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Institutional Evaluation Programme

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

University of Medicine and Pharmacy Craiova (UMFCV)

EVALUATION REPORT

APRIL 2013

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1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of UMF Craiova. The evaluation took place in 2012 - 2013 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 are taking 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.

While the institutional evaluations are taking 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 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?



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- 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 UMF Craiova profile

The University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Craiova (UMFCV) was established in 1998 and is the youngest of all the medicine and pharmacy universities in Romania. It is also a relatively small university with around 3 400 students, specialised in the field of health. It has four faculties, which deliver seven programmes, including medicine, pharmacy and nursing. It has 4300 hospital beds for available for training. Of the 3 422 students approximately 49% are studying medicine and 10% are non-Romanian. It has 450 PhD students and produces around 100 thesis completions per year. It has 443 academic staff with an annual budget of 21 million euros. 40% of this budget is generated from its own revenues. There are large differences between faculties in terms of students who pay fees; university 36%, medicine 15%, dentistry 45%, pharmacy 61%, midwives 57%. The medical faculty is by far the largest faculty and has a guaranteed majority in Senate membership. It has a high academic/student ratio with highly selected students, high success rate (in residency examinations) and high employability. There are well-equipped teaching facilities and good social and living facilities for students. The university has an increasingly impressive record of attracting large research grants and the recent implementation of sophisticated equipment will enhance this attractiveness.

UMFCV is a regional university located in Craiova, the capital city of the Dolj county and of the Oltenia historical region, and, according to the SER is the most important urban agglomeration (298,643 inhabitants, of which 34,000 students) of the south-west development region of contemporary Romania (comprising five counties with a total area of 29,212 sq km and 2,330,792 inhabitants). Post 1989 the region experienced an economic downturn from which, it is reported, there is now some recovery. Nevertheless, air connections are infrequent and road connections from Bucharest take three hours.

1.3 The evaluation process

The self-evaluation report of the UMFCV together with the appendices was sent to the evaluation team in October 2012. The visits of the evaluation team to UMFCV took place from 1 to 3 December 2012 and from 18 to 21 March 2013 respectively. In between the visits UMFCV provided the evaluation team with some additional documentation.

Meetings were arranged with: the leadership of UMFCV (rector, vice-rectors, deans, administrative director etc.), members of the academic and non-academic staff, students, the president and members of the Senate, and external partners (companies, local authorities, health services).



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

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Andy Gibbs Edinburgh Napier University, team coordinator (UK)

1.4 Thank you

The team thanks the Rector, Professor Ion Rogoveanu for the warm welcome and the generous hospitality as well as for the useful and open discussions. Special thanks go to Vice-Rectors A. Cupsa and M. Caragea who were UMFCV's liaison persons and who prepared and organised all our meetings during the visits.

We are grateful to all the staff and students who participated in the evaluation.



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2. Governance and institutional decision-making

A new rector and rectorate management group have been in place since 2012 and the team was impressed throughout the evaluation by the cohesive presentation of ideas with a clear sense of purpose and direction by all members of the management group and that its intentions and actions were striving to be forward thinking and proactive. The university has a well-established approach towards strategic planning. This has been in place since at least 2008 when a plan for 2008-2012 was produced. The new rector and his group have prepared to evaluate the effectiveness of that plan and have produced an updated Strategic Plan for the period 2013–2017, which, at the time of writing this report, was awaiting approval by Senate.

The team also noted that in the Self Evaluation Report (SER) and in meetings held with management and other staff, that there was general appreciation of the university's strengths and limitations, reflecting a high degree of institutional self-awareness. The team commends the university commitment to strategic planning and recommends that the university continue strategic planning activity and take steps to further involve the university community and further build collective ownership of the plan. The plan should clearly identify key actions that all staff can focus on so that their role in implementation is clear. The team also recommends the continuation and further development of activity which informs institutional awareness and furthers university planning capability and quality enhancement.

