

GRIGORE T. POPA
UNIVERSITY of MEDICINE and PHARMACY, IASI

EVALUATION WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON INTERNATIONALISATION

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Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Governance and institutional decision-making	6
3. Quality culture	9
4. Internationalisation	12
5. Teaching and learning	17
6. Research	20
7. Service to society	25
8. Conclusion	27

1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of the Grigore T. Popa University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Iasi (UMF Iasi). The evaluation took place over the academic year 2021-2022.

1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an independent membership service of the European University Association (EUA). It offers evaluations to support participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture. 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 IEP are:

- a strong emphasis on the self-evaluation phase;
- a European and international perspective;
- a peer-review approach; and
- support for improvement.

The focus of IEP is the institution as a whole and not the individual study programmes or units. It focuses on:

decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management; and

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.

All aspects of the evaluation are 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 UMF Iasi's profile

UMF Iasi dates back to 1879 when the first Faculty of Medicine was founded in Iasi. The university is comprised of four faculties (general medicine, dental medicine, pharmacy and medical bioengineering), with a total of slightly over 13,000 students and nearly 1,000 teaching staff. A significant proportion of the student body is international, with over 2,500 students coming from 75 countries.

UMF Iasi is a public autonomous university, regulated by the Romanian Constitution, the Romanian Law of National Education, and the UMF Iasi Charter, whose mission is *to train world-class medical*

professionals and scientists, create knowledge for the improvement of human health, and make a positive impact on the lives of the members of the academic community as well as the national and international communities¹.

UMF Iasi is firmly anchored both physically and socially in Iasi, the second largest city of Romania, alongside five other public universities and two private universities. With around 60,000 students across these institutions, Iasi is a young, vibrant and cosmopolitan university city, where the university has a pre-eminent role in health care education and training.

UMF Iasi has been on a continuous path of modernisation and strategic development over the last two decades. To guide this change process, in addition to the regular national programmes of evaluation and monitoring led by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS), the university had already participated in two previous IEP institutional evaluation exercises, the first in 2012, and then a follow-up exercise in 2016. The university's objectives regarding the current IEP evaluation can therefore be placed on this same developmental trajectory, this time with a particular focus on internationalisation.

1.3 The evaluation process

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by a self-evaluation group of nine persons, appointed by the UMF Iasi Administrative Board. The group was led by the Vice-Rector for Institutional Strategy, and included the Vice-Rectors for International Relations and 2nd Cycle and Masters Studies, the Head of the Doctoral School, the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, the Director of Property Control and Administration, the Head of Communication and University Marketing, an Institutional Strategy Officer from the Department of International Relations, and a student representative from the Faculty of Medicine.

Each group member used their respective positions to gather inputs for the self-evaluation report, following the IEP guidelines. A first draft report was circulated to the UMF Iasi academic community, through the Faculty Councils and Deans, for feedback. The completed self-evaluation report, together with the appendices, was sent to the evaluation team in early March 2022.

The visits of the IEP evaluation team to UMF Iasi took place from 30-31 March and 11-13 May 2022 respectively. Following the first site visit, the university provided the evaluation team with some additional documentation and data, as requested by the IEP team.

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

Luc Hittinger, former President, University of Paris Créteil, France (team chair)

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Lewis Purser, Director Learning, Teaching & Academic Affairs, Irish Universities Association, Ireland (team coordinator)

¹ UMF Iasi self-evaluation report, p7 (2022).

The IEP team would like to thank all those who work and study at UMF Iasi and those from the broad UMF Iasi stakeholder community, who took the time to meet with the IEP team over the course of the two site visits. The useful and stimulating discussions which took place during these meetings are central to the IEP methodology and to ensuring that the IEP team's feedback and report to the university has a sound evidence base, complementing that of the documentation supplied to the team by the university.

In particular, the IEP team would like to thank Rector Viorel Scripcariu for his welcome and hospitality, Vice-Rector Radu Iliescu and his team for their efficient and friendly support at all stages, and Andreea Dobrea Iacobescu for her warm and helpful assistance during our site visits to Iasi.

2. Governance and institutional decision-making

In its evaluation methodology, IEP examines a university's governance and institutional decision-making processes within the context of that university's mission and strategy, in order to understand how these processes work and how they lead to ongoing quality enhancement at the university. In its evaluation of UMF Iasi, the IEP team looked at the university's governance bodies and the links between them, the decision-making processes across the university's organisational structure, the strategic planning process, and the role of the university administration.

UMF Iasi is clearly in a position of stability and continuity in respect of its governance and management, and in a healthy financial position. There have been a number of significant and successful academic and infrastructural developments in recent years, with more underway. The IEP team found a clear commitment to improvement across the entire institution, with considerably loyalty and pride expressed by students, staff and stakeholders.

However, in a rapidly evolving external environment, where the university needs to ensure that its governance and decision-making processes are as good as they can be, the IEP team identified a number of areas for consideration.

2.1 Governance and decision-making

During its two site visits, the IEP team met with the Rector and Vice-Rectors, the Deans, and representatives of the Senate. The team also examined the documentation provided as part of the self-evaluation report and annexes. All these players have key statutory roles in the governance of the university, and it is clear that they have close working relationships, with very regular meetings and effective communication between themselves.

However, from the external perspective of the IEP team, it remained difficult to understand clearly how all these important structures and roles within the university work together coherently and efficiently to achieve the university's mission, and how key responsibilities are allocated across these different structures.

This lack of clarity across the most senior structures also appears to be reflected in the next layer, where the IEP team noted, for example, that the Research Office does not report to the Vice-Rector responsible for research, that the Doctoral School does not report to the Vice-Rector for postgraduate studies or the Vice-Rector for research, and that the relationship of the Senate and its Commissions with the university management structures across key strategic topics does not appear to be well aligned or with clearly delineated responsibilities.

The result, as perceived by the IEP team, is that there are overlaps and inefficiencies inherent in the structures, that these senior roles sometimes appear to be more about operations than policy, and that some representatives appear in more than one position across different structures. This all leads to a certain amount of confusion among the staff who work in these areas at administrative or operational levels. In addition, the organisational structure of the university – as presented to the IEP team – implies that a very high number of roles report directly to the Rector, rather than to the most relevant Vice-Rector.

