



THE EVALUATION CONTEXT AND ORGANISATION

I was invited by the Romanian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (ARACIS) to take part of the evaluation panel as the international expert for the institutional evaluation of Victor Babeş University of Medicine and Pharmacy from Timișoara (UMFVBT). The evaluation was carried out on line during the week of December 6-10th. The evaluation begun with a meeting where the panel members were presented and some guidelines related to the process of evaluation were given. Following this first event, a series of meetings were scheduled with representatives of UMFVBT, including the academic staff, the quality assurance department, the ethics committee, the international relations office members. Technical meetings for conclusions and recommendation were organized at the end of the week. The self-assessment report and related annexes were provided few days before the evaluation. Some requested information were obtained after the evaluation period. I was assisted by a professional interpreter all along the evaluation process. A contact person from UMFVBT was appointed and was very reactive and of great help when some requests were needed. The meetings went in very well spirit.

The self-assessment document (68 pages) address the missions and activity of the institution. The report is sufficiently detailed and bring useful information. Additional information were requested by the evaluation panel members and they were provided in a short time.

The present report was drafted based on the information provided in the self-assessment document, annexes and clarifications provided during the on line meetings with the different university representatives. The report of the international evaluator corresponding to the last evaluation (December 2013) was consulted in order to check if the formulated recommendations were satisfied or not.

THE INSTITUTION

The University of Medicine and Pharmacy is an institution that was created in 1945. At that time, the University comprise only the Faculty of Medicine. The Faculty of Dentistry and Faculty of Pharmacy were installed in 1995 and 1997, respectively. The current structure and status of UMFVBT was approved by the ministry of higher education and research in 2005. Up to 2008, the three faculties were operating to accredit specialisations in general medicine, dentistry, dental technology and pharmacy. In 2008, then in 2012, two reforms were conducted, allowing the university to deliver new diploma (bachelor degree) and new specialisations. Within these reforms, the faculties of medicine and pharmacy have implemented curriculums in English and in French. Finally, in 2018, the three faculties broadened their offer to include dental medicine in English and new professional diplomas.

The missions of the UMFVBT comply with the education legislation of Romania and are similar to those found in major public universities worldwide: providing education to youngers, continuous education to professionals and promoting the scientific research by teaching and training within the field of medical and pharmaceutical domains. The educational program is established and executed by qualified scientific staff. The ultimate goal of the University missions is to form qualified professionals and researchers who will impact their how-know on the population for better health and well being. UMFVBT operate in full compliance with the academic integrity, code of conduct and ethics as defined by the legislation.

What is appreciated is to see the evolution of this ambitious University. On regular periods, the institution has integrated new missions that were adapted to be in line with the needs of the society. It is quite unique to see institutions delivering education in three languages with high standards.

MANAGEMENT

The University is managed by a set of management structures and the all is headed by the Senate. The central management structure is composed of a rector and vice rectors in charge of pedagogy, research, postgraduate studies, international relations, human resources and administrative staff. At the Faculties level, each Faculty is managed by a management team composed of a Dean and vice deans.

Each Faculty elect its members including students (25% of the members) who sit in the Senate.

The Senate under the guidance of the rector has full autonomy to manage its: educational and research programs, budget, international exchange programs, human resources, research facilities and means of recreation within the campus. Regular meetings are organised at the Senate, vice rectors and faculty levels. An agenda is established before each meeting and minutes of the meeting are addressed to the faculty members. If urgent points have to be discussed, then extra meetings were organized on demand.

Based on the information provided in the self-assessment document, the management follows standard rules and no problems were revealed.

Recommendations:

- Consider the respect of gender equality among the managerial committees.
- Diffuse the conclusions and decisions of the managerial committees as large as possible.

REVENUES AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

The university receives annual funds allocated by the Ministry of Education and Research. These funds represent two thirds of the total budget run by UMFVBT. The amount of these funds are established by the Ministry based on the number of students educated and trained by the University. The second revenue of the university comes from the students fees which are calculated annually based on national and local

regulations. The annual budget planning takes into account the number of registered students, teaching staff, human resources, operating costs, material and equipment purchasing. The annual budget planning is discussed, examined and at validated by the senate. As it can be expected, the biggest part of the budget (70%) goes for the salaries payment. The income and expenditure are processed by the financial accounting services, using a dedicated software. A substantial part of the revenues are dedicated to scholarships and aid for students in need. The allocated scholarships are awarded following different mechanisms and rules that are proposed by the Senate in collaboration with the students.

Recommendations:

For more revenues, consider the promotion of continuous education for professionals with adequate fees. The fields of medicine and pharmacy lend themselves well to continuous education.

