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## **A R A C I S**

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**E x t e r n a l I n s t i t u t i o n a l E v a l u a t i o n**

**Universitatea de Medicină și Farmacie Iuliu Hațieganu  
din Cluj-Napoca, România**

**F o r e i g n E x p e r t R e p o r t**

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## **1. Introduction**

This report summarizes my impressions as Foreign Expert from the visit to the “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Cluj-Napoca (UMF) for an external institutional evaluation by ARACIS from October 22 to 24, 2014. This was a follow up institutional evaluation of UMF by ARACIS after the institution had received the “High degree of confidence rating” in 2009.

Beside the institutional evaluation, the bachelor programmes "Medicine", "Dental Medicine" and "Pharmacy" were selected to be evaluated too.

During the last five years I have participated in twelve ARACIS-evaluations. As a member of the pool of experts of the Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) of the European University Association (EUA) I have participated already in more than 20 evaluations in 7 European countries, in Colombia and in Nigeria. Furthermore, I have also worked as a peer for the Lithuanian Center for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (CQAHE). Hence the following observations and comments will not only reflect my Romanian experiences but also European and international perspectives. My focus is on the institution as a whole and not so much on individual study programmes. The self-evaluation process, international perspectives as well as governance and quality assurance are important core elements of my considerations.

I am very grateful to the Mission Director Prof.univ.dr. Ioan Lascăr and the Mission Scientific Coordinator Prof.univ.dr. Alexandru Țugui for conducting the evaluation process in a very efficient way and to all members of the ARACIS team for their constructive and fruitful discussions during the visit. My special thanks go to the Technical Secretary Mrs.Carmen Mirian from ARACIS for giving me the opportunity to participate in this evaluation and for her friendly way of holding contact with me, providing all necessary information for the visit.

I also give my cordial thanks to the Rector Prof.univ.dr. Alexandru Irimie of “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Cluj-Napoca as well as to his team of Vice-rectors and Deans for the friendly welcome and perfect organization of my visit. I also want to express my appreciation to the President of the Senate Prof.univ.dr. Ioan Ștefan Florian and to the Administrative Director Mr. Silviu Corpodean as well as to the various representatives of UMF including students, who have actively participated in the meetings and considerably contributed by their discussions to a good understanding of the institution.

## **2. Organizational Details of “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy**

The beginning of the “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Cluj-Napoca goes back to 1565, when a Medical College was founded in Cluj. The present “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy (UMF) of Cluj started in 1919 as Faculty of Medicine within the “Dacia Superioară” University of Cluj. In 1990 the Faculty became the University of Medicine and Pharmacy and in 1994 it was renamed “Iuliu Hațieganu”

University of Medicine and Pharmacy. UMF is a public institution with legal personality. In the national university ranking 2011 UMF was classified as a university of advanced research and education, having the right to offer Bachelor -, Master – and Doctorate programmes. UMF consists of the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Dental Medicine and the Faculty of Pharmacy and offers studies in these three fields. It should be remarked that the bachelor programmes in medicine, dental medicine and pharmacy are given in Romanian, English and French language.

At present UMF has 9000 students of which more than 2000 are foreign students from over 50 countries. The teaching and administrative staff consists of 858 teachers, out of which 90 are professors, 333 auxiliary teachers and 190 administrative employees.

The facilities for education and research are excellent.

The financial resources of the UMF come mainly from the Romanian government, school fees and project income. Due to an excellent financial management UMF has succeeded to reach a cash surplus and a certain financial flexibility during the last years despite of the actual difficult financial situation. Nevertheless, legal restrictions and complicated procedures delay even the use of own income.

According to the Law 2011 the University is led by the Administrative Board chaired by the Rector and the Senate of about 40 members.

### **3. Outline of the Visit**

UMF is one of the leading Romanian universities in the field of health education and research. Nevertheless, the institution took the whole evaluation process and the visit very seriously and prepared very well for the visit.

#### **3.1 The Self-Evaluation Process**

The Self Evaluation Report (SER) is comprehensive and together with the numerous annexes gives a complete information on the institution. But the provided materials are far too extensive. The University must have spent much time in the preparation of the documents and the evaluation team had to check thousands of pages. As UMF is not in any danger to loose accreditation or to be down-ranked it would have been fully satisfying to provide a compact SER of 25 to 30 pages concentrating on the changes since the last ARACIS visit in 2009 and presenting the present situation (staff, students, budget, facilities). Furthermore, the experiences of UMF implementing the Law 2011 would have been interesting.

#### **3.2 The Evaluation Visit**

The institutional evaluation visit to the “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Cluj-Napoca began in the evening of October 21 of 2014 with the arrival of the ARACIS team at the Capitolina City Chic Hotel in Cluj-Napoca.