The discussions across all Faculties during the IEP site visits, as well as the additional Faculty-level analyses provided to the IEP team, also show that there are quite important differences between the

Faculties in terms of their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It is unclear whether the organisational structure of the university, as understood by the IEP team, enables and supports the sharing of good practice between Faculties, the identification of common challenges, and the development of joint strategies.

The IEP team also met with many students during its two visits, including student representatives in the governance structures. It could be seen that the student voice is valued at UMP Iasi, and that the university – at all levels – is open to student ideas and proposals for change. While the student representatives who met the IEP team were well organised and well positioned to contribute to institutional governance and decision making, the team also noted that there was room for improvement in terms of ensuring greater connectivity between different student cohorts, notably the different language streams. This would help strengthen the student voice and in turn support effective governance and decision making.

2.2 Strategic planning processes

The Rector's mandate at a Romanian university is determined by law to be of four years duration, with the possibility to renew this for one further four year mandate only. The IEP team understood that the university's strategic planning process is therefore conventionally based around the mandate of the Rector, and that in many cases the university's strategic plan mirrors the project which the new Rector proposes as part of his or her appointment process.

While this appears efficient in ensuring that a plan is available rapidly and is owned by the university senior management team, it also runs the risk of having been developed by a very restricted group of persons, without the input or buy-in of the broader university community. It is also likely to change significantly as Rectors change, thus not facilitating a longer-term university vision and planning process.

While these risks were not immediately apparent at UMF Iasi, they remain a source of potential concern to the IEP team, particularly in terms of ensuring sufficient continuity of vision and strategic planning in a context of significant external change. The team was informed that there were possible legislative changes being considered which might ameliorate this situation. However, in a situation where political and economic risks are on the rise internationally, long-term strategic planning becomes more important. In this context, coupled with the fact that UMF Iasi has important investments planned and/or already underway (with part of this self-funded from the university's own reserves) to facilitate growth and development in a number of important strategic areas, the need for a more inclusive, robust and longer-term strategic planning process appears essential.

The IEP team noted that a Gender Equality Plan was under development at UMF Iasi and supports this development. While the team noted a good gender balance in many of the groups we met at the university, this was not always the case. The team would also like to draw attention to the importance of broader aspects of diversity at a university, ensuring that a wide range of faculties and disciplines are also represented on and contributing to all university groups and committees.

The recently-formed alliance with the five other traditional Universities of Medicine in Romania may also, in the opinion of the IEP team, provide a useful opportunity to work together with these partners in the development of good practice in strategic planning across a range of relevant areas.

2.3 Administration

A modern university relies extensively on an effective and efficient administration across all aspects of the institution, notably its services aimed at supporting students and staff, and in working with the extensive range of external stakeholders, ranging from government to local communities. Many of these administrative roles have become increasingly professionalised across European universities in recent years, both to ensure the quality of the services provided and to maintain a high level of performance and cost efficiency for the university. A high quality of professionalised administration will also help avoid senior academic staff unnecessarily fulfilling administrative functions, for which they themselves may not be best qualified.

Senior university administration should also play an important role in ensuring an effective, well prepared, well implemented and well monitored long-term strategic plan, thereby underpinning the university's governance and decision-making structures in these key areas.

Given the rapid developments underway at UMF Iasi in recent years and the ambitious plans for more, the IEP team was struck by the need to invest in the professionalisation of the UMF Iasi administration, at all levels and across a range of specialist functions. For a highly internationalised university such as UMF Iasi, it would also be important to ensure that all staff are able to operate comfortably in at least one foreign language, in particular those who work in units supporting activities such as research, European projects, etc.

2.4 Recommendations:

- Develop a longer-term vision and planning process to guide and support the university's development and investment plans into the future;
- Better define the roles and responsibilities across Vice-Rectors, Deans, Senate Commissions and main administrative units;
- All management and administrative support units should report to the relevant Vice-Rector;
- Only a small number of university-level structures should report directly to the Rector;
- Equality of representation (e.g. gender, discipline, faculty) should be considered in all university bodies and functions;
- Invest in professionalisation of administration at all levels, and across a range of specialities;
- In a multi-lingual university, all staff should be able to operate in at least one foreign language;
- Avoid double representation of academic staff undertaking administrative roles.

3. Quality culture

Very significant developments in the broad field of quality culture have taken place across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) during the last decade. These have been driven by greater awareness of the importance of ensuring, enhancing and promoting the quality of everything that universities do, and in particular of the teaching and learning that underpins the student experience. This work has in turn been supported and guided by the development and refinement of European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, which are now used widely by universities and national agencies across the different countries of the EHEA.

At UMF Iasi the IEP team found that quality is an important concept, as per the Romanian legislation, and that it is supported by a number of structures and processes at both institutional and decentralised levels, resulting in a major annual report which is approved by the Senate. Given UMF Iasi's particular profile as a health sciences university, there is also a range of relevant national and international professional accreditations which the university achieves.

3.1 Quality concepts and instruments

The main quality concept used at UMF Iasi is the ISO 9001 system, with certification by an external agency. This quality management system is applied across the entire university, covering all academic, technical and administrative functions, culminating in a major annual report to the Senate.

The IEP team learned that the UMF system and approach to quality culture has also enabled effective responses to recent unexpected events, such as Covid or the Ukrainian crisis, where Ministerial directives have been translated into university-wide procedures which can then be brought to the attention of the relevant stakeholders, including students.

While UMF Iasi's approach to quality has been well established over many years, the team noted that it appeared largely unchanged from the previous IEP evaluations (2012, 2016) and that it still continues to be weighted towards procedures and processes, rather than student and staff academic outcomes. The team also found that very different levels of awareness still persist within the university regarding quality policies and processes. The UMF Iasi approach is also difficult to explain to external partners, and it should be noted that the ISO system is now only infrequently used by European universities. The main quality assurance approach in use across European universities now is the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for QA in the European Higher Education Area. These ESG do not appear to be referenced in UMF Iasi. While the ISO system is not entirely aligned with the academic environment, ISO may co-exist with ESG in a supportive way to assure a complete implementation of quality assurance and quality enhancement in an institution.

The IEP team considers that greater awareness and use of the ESG would help UMF Iasi to develop a more enhancement-led approach to quality, and also prove useful in furthering the university's European ambitions.

