and which neither students nor teachers could identify in any of the meetings. Additionally, principles mentioned originally in the Bologna Process and as part of the European Higher Education Area, such as learning outcomes, constructive alignment, consistency in assessment and generally a move of emphasis from teaching to learning, are not reflected in university literature nor in discussions with teachers and students. To this extent, and for reasons cited below, the team reiterates the 2012 recommendation **to create and elaborate a teaching, learning and assessment strategy based on student-centred learning** which would further the implementation of these principles.

Furthermore, it is worthwhile that students achieve basic research competences and that these should be included in curricula together with research methodology and teaching activities and assessment. The team recommends that the university **increase research-related learning opportunities for students**

4. Research

The University has a number of internal incentive schemes to promote research. These include a “merit gradation” which includes giving an additional wage increase of 25% to the best performing researchers within the university, a competition of internal grants and financial support for the participation of teaching staff in various scientific conferences, networks and events.

These incentives have contributed to the university meeting the recommendation from the 2012 evaluation to strengthen visibility of research by being more present in international research groups and further open UMF to the international scientific community (collaborative research, conference attendance, staff recruitment etc.). Additionally, the SER reported a doubling of research publications in the period since the last IEP evaluation.

In tandem and prior to the activities related to rankings highlighted in Section 2 of this report, the team recommends that **internal incentives should be linked to any strategy related to improving the university’s position in international rankings**. Additionally, UMF should **prioritise specific research fields on which to focus its efforts**, rather than maintaining the current aim to be better and undertake more research. Underpinning the strengthening of activity in specific fields, UMF may wish to **continue strengthening visibility of research by being more present in international research groups** as recommended in the 2012 evaluation.

The team heard that there was some inexperience among staff in applying for external funding and grants, which led to a reluctance to make applications. The team concluded that linking internal grants with conditions to apply for external grants could help to stimulate professors to apply for them. Therefore the team suggests **implementing starting grants to incentivise the initiation of research** and link them to applying to European, National and International grants.

Finally, the team heard that professors faced an excessive clinical overload of work that left little time to devote to research. The team suggests the possibility to periodically **liberate professors’ time from their clinical and teaching work for more intensive dedication to research**.

5. Service to Society

The SER outlined many initiatives that have been implemented and these were elaborated during the site visit, allowing the team to hear of a number of activities through which the university contributed service to society. Amongst these were initiatives to support university applications from the Roma community by providing a number of designated places for this group. Coupled with this were financial and social support systems designed to enhance the integration of financially or socially disadvantaged students.

The university also sponsors and promotes community outreach programmes. These include providing support for schools in local villages, organising collections and donations of food and clothing to disadvantaged groups and communities. The university has also taken a lead role in organising health promotion and awareness events focused on healthy living including exercise and sanitation.

The 2012 evaluation recommended that UMF continue its way of offering important services to society and the team commends the lifelong learning activities of UMF and **encourages the continuing development of lifelong learning activities.**

6. Quality Culture

The SER advises that from 2012 onwards, knowledge and understanding of the quality standards by each member of the academic community became a priority for the university. Thus, for the new personnel (academic and administrative), training is carried out regarding the quality standards of the university based on ISO standards. The SER also outlines a number of processes and procedures which have been adopted to monitor, *inter alia*, curriculum development and review and student satisfaction.

The university expanded its definition of quality from 2012 outlining it in the SER as "The culture of quality, defined as a system of organisational values resulting from an environment oriented towards the continuous maintain and improvement of quality, is in a development process regarding our university that will continue with the rebranding process proposed by the new management of the University within the Strategic Plan 2016-2020." This system derives from procedures and expectations that promote quality.

These activities build on those observed and noted in the 2012 evaluation which commented that a number of significant measures have been taken, most significantly the introduction of Quality Management System (QMS) at the university level. A system wide QMS has been designed, documented and implemented, according to the SR EN ISO 9001:2008, and certified. The 2012 evaluation commented at the time that whilst it has a number of benefits, ISO has a tendency to focus on processes rather than people, improvement and culture change.

The team notes the considerable efforts of the university in developing its quality systems and processes and commends those involved for the progress made. The team notes the intention of the university to **focus on closing the quality assurance loop** and encourage this as a further step in promoting openness and transparency as well as possibly maintaining and increasing students' motivation to give critical feedback. This is closely linked to the recommendation about the statement of university values given in section 2 and the university should take the opportunity to **ensure that existing quality assurance procedures are aligned with values and expectations related to quality culture**

At the same time, whilst understandable within the ISO system, the team recommends that the university considers the connotations of designating students as clients and/or customers within the quality system and that it should **revisit the decision to view students as partners rather than customers.**

This may be of particular relevance to the French and English curricula streams. The team noted the comments of the previous review and reiterate their observations of that time. The university has programmes, which are taught in English, French and Romanian. These are currently organised as three distinct entities. There are opportunities to improve both the

quality of teaching and learning and the internationalisation of the student body through greater integration of these programmes. Additionally, as the majority of students within the French and English taught curricula will leave the country after graduation and function as “ambassadors” of the institution, sound quality processes especially within these programmes will help to build a quality culture and an international reputation. The recommendation of that time is therefore repeated, that **sound quality processes especially within the French and English streams will help build quality and reputation.**

7. Internationalisation

The SER reports a substantial increase in its international activity in the period 2012-2016. This includes gaining membership of a number of international scientific communities, participation in exhibitions, conferences and international fairs, a focus on improving academic and student mobility, over 60% increase in non-Romanian academic enrolment, international internships and an increased number of international partnership agreements. Additionally, the university increased financial support for international activity for staff and expanded the provision of international literature available through its library resources. The university also invested more human resources in the international office as recommended in the 2012 evaluation.