During the evaluation visit I participated in the meetings of the main ARACIS team, but did also arrange my own interviews and examinations.

The evaluation procedure started punctually on October 22 at 9:30 in the Senate meeting room of UMF. Rector Prof.univ.dr. Alexandru Irimie welcomed the ARACIS delegation and

introduced the representatives of the University. The leadership of the University was more or less completely present. Mission Director Prof.univ.dr. Ioan Lascăr and the Mission Scientific Coordinator Prof.univ.dr. Alexandru Țugui presented the members of the ARACIS team and explained the evaluation procedure.

In the course of the day the ARACIS team had the usual activities. We visited for more than two hours buildings, the central library, lecture theatres, laboratories and other facilities of UMF. On our round we met many ongoing classes, small groups of 5 to 12 students as well as groups up to 100 students. In all visited locations we found state of art technical teaching equipment and met teachers and students at work. I had everywhere the impression of lively ongoing academic activities. The library, the lecture rooms and laboratories were all in excellent condition. A new Aula Magna, a new building for languages and a new building containing a Medical Simulation Centre and a research unit for Functional Genomics, Biomedicine and Translational Medicine with equipment for millions of Euros can compete with the facilities of leading health institutions in Europe.

In the afternoon I had a private meeting with the President of the Senate Prof.Univ.dr. Ioan Ștefan Florian and with 16 international students from the programmes given in English and French. I also attended the meeting of the ARACIS team with about 60 students, the meeting with about 50 graduates and the meeting with 30 employers and stakeholders.

On the following day (October 23) I had private meetings with the Administrative Director Mr. Silviu Corpodean and with Conf.uni.dr. Dorin Farcău, the founding professor of the nursing school at UMF.

On October 24 at 11:00 the Mission Director Prof.univ.dr. Ioan Lascăr together with the Mission Scientific Coordinator Prof.univ.dr. Alexandru Țugui chaired the final meeting between the ARACIS experts and the leadership of UMF. The findings were summarized. All statements including my report were very positive. Only some minor weaknesses were mentioned and several recommendations were given.

The representatives of UMF thanked the ARACIS team for their constructive and supportive work.

#### **4. Governance and Institution**

The leadership of the University shows very high identification with the institution and is highly committed. Despite that the Law 2011 allows different interpretations of the duties and rights of the Rector and the Senate, the governing bodies at UMF have developed a fruitful and effective way to govern the institution. There exists a culture of consensus and compromise which makes it possible to take also difficult and complex decisions within appropriate time. By my opinion the provided Organizational Chart (Annex 21-00-11 of the SER) with the Rector sub-ordered to the Senate does not fully correspond to the intentions of the Law 2011 nor does it reflect the actual situation at UMF. Rector and Senate should be on the same level linked by a horizontal line. According to the Law 2011 the Rector has duties which are not all sub-ordered to the Senate and considering the positive climate between the university leaders at UMF this is even more valid.

Similar to many other Romanian universities also UMF has a favor for collective decisions. The size of the Senate with about 40 members is ok, but the agenda of the Senate is terribly

overloaded and far away from an effective and modern management of a university. The Senate should be a fast and efficient decision body concentrating on rules and the legal framework for the institution and its administrative managers. E.g. the Senate should only decide the rules for the staff bonus system but not decide all individual rewards. The habit to take decisions on individuals to the Senate contradicts privacy and means a terrible waste of time of university members. Administrative and bureaucratic work of teaching staff should be reduced as much as possible.

With respect to the defined goals and the mission of UMF (e.g. increase international visibility, become a leading European university) I am missing clear indicators and benchmarks. How will the success of the rector's team at the end of the term be measured? As main problem were mentioned financial problems. There are legal constraints even for spending "own money". Full costs of activities are not known. There is a lack of contracts for services and many existing contracts are based on individual agreements and not on the institution.

### **Recommendations:**

- Reconsider UMF's organizational chart and put the Rector and the Senate on the same level linked by a horizontal line. The Senate should limit its function on defining the general framework for the Administrative Board and monitor the institution. Specific decisions concerning individuals should be left to the responsible university managers to be realized within the given regulations.
- Monitoring instruments of the progress of the strategic plan (especially concerning the increase of international visibility, becoming a leading European university) should be improved. Indicators to be reached should be regularly measured and compared with benchmarks from similar institutions.
- UMF should try to improve the legal constraints (procedure for spending own income), make relations and services for the society more sustainable and observe carefully the costs of all projects and activities.
- The existence of an Ethic Commission has to be commended. But as I have pointed out already several times I am in favour an inter-university Ethic Commission with half members coming from UMF and the other half from other universities. Only such a body will be able to discuss and solve sensitive cases. If the Romanian law does not support such a commission, it should be realized informally.