3.2 Quality structures and implementation

The Commission for Evaluation and Quality Assurance was created by UMF Iasi in 2008 as part of the introduction of an integrated quality management system, as required for reporting purposes to the public authorities. This Commission presents the major annual report on the quality of education to the Senate, based on the work of the Department of Quality Management and Internal Control, the operational unit within the general university administration which manages the ISO 9001 system. The IEP team was informed that this annual report to the Senate is based on inputs from each Faculty, which are then integrated into a university-level report, the structure of which is determined by law.

Student feedback is of course a major source of data and evidence to enhance quality across teaching and learning, as well as across a range of student-facing services. While limited information was received by the team on the topic of student feedback, the evidence available suggested that this is approached in a very decentralised and ad-hoc manner across UMF Iasi.

The IEP team was informed of an interesting initiative led by the Commission for Evaluation and Quality Assurance to analyse student response rates to teaching evaluations in an effort to improve these. Based on the findings of this initial survey, and with the approval of the Senate, UMF Iasi students have been preparing an enhanced questionnaire, for implementation via a new online system.

Developing a university-wide approach to obtaining student feedback is of significant strategic importance, as without consistent and reliable student feedback it is difficult to monitor any efforts to enhance the quality of teaching and other activities.

Within the ISO 9001 quality management model, which is managed by the Department of Quality Management and Internal Control and overseen by the Vice-Rector for Institutional Strategy, each process has a responsible person attached to it. The auditing of each process is done by the Department of Quality Management and Internal Control, with relevant people, including academic staff, from each faculty.

While important steps are made every year to improve the system, with enhanced collaboration across the university, the IEP team was informed that a lot of documentation was required to obtain certification, and that implementation of the system could still be seen as a bureaucratic burden. Likewise, little evidence was presented to the IEP team regarding ongoing quality enhancements across the university as a result of the system.

Separately to the ISO 9001 system, the work associated with academic programme and faculty evaluations undertaken by the Romanian National Agency (ARACIS) is led by the Deans of each Faculty. These evaluations appear to operate outside the quality assurance structures as mentioned above, and to receive no administrative support from the Department of Quality Management in terms of the preparation of reports. The IEP team was informed of plans to build a shared information system with data from across the university, to help inform these various reports. There were no clear timelines attached to these plans. The team supports this initiative, since readily available university-wide data, together with good analysis of these data, will also be extremely useful for strategic planning and decision-making.

3.3 Recommendations

- Move the UMF Iasi understanding of Quality Culture away from one based on processes, procedures and reports, towards one based on people, outcomes and enhancement;
- As part of this, focus particularly on improving the quality of Teaching & Learning and the student learning environment;
- A systematic approach to gathering student feedback would facilitate better use of this important evidence base to enhance quality, strategic planning and decision-making;
- A greater awareness of ESG and a QA methodology closer to the ESG would be useful in terms of European cooperation and important in developing further international partnerships.

4. Internationalisation

UMF Iasi has been successful for many years now in attracting significant numbers of students from many countries to study across most of the university's programmes. While these students are heavily concentrated in the French and English language streams of the largest programmes (medicine and dental medicine), there are also large numbers of international students in the Romanian language streams of many programmes.

In addition to hosting these full-degree students, UMF Iasi is a regular and active participant in Erasmus+ and other mobility programmes. The university has achieved good success in obtaining European funding for infrastructure and other projects and has developed strong collaboration with a range of international agencies over the years. This is notably the case with the *Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie* (AUF) and with the *Université Numérique en Santé et Sport* (UNESS), to promote and develop the UMF Iasi French language programme offerings, including through supporting access to the French medical career system for UMF Iasi graduates. The university is also a member of the Association of Medical Schools in Europe (AMSE). All of these add to the international profile of UMF Iasi and expose the university to new ideas and opportunities.

UMF Iasi also has a clear ambition to join a European University Alliance and is actively exploring possible options in this regard.

4.1 International activities

The main activity related to internationalisation at UMF Iasi concerns students. Large numbers of international students (just over 2,500 in total in 2020-21, around 20% of the entire student body) are registered at the university, studying across most programmes, including through the Romanian language. This is a very significant endeavour and implies a whole range of additional activity to attract, admit, teach and support these students from a wide range of different nationalities and backgrounds.

For example, the French language streams alone include close to 900 French citizens, as well as many other students of different nationalities. Significant work has been undertaken by the university in recent years, in cooperation with the French Embassy and other stakeholders, resulting in medical students from UMF Iasi now being able to compete in the French national competition to undertake their Internship year at a French hospital and then work in the French health system. As a result, the numbers of students applying for the French language stream programmes at UMF Iasi has grown rapidly in recent years.

In contrast, while the English language stream programmes had traditionally been larger, their external changes in one or two of their main markets has left them vulnerable and places on these programmes are now proving more difficult to fill. The university is seeking to counter this by putting in place a more ambitious communications campaign to broaden recruitment across a wider range of countries, particularly now that the Covid-19 crisis is no longer the same obstacle as during the previous two years.

Outgoing student mobility from UMF Iasi is considerably more modest, with only around 160 mobility places available per annum. The team was informed that almost all of these places were taken by medical students, and that most of these came from the French language stream. This number, which is allocated by the national Erasmus+ office in Bucharest, is very small for a university

with the profile of UMF Iasi, and the team would encourage UMF Iasi to make every effort to ensure this allocation is increased under the new 2022-27 Erasmus+ programme. This would allow more students from a broader range of programmes the opportunity to experience an international mobility dimension to their studies. Given the frequency with which the IEP team heard from students regarding problems with recognition of their ECTS when returning to UMF Iasi, the university will need to ensure improved procedures for the recognition of academic credits to encourage and support more widespread and seamless mobility in the future.

In contrast to the many activities undertaken to support the international mobility of students, the team noted that the attention paid to international staff mobility or indeed any other type of internationalisation at UMF Iasi was relatively small. Only a handful of academic staff benefit from Erasmus+ mobilities in any given year. The university has a fund to support staff seeking to attend international events and/or to publish in suitable journals, with a defined amount per staff member according to staff grades. In a typical pre-Covid year, around 400 short-term staff mobilities to international scientific events took place. Staff were however more likely to participate without any financial support from the university, or by using other forms of grants and project funding. There are also Eugen Ionesco scholarships available on a competitive basis through the *Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie*. But there are very few, if any, staff from other countries working at the university, which is highly unusual in contemporary European higher education. Having said that, a number of UMF Iasi staff have had experience working or studying in universities abroad, at least for short periods. The university maintains very open, collaborative and supportive relations with its neighbouring State University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Moldova, across teaching and scientific events, and has been generous in its support for refugees from the war in Ukraine seeking temporary accommodation in Iasi as a result of the recent Russian invasion.