It was suggested on more than one occasion when the team met with various members of staff that the key task for the university was to promote visibility and develop the university brand. The team agrees that this is a key task and suggests this is undertaken using the assistance of the newly created Council for Diagnosis Forecast and Prognosis and that the task should include making the mission statement more focused and concise.

The team took a view from comments made in the SER and in interviews with various groups of staff that the university was regionally focused. The team was surprised to find therefore that there were little formal local connections with stakeholders and that these were largely focused on goodwill and personal acquaintances. To build relationships with the region and ensure that the university is clearly linked with and reflects the needs of the region, the team recommends that formalising and institutionalising "service to society" is a key task, including the creation of an advisory committee of stakeholders to link with key decision making groups within the university. The team considers that as the university develops its strategy of internationalisation, it is important to keep sight of and strengthen its regional links in order to maintain and develop local markets. The team recommends that the university develop an internationalisation strategy whilst paying attention to enhancing local focus.

The team considered the relationship between the rector and the Senate as it was described in the SER and during its meetings with management and Senate representatives. The team could draw only limited conclusions as the President of the Senate failed to attend the



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meeting that was scheduled with the team, however it appeared that the role of rector is balancing internal relationships with the Senate and externally with hospital and government. This seems to work effectively when there is no conflict and the team felt it would be useful to explicitly clarify the relationship between rector and Senate in terms of strategic development as well as the balance between the Senate and its committees and the rectorate. The latter has the potential to be overlapping and competing and there is potential for both redundant and/or overlapping roles. Examples of this were: Council for Doctoral Education vs Director of Doctoral School; various Quality systems, Committee for Institutional Development vs Council for Diagnosis, Forecast and Strategic Development. These overlapping functions may lead to a lack of clarity in communication and ownership of decisions, for example the Senate and the Rectorate had differing views as to the status of the current strategic plan. The team recommends that it would be useful to review roles and committees and consolidate, merge or cease overlapping roles and responsibilities, duplication of effort and ineffective effort.

The team acknowledges that the balance of representation on the Senate is established in law and noticed that the faculty of medicine always has the majority. It was mentioned by Senate representatives that the Senate would always protect minority groups. The team took the view that the protection of minority groups only by goodwill is not in the interests of good governance nor transparency and that the Senate should address the inbuilt majority to protect minority group rights.

The participation of an active but small group of involved students was identified by the team, however the fact that only 20% of the student body voted for student representatives suggests to the team that there is perceived disenfranchisement amongst groups of students. This coupled with the low levels of constructively critical comment expressed by students during their meetings with the team led them to conclude that students input to university life and decision-making could be further developed to make a stronger contribution to quality enhancement.

Finally the team recognised the limited autonomy in financial management that the university has, even for the use of resources which are generated through its own activity. This amounts to 40% of total finances which are not provided directly by the state. The team heard that finances were well managed but in a state of flux and there was no capacity to direct excess/blocked funds towards strategic goals. The team urges the university to continue effective financial planning and lobby for greater financial autonomy.



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3. Teaching and learning

The university states in the SER that substantial financial allocations have been made to ensure constant modernisation and update of teaching facilities. The SER claims that, “real estate, technical and teaching facilities comply with the level of an outstanding European university.” The team confirm the availability of good and modern teaching facilities and equipment and note the good development of skills labs in some areas and the planned developments in others. In discussion with groups of students they expressed high levels of satisfaction with the teaching they receive. Additionally students from all faculties expressed their satisfaction about dormitories, restaurants, sport facilities, access to library and access to internet. According to figures supplied by the university, there is a high demand for places, with a university average of 3.45 applicants for each available place. This enables the university to select higher achieving students and this is reflected in the high success rate, for example 90% of entrants pass the residency examination at first attempt. External providers, with whom the team met valued UMFCV graduates as employees and the university reported a high employability rate for its students. These objective measures of student satisfaction, high demand for places, good success rate for students, employee satisfaction and high employability rates all point to effective teaching.