TEACHING FACILITIES

UMFVBT provides around 350 teaching rooms: amphitheaters, seminar rooms and rooms for small group of students. In addition, the University has full access and use of teaching facilities within the hospitals and clinics hosting teachers and students. Based on the report, the teaching rooms are well-equipped with video projectors, internet connections, WiFi and computers. The training laboratories are described as well-equipped and offer the sufficient space to allow students working in safe and comfortable conditions. Based on the report and the feedbacks from students representatives, the work conditions are fulfilled and were no problems were raised. The access of the university members and students to teaching and practical training facilities in the hospitals and clinics are regulated and framed by conventions between UMFVBT and hospitals.

The on-site visit would have allowed to get a clearer idea about the facilities and give accurate recommendation.

Recommendations:

Consider the implement of an IT system allowing the management of the schedule of teaching rooms, their occupancy, their availability, how to reserve a teaching room,... The IT system can be consulted at any time by users to check where courses, seminars, meetings are taking places.

LIBRARY/ LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT

The library of the University of Medicine and Pharmacy propose 574 seats (the number of 624 seats is also indicated!!!) in reading rooms, corresponding to 10% of the total number of students. The library is located in the main building of the University. There are 182,000 books and 13000 of magazines. Purchases of books are operated periodically allowing to maintain an up do date resources.

The learning resources provided by the UMFVBT include: course books, handbooks, medical practice / internship guides, monographs, treatises and journals in classic format as well as in electronic format and on line. For detailed specialist documentation, faculty and students had unlimited access to electronic medical

databases to which the University had paid subscriptions from its own funds. Hence, the University offers free access to more than 2000 journals. Some journals that are not covered by the University subscription can be accessed free of charge through national programs. The library manage e-learning platforms used for dissemination of teaching resources in electronic format.

The University has its own publishing house (Victor Babes Publishing House). Its main objectives is to promote internal publications coming from teaching and research activities.

Recommendations:

Consider wiring all reading rooms and giving full access to internet (apparently, only some of them are wired for internet).

STUDENTS ADMISSION and TEACHING PROGRAMS

The admissions rules and conditions are published at the university website. For those entering the University for the first registration, a high-school diploma is requested. The disciplines included in the admission competition are defined and are known. For international candidates, useful information about the admission conditions are given through the international relations office and the website. The condition of admission may differ for students from EU, third countries and Romanian abroad. The student admission is calculated through a formula that takes into account the high school diploma, the scores in biology and chemistry earned in high school.

The educational programs are communicated to students and are posted on the website. The contents of educational programs are designed by course coordinators according to national guidelines. The programs are validated at the Faculties level then at the University level. The programs are annually updated through the help of the Department of Quality Assessment and Assurance in Education (DEACE) who carries out reviews of the educational programs. In this regard, the students feedbacks are used as elements to identify new targets in institutional development, as well as existing gaps and propose solutions to overcome the revealed problems, if any.

Recommendations:

Implement and generalize optional but elective modules. The student can choose one optional elective course per semester.

STUDENT EVALUATION

The UMFVBT applies a regulation discussed with the members of the council and approved by the Senate, concerning the examination and the evaluation of the students. The regulations include general provisions, the conditions of participation in the examination, the examination process, the marking and passing of the examination, the completion of the course and the final provisions. For modules comprising theoretical and practical components, two stages of examination are organized. In all cases, a re-examination is organized at the end of the academic year for those who failed.

The examination process is carried out under the responsibility of the faculty committees, approved by the board of directors and the Senate. The evaluation of students is based on theoretical and practical exams which take place during exam periods, training through theoretical and skills tests. A candidate is considered successful if he/she achieves a minimum cumulative grade point average. The scoring

criteria are specific for each discipline. In case of appeals, the students assessment office and the course coordinator are the first to deal with the matter. Students pass to the next year if they fulfill the learning activity that is measured in credits (ECTS). In case of fraud in exams and plagiarism, the ethics committee of UMFVBT is powered to instruct and deliver the sanction according to the University rules. The University uses a validated national software for similarity searches.

Recommendations:

Consider the generalization of periodically continuous checks in addition to the final exam. The continuous checks must account for a defined % of the final score.

THE INFORMATION SYSTEM (IT SYSTEM)

The IT infrastructure has been developed with the aim of responding to unforeseen or specific requirements of certain disciplines or study programs. The university's website is continually being updated and redesigned to meet the highest demands of students and teachers.

As highlighted before, Moodle, an open source software platform, is used as a course management system. It is installed, configured and designed to integrate all UMFT courses.

Since there was no on-visit, we cannot pronounce if there is internet access on campuses and in all UMFVBT buildings as well as in all clinical hospitals where students work: internet and intranet network at institutional level and wireless access. During the University lockdown linked to the pandemic and according to students feedback, the University has mobilized considerable means to ensure continuing education for students and work at home for teachers and administrative staff.

Recommendations:

Teachers and students should have and use an operational institutional e-mail accounts. In many cases, non-institutional e-mail accounts are used.