The IEP team noted that there was no specific budget for internationalisation at UMF Iasi. This is likewise unusual in a European university today. Activities are covered variously using Erasmus funding, a range of project funds, and the ad hoc approval of internal university funding as required. If the university is to develop and pursue a longer-term internationalisation strategy of its own, it may need to consider a specific internal budget to enable and support this.

4.2 Structures to support internationalisation

The university has a small international office, staffed by an international officer and three support persons. This office, which reports to the Vice-Rector for International Relations but does not appear on the UMF Iasi organigramme, promotes and markets the various programmes offered through English and French languages, attends educational fairs, and supports UMF Iasi academic staff who are undertaking short-term mobilities for scientific events. All applications for staff mobility need to be approved by the university's Administrative Board, irrespective of whether the university is funding the mobility or not. The international office also typically makes arrangements for visitors to UMF Iasi from abroad.

Given the size of the office, the breadth of its functions, and its physical location at the heart of the university administration, it maintains a broad range of relations with all the other Vice-Rectorates, and is seen as a go-to place for assistance with a wide variety of daily events. This has led to a situation where, at least from the IEP team's perspective, it is very unclear where the role and duties of the international office start and finish.

Again, depending on the university's strategic ambitions for internationalisation, investment will be needed in the international office and in its staff, in order for it to support the implementation of an international strategy, across a range of areas, in a professional and efficient manner. This will include expansion of key competences in the office staff, including a broader range of language competences.

Within the Department of Programmes for Institutional Development, there is also a unit known informally as the "European Projects" office, alongside the Research Office. The European projects office's main function appears to be writing and submitting proposals for European and national funding, as well as project management for successful European funded projects, although the volume of these appears to be small. The existence of such an office with this profile is an important asset for the university in growing its participation in EU-funded projects, assuming that the office is well resourced and has the necessary experience and know-how to manage its tasks successfully.

However, there do not appear to be any functional links between the European projects office and the international office. Given their common interests and the need for UMF Iasi to have a seamless range of specialist knowledge across the full range of relevant EU opportunities, it might make sense to consider establishing or strengthening such links. Again, depending on UMF Iasi's plans to increase participation in EU-funded projects, this office will need additional investment and resources if it is to support a wider range of project applications for various streams of EU funding, and also to provide project management support for successfully funded projects.

4.3 Internationalisation strategy

UMF Iasi does not currently have an internationalisation strategy but is seeking to develop one. This is based on the realisation that the university cannot grow and develop in an effective and sustainable way without positioning itself strategically in an international environment, nor ensure the sort of outcomes for its graduates that it seeks to provide without further internationalising its teaching, learning, research and other activities.

Based on its review of the self-evaluation report, the accompanying documentation, and its meetings across both site visits, the IEP team has identified a number of points which may be useful in guiding the university in its preparation of this strategy.

This first is that there may currently be a rather narrow interpretation of internationalisation at UMF Iasi, based mainly around the issue of student mobility, and in particular around incoming students on the French and English language stream programmes. While it is true that these language streams represent significant international achievements in themselves, they dominate discussion of internationalisation at the university and may obscure some of the other necessary aspects of a coherent internationalisation strategy. These would also include topics such as outgoing student mobility, staff mobility, internationalisation of the teaching and administrative staff, internationalisation of the curriculum, "internationalisation at home" for those who cannot travel abroad, research collaboration, strategic partnerships, etc. This is where there is a need for more strategic leadership from the university's Administrative Board, notably the Vice-Rector for International Relations.

The second suggested discussion point is to build on existing achievements regarding the internationalisation of the student body. While student associations organised around the language

streams organise various events and activities, the IEP team was informed by a range of students from various programmes that they did not meet students from other language streams in any organised way, either academically or socially. The team was informed that the university would like to develop a more inter-cultural approach and has recently created a multicultural centre to support the integration of international students, but that this has yet to develop its full potential. With such a rich diversity of cultures and backgrounds in the student body across each of the language streams, there is a significant opportunity to do more in this area, in particular for domestic Romanian students who are less likely to study alongside students from other countries.

Making better use of these opportunities would enhance the student experience at UMF Iasi for all students, help international students adapt better to life in Iasi, and help Romanian students gain additional perspectives and experiences which will be useful to them in their subsequent careers. Given that only limited numbers of UMF Iasi students themselves benefit directly from outgoing mobility opportunities, and these students are mostly concentrated in the French language stream of medicine, such interaction between the various student cohorts could internationalise the student experience at home for those who do not themselves participate in physical mobility.

A third suggested topic is the internationalisation of the UMF Iasi staff environment. This is important in facilitating innovation in teaching and research, and the presence of colleagues from different academic traditions can also be stimulating for staff and students. While the team learned that every member of academic staff has to pass an English or French language test as part of the recruitment criteria, there appear to be significant barriers to recruiting international staff members to work at UMF Iasi, apart from as occasional guest lecturers. The team was informed that the national standardised competitive recruitment process for applicants, and the inability to allow additional payments for international staff were among these barriers.

However, there may be other ways around this which could be explored, e.g. through the exchange of staff with partner universities on a temporary basis, or through the development of a number of joint degree programmes where staff from the other universities involved could teach on the programme to UMF Iasi students. The lessons of the Covid-19 pandemic have also shown that much good teaching can take place online, and there are certainly ways to explore how to introduce more international teaching in the UMF Iasi curriculum if that is seen as desirable. Indeed, the IEP team was informed that work was underway at national level to facilitate this, led by ARACIS.

A fourth possible area for exploration is the development of special strategic partnerships. This would allow UMF Iasi to concentrate many of its international cooperation efforts on specific activities with a small group of like-minded universities, in areas of mutual interest. This could in turn lead to longer-term developments in terms of joint programmes, more joint research projects, and potentially also to a more formal arrangement such as a European University Alliance.