Whilst this is pleasing, the team found that the curriculum is traditional with a focus on teaching rather than learning and is predominantly teacher oriented with little evidence of student-centred learning. The team is also aware that the method of funding for teachers, based on contact hours, has a disproportionate influence on curriculum design and may be a disincentive to curriculum reform towards more learner centred approaches. The team agreed that the current approach to teaching produces objective measures of success but were concerned that this approach would not develop the deeper skills and learning associated with knowledge management and the knowledge society that students in the majority of European universities achieve and that this, in the longer term, would handicap UMFCV graduates in the labour market. For this reason the university should consider contemporary student-centred learning approaches in line with other European Universities and also consider adopting a learning outcomes approach. The international *eMediqual* project will undoubtedly offer support for curriculum reform the outcomes but will take some time to put in place and will impact solely on the medical curriculum. The university should consider how it can accelerate implementation of curriculum reform and how this can impact the whole university rather than one faculty perhaps by continuing and extending links and exchanges with foreign teachers through projects and external funding.

Alongside this, the team also observed that there was no cross faculty and interdisciplinary working and that this reduced not only potential for efficiency savings by reducing repetitive sessions but also reduced the opportunities for students to learn in a multidisciplinary and multiprofessional environment. The team recommend a review of curricula to consider the



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implementation of more cross disciplinary integrated learning which not only reduces duplication but promotes multidisciplinary and team working.

The team commended the positive attempts to improve nursing education despite nationally having no nurses who meet the criteria to become teachers. As a consequence the curriculum is designed and delivered by doctors and there is a medically led, rather than nursing led curriculum with no subject expertise formally inputting to the programme. The team believes that this is unacceptable however they do note the best intentions and efforts of nursing faculty staff in attempting to improve the situation which places them in a leading role nationally in this regard. The university should consider a programme which would accelerate the availability of suitably qualified nurse teachers to support the aspirations of the faculty and suggest the use of recognition of prior learning and building supportive links with European nursing faculties with a view to bidding for developmental funding.

The team heard of various initiatives that are focused on evaluation and improvement of teachers. The evaluation system of teachers by students is well established and implemented with a rate of participating students of 80%. The team saw an opportunity to build on this by more clearly linking the teacher evaluation to the programme of professional development of staff that is in place.

The SER outlined a systematic approach to curriculum development, stating "Starting 2004, curricula have been updated according to the requirements of EU Directives. Curricular committees operate at the university and faculty level which, along with quality committees, have elaborated specific procedures for changing the curriculum or updating the syllabus of each subject. The curriculum is periodically revised and checked for synchronisation with the other faculties in the country, based on special working group meetings. However, each institution has full freedom to decide on its own programmes." The team welcomes this systematic approach and believe the remit could be expanded to reflect wider societal needs as it currently focuses on internal activity, development within other national universities and medically related EU directives. Whilst these should be maintained the team recommends the wider involvement all groups of local stakeholders in curriculum development and a greater consideration of preparation for the international labour market. The latter was suggested by students and it can be foreseen that alumni could contribute to this activity.



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4. Research

The team was informed about a number of positive trends in research. These included attracting EU structural funds to support PhD training, which had encouraged new young teachers as the training came with what was considered good contracts and conditions of service. This was a major contributory factor in the increase in PhD completions from 45 in 2005 to 100 in 2012. Over the same period positive trends in ISI publications were seen. Between 2000 and 2005 there were around 30 publications per year and between 2010 and 2012 this rose to around 160 per year.

Three large programmes are underway, one national (TARGET) and two international, (ECRIN, TANDEM) which give the university a leading national position in attracting international funding. Furthermore there has been the recent implementation of costly, sophisticated high technology equipment (molecular biology, toxicology, gastroenterology, pathology, medical imaging) which has considerably improved the research infrastructure.