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF TEACHING STAFF

The teaching staff apply modern and updated pedagogical methods adapted to the study program and curriculum. According to the self-assessment report, the curriculum are continuously improved, thanks to the students feedbacks and sharing of experiences with other institutions in Romania and abroad. The quality of the teaching is evaluated annually. The evaluation of teachers is carried by the students and takes into account: the presentation of the course, the timeliness of the information, the clarity of the presentation, the participation of the students in teaching and learning, student time and the assessment and grading system. The results of the evaluation are analyzed at the Teachers' Council. Conclusions are drawn and guidelines for improvement are addressed.

Recommendations:

- The rate of the students responses to the evaluation surveys is low. Consider the option of rendering it mandatory.

RESEARCH

UMFVBT carry out active scientific research activities. Most of the teachers working at UMFVBT are involved in research programs, some are heads of research laboratories with doctoral supervisions activities. The University ambition is to increase its visibility and ranking at the national and international levels. Within the evaluated period, teachers from UMFVBT have conducted 15 scientific stays in 12 countries. The funds for supporting research are of national and international origins, obtained through competition. According to the self-assessment document and feedbacks from students and researchers, the research facilities are satisfactory. Three doctoral schools are managed by the institution with the doctoral school of Pharmacy being the last one to be implemented. Doctoral students play pivotal role in the scientific activity of the University. The research is well disseminated through index international publications and communications in international scientific events. For the period 2015-2020, there were 1860 publications indexed in ISI and 713 in BDI indexed journals. An important number of communications at both international and national levels were disseminated. The intellectual property activity is also part of the scientific activity. For the period 2015-2019, 11 patents were granted to the University repartitioned as follows: 6 for the Faculty of medicine, 2 for the Faculty of dentistry and 3 for the Faculty of Pharmacy.

The University organizes a series of scientific events related to doctoral studies or medical symposiums and workshops.

In our opinion, the scientific activity being conducted at UMFVBT is diverse and covers the areas of medicine and pharmacy. The research facilities seem to satisfy the researchers demand (although the on-site visit would have helped to appreciate the facilities). The scientific dissemination is very important and witness on the dynamism of the researchers and doctoral students. The research excellence is hampered by the lack of funds (which is the case in many EU countries).

Recommendations:

- The publications in international journals should be privileged over national ones.
- Find mechanisms to enhance the participation of teachers and researches in international funding calls. The existence of a dynamic research office to detect research opportunities would help for this task
- Free up a budget to attract foreign talent through visiting scientists status, sabbatical leaves, even for short periods. This would promote collaborations and partnership that would lead to co-responses to funding calls.

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The international activity is managed by a dedicated office and headed by a vice rector in charge of it. The international office activity is ensured by a group of 15 peoples trained to deal with program exchanges and management of students coming from EU and abroad. The existence of programs taught in English and French is certainly the door of entry to the University and this engage an important work for the international office that has to deal with applications checking. Compared to the last evaluation (2013/214), the number of Erasmus programs and exchanges were judged modest, it is pleasant to see that this is not the case anymore as the number of signed agreement are increasing and the University has positioned itself as one of the leaders at the national level. The increasing number of scientific stays abroad conducted by the teachers is to be highlighted. The quality of services offered by the international office to incoming students is to be mentioned. According to the heads of the international

relations offices, the feedbacks from foreign students who have stayed at UMFVBT was extremely positive.

Recommendations:

Find mechanisms to attract students to be enrolled in PhD programs including co-tutelage theses with EU universities and abroad.

Conclusions

"Victor Babeş" University of Medicine and Pharmacy from Timișoara (UMFVBT) is a leading institution dedicated to education and training in the fields of medicine and pharmacy. In parallel, it ensure its mission in carrying out scientific activities in the biomedical and pharmaceutical areas. During the evaluated period (2014-2020), the institution has established itself as a leading University in Romania. Many progresses were made on all levels. The management operates according to high standard and within the legislation frame. No particular problems were raised during the evaluation process. The students, teachers and administrative staff experience is very positive. For our opinion, all performance indicators are fulfilled. Despite the very positive achievements reached during the evaluated period, the University is facing many challenges. The University has made an objective and clear SWOT analyses and recognize its weaknesses and threats that facing it.

Recommendations:

- Implement mechanisms to discharge the teaching staff from administrative tasks
- Recruitment of qualified administrative staff or ensure training shortly after recruitment
- Reinforce international incoming scientists and experts even for short periods to boost collaborations and reinforce the scientific collaborations.
- Implement as much as possible the e-learning tools which can have many positive impacts and one of them would be to decrease the teaching duties of teachers and giving them more time for scientific activities
- Activate all keys to increase additional income generation. One of the keys could be the continuous education toward professionals who can afford high (but reasonable) registration fees.
- The recruitment of teachers should be more competitive and opened to national candidates and abroad.
- Find mechanisms to reward teachers with heavy administrative and academic responsibilities and low research activity.

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