The IEP team was informed that no such strategic partnerships currently exist. This would be a necessary first step towards more intense cooperation across a range of fields with suitable like-minded universities. The current list of partner universities is very long, with 72 partners in the Erasmus+ programme, and other 12 bilateral partnerships with universities from 11 different countries. The level of mobility activity between UMF Iasi and most of these universities is very low. There is considerable potential to review this list and focus on a much smaller number of carefully chosen universities. Such an approach, which the IEP team understood was already being considered by the UMF Iasi leadership, would allow for more sustainable bilateral relations, building activity over time. It would also facilitate better alignment between the programmes and curricula at UMF

IASI with those selected partners, allowing for more streamlined and systematic recognition of ECTS credits obtained by UMF Iasi students abroad.

If the university is serious about the internationalisation of research, it should without question become a more active player in the European research funding landscape. This would be the fifth area for exploration by UMF Iasi in developing an internationalisation strategy. The Horizons Europe research framework programme is the EU's flagship research, development and innovation programme to 2027, with a range of important funding streams and initiatives with which universities need to engage. There is a lot of specialist information and knowledge inherent in these programmes, and UMF Iasi will need to invest time and effort to build these up. The Romanian delegation to the EU in Brussels would be a good initial starting point and should be in a position to advise the university of suitable opportunities which are being prepared by the European Commission, in advance of this information being published officially.

The university should also seek to make better use of key enabling services such as Euraxess (supporting researcher mobility across Europe) and the HR Excellence in Research label, without which universities will soon no longer be eligible to apply for EU research funding. The IEP team was informed that UMF Iasi had incorporated the EU Charter and Code of HR in Research some years ago, but that it had not yet achieved the HR Excellence in Research label.

Within this broad topic of research, there is also considerable scope to internationalise PhD studies at UMF Iasi. The proportion of international students in the university at PhD level is considerably lower than at undergraduate level; this is unusual in that in many European universities, it is the inverse, as PhD students tend to be from a broader range of nationalities than undergraduate students. The IEP team learned that the university has been successful in obtaining ten Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions grants over last 5 years, a good result which shows the potential for greater internationalisation of PhD studies. However, there appeared to be few joint doctoral programmes with partner universities abroad, although the team was informed that of the twenty PhD co-tutelle supervision arrangements which currently existed, five of them were from abroad.

4.4 Recommendations

- Develop a pro-active strategy to target full-degree students from a range of countries, and reduce risk;
- Link the communications/marketing strategy for additional full-degree students to the success of the French language stream; use students and alumni as ambassadors as part of this;
- Review the list of partner universities to concentrate efforts where partnership is most effective, and to balance incoming and outgoing numbers;
- Invest in international office staff, including for European projects, and promote multi-lingual competences;
- Develop pro-active connections with the Romanian representation in Brussels and other key contacts, in order to ensure advance information regarding areas of strategic interest to the university;

- Make better use of Euraxess for research and staff mobility, including the HR Excellence in Research tool;
 - Internationalise research, including PhD studies.
- **5. Learning and teaching**

During its site visits to UMF Iasi, the IEP team met with groups of teachers and students from across all four Faculties, as well as in various meetings organised at university level. It was clear from these meetings that there are many committed and enthusiastic teachers in each of the Faculties, and that there are many nice examples of modernisation of teaching and learning, with good and effective practices to be found, including regarding the increased use of digitalisation.

The team also found advanced facilities with simulation equipment at the university, for use by students across different programmes, and that robust teaching and learning arrangements were in place across a broad range of clinical sites.

The team was informed that a major objective of the university since 2016 had been curriculum reform, and that an important project had been prepared with a number of partner European universities to work on areas of improvement, but that this project had been delayed because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Coupled with the importance of teaching in the university mission and the evidence coming from the self-evaluation report, it is clear that good teaching is highly valued at the university, and that this is the foundation on which the three language streams are based. Nevertheless, the team also heard of examples of very outdated teaching methods and laboratory environments, and that more exposure to clinical practice would be valued by students.

It is important therefore to have processes and procedures in place to ensure that curricula in all programmes are fit for purpose, that the quality of teaching of these is optimum, and that students have sufficient flexibility – within the limits of what is possible according to national and professional regulations – to choose elective modules, at home or in partner universities abroad, which correspond to the learning pathways of particular interest to them.

5.1 Organisation of teaching

In a university with three parallel language streams, and where the programmes delivered within each stream have the same curriculum and standards, where students sit the same exams, and where the teaching across different language streams is undertaken by the same academic staff (all with certified competences in the relevant language), the effective and efficient organisation of teaching is obviously an important issue.

The team noted that this was facilitated by organising teaching in blocks, which allowed for effective planning and implementation across each programme and language stream. This organisation is the responsibility of the Deans, supported by the secretaries for each language stream within the Deans'

offices, which also provide an operational interface with the Rector's office, the students and the rest of the university administration, and which assist with the resolution of daily issues.

As part of the planned curriculum review at UMF Iasi, there may be scope to explore how more joint provision of teaching across faculties could be organised. This would introduce some improved flexibility for students in terms of the range of elective modules, allow for interesting academic collaboration in relevant areas, and also help address the overall challenge of staff teaching loads. In addition, it could in turn facilitate greater levels of outgoing student mobility, by allowing more flexibility to recognise a broader range of modules undertaken by students in partner universities abroad.

While the national teaching requirement for a professor in Romania is seven hours per week, the IEP team learned that a fourteen hour teaching load per week is common across UMF Iasi, and that some staff teach more than this. This may be linked to many academic staff teaching across two or more language streams. The limited sharing of relevant modules across different programmes – partly because of inflexible national accreditation standards - may well also contribute to this. However, such a significant teaching load must clearly have an impact on other academic duties and activities. There is an obvious contradiction at UMF Iasi – of which the university leadership is already aware - between these teaching realities and the university's research ambitions.

The team learned that there are a significant number of unfilled positions across the university, and that it is in the power of the university to hire more staff who could absorb some of the teaching load. In exchange, the university and each faculty should seek a corresponding increase in research activity from academic staff who have their current teaching loads reduced as a result of additional staff being recruited.

5.2 Student-centred approaches

A range of services are in place at UMF Iasi to support students with their learning and progression through the university. These include a tutor system, provided by academic staff, to support and guide students in each year of study, aimed at facilitating their integration and progression through their studies and to ensure successful educational outcomes. Students also informed the IEP team that there is a good orientation programme at the start of every academic year.

While the self-evaluation report notes that the Deans and the Deans' offices would normally be where students should address their queries, the IEP team heard from both staff and students that in reality the Rector's Office is often seen as "the place to go" by students, and which also helps with the admissions process.