The team noted this commendable increase in international activity however were unable to place the activity within the context of a clear internationalisation strategy. The team concluded that whilst there was considerable activity, unless this was directly linked to recognised measures and metrics of internationalisation, the overall result would be a growth in diverse unfocused activity which would be difficult to maintain in the longer term. The developments and relationships often appear piecemeal and developing in a way that does not build capacity or critical mass. The team observed a lack of clear goals for internationalisation activities. The team recommends that **an internationalisation strategy is developed which maximises existing opportunities through targeted actions with clear leadership.**

For example, the increased enrolment of non-Romanian students provides an excellent resource from which to develop an internationalisation at home strategy, which would enable the whole university community to benefit from the diverse student body. It is noted in the SER that the educational bachelor program in English, French and Romanian is carried out based on the same curriculum corresponding to each faculty. The university encourages running of common activities among the students both at educational level as well as at scientific level by organising workshops, summer schools, and scientific events. The team suggests that this could be taken further and **to use synergies between the programmes to maximise the potential of the international student body through further shared curricula activity.**

To some extent this is envisaged through the development of a Multicultural Centre which is mentioned in the strategic plan. The purpose of this is to consolidate the university's position on the foreign student recruitment international market. Its main goal is to ensure an open area where every culture, religion and tradition is presented through its students, generating knowledge, respect and tolerance - indispensable values of a higher education institute that accommodates a broad range of nationalities. The cultural diversity creates a huge educational potential, which can be put to good use, but only in the presence of an adequate and encouraging institutional environment. Integrating the specific values of each nation will

be an attractive element for foreign students in choosing the university they want to attend in Romania. The team agree that this will provide an opportunity to develop a multicultural profile. The team heard on a number of occasions from various members of staff that the university is multicultural. The team believes that the fact that the university has students from many countries does not by itself automatically convert it to a multicultural institution. The lack of representation in student bodies and the provision of services and information only in Romanian does not reflect a system of beliefs and behaviours that recognises and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organisation or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context. To facilitate development towards this, the team recommends that the university **further develop induction and support services to integrate international students and introduce equality in representation in university decision making bodies especially for French/English language students.**

In connection with the above, the strategic plan also indicates that special attention will be given to identifying student mobility opportunities in English speaking countries. The team suggests that to support this the university may wish to **define and practice a clear language policy**, which would include academic staff and all students. This would also benefit the development of joint curricula activities as well as enhancing the experience and skills, particularly of Romanian students. In building partnerships with English speaking universities the team suggests that the university adopt a strategic approach to **profile the type of institutions with which UMF could partner, identify these and develop clear mutually beneficial propositions.**

The team heard differing accounts and figures related to student employability. The team welcomes the steps outlined in the strategic plan to meet the recommendation of the 2012 evaluation that as part of an internationalisation strategy the university should **gather quantitative and qualitative evidence on employability and workforce impact to build reputation.**

The team heard that substantial numbers of graduates gain employment in other countries, and in line with an internationalisation strategy, in order to develop research partnerships and enhance communication and reputation the team suggests to **engage overseas alumni to promote the university abroad**

8. Conclusion

Good progress has been made across the whole range of university activity since the last IEP evaluation in 2012, a period that has seen intense change and occasional adversity. The university has decided to support a new Rector with a new agenda, which seeks to consolidate achievements and introduce participative, transparent ways of working. Whilst this demands a review of community values, the team has confidence that the university can build on its success to continue its positive development.

9. Summary of the recommendations

Governance and Institutional Decision Making

Clarify values and expected behaviours.

Promote the values of the university with measures to ensure these are implemented both in deed and policy.

Further develop the conditions for transparency in all university activity.

Introduce equality in representation in university decision making bodies, especially for French/English language and nursing students.

Create a role with similar functions to an ombudsman to aid transparency.

Prioritise and indicate the key goals in the strategic plan.

Provide a one-page summary which prioritises and indicates the key goals in the strategic plan.

Define SMART objectives against all goals and objectives in the strategic plan 2016-2020 and regularly monitor progress detailed in an action plan.

Maintain a management system for priorities and goals.

Identify internal and external communication needs and develops a communication strategy based on university values and priorities.

Allocate responsibility for reviewing rankings to one of the Vice Rectors.

Teaching and Learning

Balance autonomous study time/student workload with teachers' contact time in teaching and learning and e-learning approaches in the spirit of the new philosophy of sharing responsibilities in study achievements.

Create and elaborate a teaching, learning and assessment strategy based on student-centred learning.

Increase research-related learning opportunities for students.

Research

Link internal incentives to any strategy related to improving the university's position in international rankings.

Prioritise specific research fields on which to focus its efforts.

Continue strengthening visibility of research by being more present in international research groups.

Implement starting grants to incentivise the initiation of research.

Liberate professors' time from their clinical and teaching work for more intensive dedication to research.

Service to Society

Encourage the continuing development of lifelong learning activities.

Quality Culture

Focus on closing the quality assurance loop.

Ensure that existing quality assurance procedures are aligned with values and expectations related to quality culture.

Revisit the decision to view students as partners rather than customers.

Implement sound quality processes especially within the French and English streams that will help build quality and reputation.

Internationalisation

Ensure an internationalisation strategy is developed which maximises existing opportunities through targeted actions with clear leadership.

Use synergies between the programmes to maximise the potential of the international student body through further shared curricula activity.

Further develop induction and support services to integrate international students.

Introduce equality in representation in university decision making bodies especially for French/English language students.

Define and practice a clear language policy.

Profile the type of institutions with which UMF could partner, identify these and develop clear mutually beneficial propositions.

Gather quantitative and qualitative evidence on employability and workforce impact to build reputation.

Engage overseas alumni to promote the university abroad.