Balanced against these positive trends are that there remains an overall relatively low number of ISI papers per year (160 for 443 teaching staff members) and that there is considerable underused clinical research equipment. There is improving cooperation within four existing research centres within the faculty of medicine, which are now sharing their equipment and know-how in common research activities and this meets one of the requests from students, which the team heard, that students would like to share research facilities with others. Students also said that they would like more online access to a greater range of publications. The team observed that there was online access to a large number of journals and publications and suggests further dialogue between staff and students to clearly ascertain their needs.

Overall the university has created an approach towards research which has enabled it to steadily develop. The SER describes that it has “highly developed core facilities, but also individual initiatives, allowing for extended operation, diversification and international recognition of scientific output.” The team reflected on this statement and considered it during interviews with staff concerned with research and concluded that the university research strategy is, in essence, bottom up and that individuals have developed core facilities based around their own motivation and interest. Whilst this has proved moderately successful the team believe that in the interests of sustainability and building reputation, the university should develop an institutional strategy for research which builds critical mass by maximising and focusing both effort and resources. This may be one way to address the role conflict described to the team by various groups in which everyone is expected to undertake teaching, research and practice.

The team can appreciate that there may be reluctance to adopt this approach as it may be considered high risk given the weaknesses which are identified in the SER including: “the sudden suspension of funds from the state budget for projects under development, while



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compensation from own resources was not always possible; unpredictability of the organisation of national competitions for grants, which were not continuous throughout the years. The reduction in budgets along with the national blockage of higher education positions resulted in a flawed integration of young researchers. Another issue affecting the strategic management of research is due to the relatively frequent changes occurring within the national research evaluation system.” The team recommends that the university continue its integration and access to EU funds and frameworks as this will provide some buffer against turbulent policy changes.

Finally, to ensure sustainability the laboratory facilities need to be used more extensively. The team suggests that the university use the well-equipped facilities for marketing and communication in order to attract foreign students, academic staff from outside Craiova. The team appreciates that there may be obstacles to this but the university should explore ways in which it can open research laboratories to clinical and commercialisation activities for sustainable operation.



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5. Service to society

The team heard the view expressed by a number of groups within the university that health is a service to society. The SER highlighted that “the direct and consistent participation of UMFCV in the health issues of population represents strength in the active involvement into the life of community and provides significant support for education and scientific studies.” The team could see that this was the case however the high level of participation by individuals belies a low level of formal engagement at institutional level. This means that the university is neither maximising nor benefiting from its relationship with the community in a structured way, which is necessary if it is to build a brand image. The team observed that stakeholders, such as health care authorities, municipality bodies and local enterprises do not participate in the changing of curricula and university development. Additionally stakeholders do not have input to Senate-level decisions. The team recommends that the university establish an advisory board of stakeholders, institute input of stakeholders into Senate-level decisions via participation in the various committees and commissions and engage community stakeholders in curriculum development in order to ensure that the aims of the region are reflected in university strategy and actions.

It was noted that permanent educational, scientific and medical connections have been established with the other medical and pharmaceutical universities and most related faculties in the country. This was viewed as a positive development by the team, however some caution was expressed that the university should ensure that it maintains its autonomy and is not tied to development projects which will slow down or hinder its development. It was also noted that there is some partnership with local comprehensive university which could be developed further. This further development of the partnership with local comprehensive university would be beneficial in helping to create a coherent local/regional approach and identity.



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6. Quality culture

The university has a long unbroken history of development since 2003 in taking proactive and positive steps to address internal quality with committed staff. As a consequence both internal and external quality measures are in place. Over this period the university reported, and the team observed during their visit, an improving engagement of staff and less unfamiliarity with technical language and systems associated with managing quality assurance.

The team was impressed both by the work undertaken in this area and the fact that much of it had been undertaken from motivation within the university. This appeared to be an area in which going beyond the requirements established by the law had given the university an advantage. The team observed that global feedback closes the quality loop and attempts to ensure that users of the system have an opportunity to hear about the positive outcomes. The team commends the positive steps taken by the university in terms of quality assurance and urges it to continue to be proactive. The following recommendations are made in that context.