A Student Counselling and Career Service (SCOP) exists to advise students regarding career guidance and labour market opportunities, as well as to provide more generalised student counselling. This is available through Romanian, English and French, free of charge, and is provided by qualified psychologists.

An important issue raised by students with the IEP team is that some students have to pay for a certain number of extra materials and laboratory accessories, while others do not. While these may be standard practices which vary across different disciplines, the situation should be clarified by the university so that all students are fully informed in advance of any possible such obligations. All

options should also be explored to ensure that, for students for whom these costs may represent a significant challenge, adequate supports can be found to ensure that all students can obtain the essential materials and equipment they need for their studies.

In terms of student-led approaches, each year in each language stream has a “student chief”, through whom students engage with the administrative and academic structures of the university regarding feedback, class issues, and other relevant matters. A range of student associations also exist for academic and social activities across the various programmes, organising student events through the various languages, sometimes in partnership with students from other universities in Iasi.

5.3 Recommendations:

- Implement the planned curriculum review across the whole university; as part of this allow more joint provision of core modules across faculties and more flexibility for students in terms of electives;
- Explore all options to make the necessary learning materials and accessories available for all students;
- Fill unoccupied positions to ensure a correct teaching load for academic staff, and use this to also encourage a significant increase in research activity.

6. Research

Bearing in mind the four key questions of IEP, the team examined the alignment of UMF Iasi's research activities with its mission and goals and the management of these research activities. The team also accorded special attention to the situation regarding doctoral education at UMF Iasi.

In its position as the major provider of health sciences education in north-eastern Romania, UMF Iasi has a strong network of hospitals and other clinical partners across the region, as well as a number of relevant industry and other research-performing organisations with which the university collaborates. The university has benefited from significant recent investments in infrastructure, notably the CEMEX research centre for experimental medicine, with more planned such as a new Centre for Basic Research. These build on the achievements of around twenty existing centres, platforms, laboratories and units across a range of basic and applied research fields. The IEP team was able to visit the CEMEX facilities and noted the high international level of research underway, supported by dynamic and proactive leadership.

While the university's approach to research has so far been based on a bottom-up growth strategy, capitalising on particular opportunities coming through the departments, it has also benefited from a clear strategic approach from the UMF Iasi leadership to strengthen research capacity and enhance facilities, including more collaboration with the private sector.

The IEP team found that there was a good research publication record at UMF Iasi across a range of fields, and that this had been growing positively in recent years. There was likewise a greater focus now evident on research groups within the university and the possibilities for inter-disciplinary work. The team was pleased to note that PhD students were now also being integrated into these developments, and that undergraduate students were often asked by their professors if they were interested in getting involved in research projects. Students noted however that these were mostly likely to be Romanian students, and that not enough international students were informed about such opportunities.

6.1 Alignment of research activities with mission and goals

The UMF Iasi mission accords a prominent place for research, with a clear statement about the role of the university in creating knowledge for the improvement of human health. While this could be expected of a health sciences university, the IEP team was struck by the frequent references to research in the team's exchanges with the university leadership, and by the clear strategic approach to strengthen research capacity and facilities, particularly in recent years.

However, and despite the good recent growth in research activities and publications, the team also identified a number of areas where reality on the ground does not appear to be well aligned with the strategic ambition of the university. The most significant of these is that research appears to be seen by many UMF Iasi staff as something that only takes place once their teaching load has been delivered. Given that teaching loads are already high, and sometimes very high (see Section 5), this obviously reduces the amount of time and effort available for research. Coupled with this, the team was informed that no specific research load is specified in staff contracts, and that the basic staff salary is solely a function of the volume of teaching undertaken. While this salary can be supplemented by income from research grants, there are also obvious limits, both legal and human, to how many hours can be worked in any day or week.

The result therefore is that not all UMF Iasi academic staff are research active. While this is not a unique situation in itself, it remains undesirable in terms of a university which prides itself on its commitment to training world-class health professionals and scientists, as without research the quality and currency of teaching will also suffer. It also lessens the university's overall contribution to the health professions and the improvement of human health, and in particular its contribution to the health services in Iasi and across the broader region. The IEP team was therefore encouraged to learn that the UMF Iasi leadership was determined to take steps to address these issues.

As noted already in this report (Section 2), the governance lines and responsibilities for research and innovation at UMF Iasi are unclear. While university research often tends to be based within departments, institutes, centres and other such structures, and flourishes with strong and entrepreneurial Principal Investigators within these units who are skilled at obtaining research grants and ensuring a steady flow of interesting opportunities for scientists, in a relatively small and specialised university such as UMF Iasi there is real added value to be gained by a more strategic institution-wide approach to research activity, in pursuit of the university's mission and goals.

The general objective of the scientific research activity at UMF Iasi is, according to the Rector's Annual Report 2020-2021 (p125, English version), "to increase the research performance with the integration of UMF Iasi into the European space of scientific research". In the opinion of the IEP team, working towards this objective will definitely require a strategic approach over a number of years. This in turn suggests a stronger strategic and management role for the Vice-Rector for Research, federating research interests and strengths across the university, and greater alignment in terms of administrative and grant support for this by the Research Office and other support structures.

The IEP team noted the relative absence of reference in the self-evaluation report and accompanying documentation, as well as in discussions during the site visits, to the multitude of European research funding streams and support services, and to the importance of direct engagement by UMF Iasi with all key stakeholders in Brussels in order to benefit from these opportunities. Section 4 of this report mentions a number of the European instruments which can be of assistance in the internationalisation of research such as the Euraxess researcher mobility network, and the Human Resources Excellence in Research label which will become a pre-condition for successful European research funding in the near future.

In the opinion of the IEP team, over the coming ten years it is likely, in order for universities to be successful in research, that they will need to combine institutional, national and European research funding opportunities in a strategic and optimal way, leveraging one off the other to gain maximum benefit from each. A university with the profile of UMF Iasi needs to position itself very strategically in this context in order to achieve success, seeking relevant partners at every step of the way and ensuring full alignment of its own mission, goals, and research activities.

6.2 Management of research activities and use of research results

Over the last decade, UMF Iasi has developed over twenty applied and fundamental small research units, laboratories and centres, each bringing researchers together from across a small number of departments, and in some cases operating across a number of hospitals. Led by local Principal Investigators, these have been successful in obtaining a mixture of internal UMF Iasi grants with

national and European funding (sometimes for regional development, or cross-border cooperation), as well as private industry funding to support their work.