## **5. Quality Culture**

UMF has started and realized important activities and procedures for quality assurance. Reference to the national legislation, to ISO 9001 and to European quality assurance activities is given. There is a noticeable sense of quality culture inside the institution. The principle "quality before quantity" was several times mentioned during the visit and has to be commended. But ISO 9001 focuses more on processes than on people, improvement and change of culture. Hence staff and students have to be motivated by offering as much support as possible and by closing all feedback loops. At present some feedback loops seem not to be



closed (e.g. information of students on results and consequences of evaluations) and supportive instruments are not clear enough. There exists a focus on the evaluation of teaching, which forms only a part of the quality of education.

### **Recommendations:**

- The collected data and the results of evaluations should be used more explicitly for further improvement of teaching, research and administration.
- Promote more clearly to staff and students the benefits and improvements deriving from quality assurance procedures.
- Ensure the same quality processes within all faculties and all three educational lines (Romanian, English, French).
- Involve stakeholders systematically into curricula discussions. Monitor and further develop student centred learning and internationalization of study programmes.

## **6. Teaching and Learning**

The quality of the formation at UMF is recognized by students, graduates and stakeholders. The facilities and the equipment are excellent. The university campus is very nice and the visited Medical Simulation Centre as well as the Research Centre for Functional Genomics, Biomedicine and Translational Medicine are of top-quality. The different libraries provide good study possibilities. The student canteen is nice and provides very good food. UMF does also offer different possibilities for doing sport.

The University has to be praised for its three language lines in the bachelor programmes of medicine, dental medicine and pharmacy. The international students are highly motivated, but not very much integrated with Romanian students.

There is a national and European discussion on the future education of nurses. Why does UMF based on its experience and expertise not to take a leading role and propose standards?

### **Recommendations:**

- Promote UMF's leading role in health education and research (also in areas like nursing, nutrition and dietetics, which are somehow in the shadow of the so-called "main" disciplines).
- Formalise the involvement of stakeholders in the discussion of curricula.
- Increase flexibility of study programmes and provide also "soft skills" (presentation skills, writing research papers, management skills, etc.) to students.
- Strengthen advising activities to students (advise and support at financial and other problems, career day, etc.)
- Ensure that the principles of excellence in teaching and research apply to all curricula including nursing, etc.
- Make more use of the highly motivated international study body at UMF (shared curricula activities, use of synergies between the three language lines, interchange of experiences, etc.). This would bring benefits for both group and the institution.

## **7. Research and Service to Society**

UMF has a strong research orientation. During the last years UMF has made considerable progress strengthening its research and increasing international visibility. Research policy is in place but does not really set priorities. Especially young teachers have to manage a heavy teaching load. Relations and collaborations with the region are based mainly on individual initiatives at present.

### **Recommendations:**

- Define the University's priorities for excellence in research.
- Further increase international visibility of research by supporting publications in English language, by being more active in international research groups and by forming research collaborations with other institutions.
- Strengthen and improve relations with the public authorities, local communities, associations of medical doctors, pharmacists, etc. by signing mutual contracts of cooperation and make collaborations sustainable.
- Support young academic staff by reducing teaching hours, offering training in research methodologies and for project application.

## **8. Internationalisation**

Internationalization is a multi-dimensional task taking into account mobility programmes, language policy, curricula, joint study and double degree programmes, collaborative research, conference attendance, etc. UMF is very active with respect to several of these aspects, others need further strengthening. The international students are highly motivated, but do not share their experiences and cultural background with the Romanian students. Better integration of the different student groups at UMF could solve several mentioned problems (e.g. recruiting of patients by the international students, supply of international work placements for Romanian students). Erasmus students mention very strict recognition procedures after return.

### **Recommendations:**

- Define clear goals for internationalisation activities (strategic partnerships, language policy, mobility of staff and students, research collaborations).
- Make better use of the highly motivated international student body at UMF. Strengthen internationalisation at home by better integration of the Romanian students with the international students.
- Be more flexible with respect to the recognition of credits obtained abroad.

## 9. Final Remarks

“Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Cluj-Napoca is a well recognized institution of high national and international reputation. UMF has highly motivated staff and committed students and an excellent basis to meet its actual and future challenges.

My remarks and recommendations should assist UMF to pursue its further path of excellence and improvement. I encourage UMF to be more self-confident. Based on its high standards and experience in education and research UMF should be more pro-active setting trends and defining rules in the fields of its activities.



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