Firstly, there is a complex web of committees and structures in which committees and groups established by the university seem to compete or overlap with those established by the law. This results in a time consuming and bureaucratic process with uncertain results. CEAC (the Assessment and Quality Assurance Committee of UMFCV) would like to simplify this and we would encourage them to make proposals which would reduce bureaucracy and establish clear results. This review could then be considered within the university to ascertain a means of implementation. Included in this review would be measures to build on the positive work of the self-evaluation group and encouragement to the Committees to work together to produce an internal quality remit based on the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). Once this is done it will become clearer how to establish the planned databases and create improved information systems and use these to reduce bureaucracy.

The team appreciated the willingness and desire of the various groups involved in quality processes to move forward, together with their acknowledgement that there may be a knowledge gap. The team recommends that the short-term engagement of external consultancy to build on the existing good foundations.

The university has given priority to the development of its quality systems, and the current approach places the university in a favourable position as it continues to expand ownership and involvement to develop a quality culture



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7. Internationalisation

The team concluded from comments made in a number of meetings and also reviewing information in the SER that UMFCV is currently a locally centred and staffed university in which a large majority of students and academics are from Craiova region (90%), a large majority of academics are graduates from the university of Craiova and a large majority of the beneficiaries (stakeholders, employers) are graduates from Craiova. The university and region has limited access by public transport, few air links and poor road connections. It appeared to the team that the predominant ethos amongst staff and students within the university was orientated towards thinking locally rather than nationally and internationally and this will remain the case for the foreseeable future. For these reasons the team concluded the importance of combining local with international approaches and envisioning internationalisation as something that takes place in Craiova and not just elsewhere. An approach which balances internationalisation at home with more focused external activity is suggested.

The team heard of a number of activities that involved the university, or its members in contact with other countries. Although this represents considerable activity this appeared diverse and uncoordinated. This is confirmed in the SER which states "International relations refer to the membership of UMFCV in European educational and scientific bodies, bilateral cooperation agreements with specialised foreign institutions, value exchanges in the field of education and research, student mobility, the award of Honoris Causa (DHC) or visiting professor degrees, etc." The level of activity between 2010-2012 was 508 teachers, students and PhD students, which included 43 young doctoral students who received funds obtained through the POS-DRU programme, benefiting from doctoral scholarships of three to eight months. Although this represents a high level of international travel, the team could see no clear institutional policy or strategy even though some areas of activity such as research had adopted a tactical approach towards internationalisation with growing participation in international research and other funding programmes and the increased sharing of ideas. Additionally the website is developing. An English language section and more of a promotional approach is being adopted.

This reflects the aspirations of the university as outlined in the SER "The international visibility of UMFCV is growing, but it is still far from the available intellectual, professional and scientific potential. Medium and long-term strategic plans envisage a more aggressive policy of promotion of the university's academic brand, with proper financial support." The team recognised that this is a realistic aim in order for the university to achieve its goals and recommends that the university create a strategy for internationalisation which identifies and defines what the university wants to achieve to be an internationalised university and the behaviours and activities it would expect to see. Additionally the university should work with the city, other local universities and the region to promote the university, the brand and the region.



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A considerable amount of effort had been directed towards staff and student mobility using the Erasmus mobility programme. The university has done well to eliminate difficulties with recognition of studies abroad. Although mobility showed increases year to year, only a small number of students and staff were outwardly mobile with a small number of incoming students and academics. This level of activity was attributed to funding although discussions with staff groups suggested that there may be other reasons. There was also inconsistency of mobility across faculties, with some (such as nursing) having none. This is unfortunate as a staff and student mobility strategy targeted on underdeveloped academic areas has the potential to make proportionately more institutional impact than the mobility of a few motivated students. The team recommends a review of the implementation of the Erasmus programme to ensure that agreements are active and activity is directed to all faculties.