However, the small scale of these initiatives has limited their development, with difficulties for example in ensuring adequate professional technical staff. The IEP team was informed that clinical research was relatively under-developed, and that UMF Iasi was seeking to work with other Romanian universities to improve the evidence base for clinical work across the country.

Based on these important experiences, UMF Iasi has now invested heavily in scaling up some of these research activities. Of note here is the CEMEX (experimental medicine) research centre, with a dedicated building, laboratories, support structures and staff. Nine researchers were based at CEMEX in 2022, and PhD students from across the university were encouraged to use the facilities for their research also. CEMEX is also designed at a scale which allows it to apply systematically for many sources of funding, including private funding, as these become available.

Given that the research publications data shows that a lot of research outputs at UMF Iasi come from the basic sciences, rather than from the clinical disciplines, one of the other five major infrastructure projects in progress at UMF Iasi is the development of a new centre for fundamental research. This is specifically aimed at supporting collaboration between these sciences and the health sciences. The new centre will also allow for enhanced collaboration with colleagues from the Technical University in Iasi. In the meanwhile, researchers from disciplines outside of UMF Iasi can be incorporated and funded by research centres to contribute to a range of relevant projects.

While these new ambitious research investments are clearly important and forward looking, it is also necessary to ensure that the state-of-the-art research facilities and equipment are well used. This however is not yet the case, as the IEP team was informed that the CEMEX infrastructure was operating at maximum 50% capacity (and often well below this). A more intensive use of the facilities will help justify the investment to funding agencies and partners, and also give an indication of research outputs in preparation. Likewise, it is important that UMF Iasi has a clear plan to ensure that these new and high quality research facilities, including the new hospital-based facilities for research and innovation, can be maintained and developed further. This will involve developing a solid business plan for the coming decade.

Within the UMF Iasi's Department of Programmes for Institutional Development, there is a small dedicated research office, whose role is to provide administrative project management support for funded researchers. The research office also provides information regarding upcoming calls for proposals and acts as an interface with the research community. There is likewise support from within the same Department for Institutional Development for writing and submitting proposals for European and national funding, although this is not specialised in terms of applying to the European research framework programmes.

In addition, the university has a small Centre for Innovation and Technology Transfer (MAVIS), which is in the process of recruiting suitable professionals to ensure in-house expertise at UMF Iasi in these areas. The IEP team was informed that while UMF Iasi has an Intellectual Property policy for research outputs, it had not yet developed much experience at generating income from this.

6.3 *Doctoral education*

Doctoral education at UMF Iasi is structured in one doctoral school, with three main domains (medicine, pharmacy and dental medicine). There are currently nearly 500 PhD students across these three domains, over 80% of which are in medicine, with an average of 40-50 graduating every year. These students are supported by around 130 doctoral supervisors. However, the IEP team noted that the place of the doctoral school in the UMF Iasi structures was not coherent, as it did not appear to be linked to the relevant Vice-Rectors for Postgraduate Studies and Research. The IEP team understands that certain requirements regarding doctoral schools may exist within the relevant Romanian legislation, but the university must nevertheless ensure that its own internal functioning is coherent and optimised.

There are currently no PhD students in bioengineering, because a national rule requires the existence of three professors in the same field in order to open a new domain of PhD studies. Furthermore, the overall capacity of UMF Iasi for doctoral students is determined by the Romanian authorities, based on the number of qualified PhD supervisors. The IEP team noted that Romanian national criteria for PhD supervision are very conservative, limiting PhD numbers and research teams across broader range and more inter-disciplinary fields.

Students enrol on a four year PhD programme, with a range of courses in the first two years. By the end of the third year, students must submit a number of reports with results of their studies. The data provided to the IEP team suggested that large proportions of PhD students do not complete their PhD within the four years (including for a number of valid reasons), but as a result are no longer eligible for state grants and have to pay their own fees until they graduate. A small number of grants (around 15 each year) can also be funded by enterprises, and UMF Iasi also has a fund to support student publication fees, participation in international congresses, etc.

While the IEP team was informed that PhD students were encouraged to use the new research facilities, and this was confirmed by students, there was little further evidence of PhD students working as part of larger research teams: this is a pre-requisite for contemporary research in a fast changing multidisciplinary environment, whether clinical or laboratory. Research supervisors in some cases also have grants which can help support PhD students within research groups. In general, PhD students reported good relations with supervisors.

The IEP team was informed that teaching is compulsory for PhD students, and that even 1st year PhD students do some teaching. The team heard of cases where 1st year students were teaching up to six hours a day for several days a week, and where students who were no longer on grants were teaching twenty hours per week. While these may represent extreme cases, from the perspective of the IEP team it is therefore hardly surprising that in such circumstances many PhD students do not complete their theses within the standard four years.

The IEP team was surprised to find that there are few PhD students at UMF Iasi from other countries, given the large numbers of international students at undergraduate level. According to the discussions conducted with staff and students on this topic, there may be two reasons for this: the financial conditions are not attractive enough for young researchers from other countries, and the existence of bureaucratic barriers within the Romanian system (both at national and institutional levels) which dissuade international PhD students. The team heard that UMF Iasi students had done PhDs in leading universities abroad because of the difficulties in organising collaborative arrangements at home. It is clear that there is considerable scope for further development of inter-university arrangements in the field of doctoral studies between UMF Iasi and relevant partner universities, to try to remedy this situation.

The IEP team was also surprised to hear that more than 70% of UMF Iasi PhD graduates become members of UMFI academic staff, and that there appears to be a tradition of selecting future academic staff from among PhD students. While there may well be a limited supply of the specialised health science disciplines from other possible sources, this leads to a very endogenous situation with limited external stimuli for change. From the perspective of the IEP team, it would be important to broaden the recruitment of junior academics to graduates of other universities also, in Romania and from further afield, bringing in new ideas and approaches on a regular basis. This would also contribute significantly to the broader internationalisation endeavour at the university.