Internationalisation of the curriculum has not been considered and yet there are many opportunities to develop this through the delivery of courses in English to 64 students, with graduates working abroad and 357 non Romanian domiciled students studying in Romanian language at the university. Some contact has been made with Alumni, many of whom are working outside of Romania to get opinions and inform activity and this should continue, not least because more internationalisation was requested from foreign students when the team met with them, for example whilst there is some language support there is no overall language policy. To support this, the university should review and consider how to use existing resources (alumni, current projects etc.) to contribute to internationalisation and ensure that the current scattered individual activity supports the university strategy.

9. Conclusion

UMFCV is a young and dynamic institution. It is young in terms of its relatively recent establishment compared to other institutions, young in terms of the average age of its staff and, as we were told, in terms of being less traditional and more open to change. It is a dynamic institution with good awareness of its strengths and limitations. Its teaching can be regarded as traditional but is appreciated by its students and its graduates have high employability and high success rate. There are positive trends in research development with good engagement with EU funding streams. It has complicated governance structures which may hinder strategic planning and development. Further strengthening this strategic planning capacity by streamlining governance systems, removing duplication, simplifying and clearly focusing activity will enable it to address two main areas which will benefit future development. These are a defined approach to internationalisation and a remodelled and integrated approach to its service to society. The excellent teaching and research facilities, the developing internal quality systems and the positive attitude of its management and staff are key strengths which will assist the university to address current and future challenges. The university has good capacity for change.



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10. Summary of recommendations

This section summarises the recommendations contained in the sections above.

Governance and institutional decision-making

Continue strategic planning activity and steps to further involve the university community and build ownership;

Clarify the relationship between rector and Senate in terms of strategic development;

Continue and further develop activity which informs institutional awareness and furthers university planning capability and quality enhancement;

Develop an internationalisation strategy and pay some attention to enhancing local focus;

Promote visibility and develop the brand, including making the mission statement more focused and concise using assistance of Diagnosis Forecast and Prognosis;

Increase participation levels of students and develop their capacity for critical comment and contribution to quality enhancement;

Identify key actions that all staff can focus on;

Review roles and committees and consolidate/merge/cease overlapping roles and responsibilities, duplication of effort and ineffective effort;

Address inbuilt majority in Senate to protect minority group rights;

Continue effective financial planning and lobby for greater financial autonomy;

Create an advisory committee of stakeholders to link with key decision-making groups within the university;

Develop an internationalisation strategy.

Teaching and learning

Consider contemporary student-centred learning approaches in line with other European universities and adopting a learning outcomes approach;

Accelerate curriculum development arising from e-medical project;

Review curricula to implement more cross disciplinary integrated learning which not only reduces duplication but promotes multidisciplinary and team working;

Continue links and exchanges with foreign teachers through projects and external funding;



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Consider a programme which would accelerate the availability of suitably qualified nurse teachers to support the aspirations of the faculty e.g. RPL;

Involve all groups of stakeholders in curriculum development.

Research

Develop an institutional strategy for research to maximise and focus effort and resources;

Continue integration and access to EU funds and frameworks;

Use the well-equipped facilities for marketing and communication in order to attract foreign students, academic staff from outside Craiova;

Open research labs to clinical and commercialisation activities for sustainable operation of labs.

Quality Culture

Build on the positive work of self-evaluation group and encourage the committees to work together to address internal quality and European Standards and Guidelines;

Establish databases and improved information systems as planned and use these to reduce bureaucracy;

Short-term engagement of external consultancy to build on the existing good foundations.

Service to Society

Establish an advisory board of stakeholders;

Further develop partnership with local comprehensive University;

Institute input of Stakeholders Senate level decisions via participation in the various committees and commissions;

Engage community stakeholders in curriculum development.

Internationalisation

Create a strategy for internationalisation which identifies what the university wants to achieve to be an internationalised university;

Work with the city, other local universities and the region to promote the university, the brand and the region;

Review the Erasmus programme to ensure that agreements are active and activity is directed to all faculties;



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Review and consider how to use existing resources (alumni, current projects etc.) to contribute to internationalisation and ensure that the current scattered individual activity supports the university strategy.