6.4 Recommendations:

- UMF Iasi needs a longer-term research strategy, led by the Vice-Rector Research, to ensure the university can contribute to the advancement of knowledge at regional, national and European levels, and benefit from adequate funding for this;
- The Research Office has an important role to play in these developments, but needs further professionalisation and specialisation;
- A specialised university like UMF Iasi has great opportunity to develop more interdisciplinary research in collaboration with other universities and research actors;
- In order to gain more exposure and access to European research partnerships and funding, the university should make better use of services such as EURAXESS, the Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions programme and the HR Excellence in Research label;
- Promote the use of new research facilities and equipment more widely;
- Develop a longer-term strategy to ensure that the new research facilities can be developed and maintained;
- Support the mobility of doctoral students in flexible ways which meet the needs of a broader range of students;
- Ensure that the doctoral students are enabled to achieve their primary role, i.e. to prepare the PhD thesis, rather than being overwhelmed by other duties, including large teaching loads;
- Integrate PhD students more systematically into larger research teams;
- Explore all options to ensure doctoral studies in the Medical Bioengineering Faculty.

7. Service to society

The IEP team explored the topic of how UMF Iasi seeks to serve the society in which it is situated and of which it is part. This is a standard and integral part of the IEP evaluation methodology. In doing so, the IEP team sought to examine UMF Iasi's broader institutional aims and objectives in this area, and the specific activities it carries out to achieve these. This aspect of a university's activity is often referred to as its "third mission".

As with all universities, UMF Iasi exists in a specific context and has its own unique set of relevant stakeholders, both public and private. The university's self-evaluation report noted UMF Iasi's particular role in medical training of student doctors and residents and the impact of this on the profession and the health system. It also mentioned the mandatory professional development courses for medical practitioners which UMF Iasi provides.

In this context, the IEP team was informed by external stakeholders and by the UMF Iasi leadership of very significant issues regarding the supply of qualified health professionals across the north-east of Romania, in particular in rural areas. Given that UMF Iasi is the single major supplier of these professionals across the region, the team would encourage the university to examine in detail what it can do to support community medicine, public health, and other health services across the region, particularly in rural areas, through both the university's staff and students. The IEP team met students who were motivated to support and work with disadvantaged communities in the region. Such an approach would align perfectly with the UMF Iasi mission and could represent the university's single biggest contribution to sustainable social development across the north-east of Romania.

There are very tangible and recent achievements which the university could build on in this regard. The team was informed of the university's important contributions during the Covid-19 pandemic, including through a successful vaccination campaign hosted by the university and to public health awareness raising and communication. UMF Iasi and its students have likewise provided strong support for Ukrainian refugees since the start of the Russian invasion, including making student accommodation facilities in Iasi available to Ukrainian families. The university has also sent medical supplies to Ukraine as part of its emergency contribution.

As one of the largest employers in Iasi, and host to the largest number of foreign nationals living in the city, the university also has a significant impact on the social, economic and cultural life of Iasi. This was immediately visible to the IEP team during its visits to Iasi and expressed very clearly to the team by the range of external stakeholders we met; they also informed the team that Iasi was a very safe environment for international students. Indeed, very strong support for the university was expressed by both civic and economic stakeholders.

However, starting from this already positive situation, and arising from its discussions with students and external stakeholders, the team detected that there was considerable potential for international students at UMF Iasi to engage further with their host communities and contribute more to the economic, social and cultural life of the city. One possible route for this may be through better and more explicit links with other universities in Iasi, so that the 60,000 students, both Romanian and foreign nationals, across all universities can act as a positive catalyst for the ongoing social, economic and cultural development to which the city, the region and Romania as a country are committed.

Such an approach would also help ensure that the role of UMF Iasi in the city and region is well understood by broader society, generating in turn further societal support for the university. It would also be important in promoting Iasi as an international centre of excellent higher education and research, where the contribution of students to the city is valued. This likewise would have obvious knock-on benefits for both the university, the city and a range of relevant stakeholders.

UMF Iasi has a small communications department, created in 2016. The IEP team was informed that its main focus was the recruitment of Romanian and international students, through international education fairs but also – in particular as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, through targeted online recruitment. A French-language version of the website was under development at the time of the IEP visits, to complement the Romanian and English language versions which already existed. This communications department has already proven its success in this regard, despite its very limited budget, with for example the places on the French-language stream programmes for the upcoming year already being filled by May.

From the perspective of the IEP team, there is considerable opportunity to build on these initial successes to improve communications with a broader range of audiences, and to strengthen student recruitment in a strategic way, e.g. in the English language stream and in the Faculty of Pharmacy where concerns were expressed regarding student recruitment trends. Such moves would be an important element in further consolidating UMF Iasi's position in the city and region, and would certainly also be helpful in helping the university progress towards its various national and European ambitions. This will nevertheless require the careful development of a new communications strategy, which also takes into UMF Iasi's societal stakeholders.

7.1 Recommendations

- Ensure the role of UMF Iasi in the city and region is well understood by broader society;
- Examine what UMF Iasi can do to support community medicine, public health, and other health services across the region, particularly in rural areas
- Work with other universities and research institutes to promote Iasi as an international centre of excellent higher education and research;
- Work with students, both domestic and international, to support this.

8. Conclusion

As detailed in this report, the IEP team found many positive developments underway across UMF Iasi, with a clear upward trajectory of travel over many years. This is being made possible by large numbers of very committed staff and students who are proud of their university.

The team hopes that this latest IEP evaluation can support ongoing enhancement at the university, particularly regarding internationalisation.

The ever-changing local, regional and international context requires all universities to continuously monitor and adapt, listening carefully to internal and external partners. This is particularly the case for UMF Iasi at the moment.

The team wishes the UMF Iasi community every success in this endeavour.

Summary of the recommendations

The key recommendations presented in the previous chapters are summarised below in order to facilitate easy identification.

In terms of governance and institutional decision making:

- Develop a longer-term vision and planning process to guide and support the university's development and investment plans into the future
- Better define the roles and responsibilities across Vice-Rectors, Deans, Senate Commissions and main administrative units
- All management and administrative support units should report to the relevant Vice-Rector
- Only a small number of university-level structures should report directly to the Rector.
- Equality of representation (e.g. gender, discipline, faculty) should be considered in all university bodies and functions
- Invest in professionalisation of administration at all levels, and in a range of specialities
- In a multi-lingual university, all staff should be able to operate in at least one foreign language
- Avoid double representation of academic staff undertaking administrative roles

In terms of quality culture:

- Move the UMF Iasi understanding of Quality Culture away from one based on processes, procedures and reports, towards one based on people, outcomes and enhancement
- As part of this, focus particularly on improving the quality of Teaching & Learning and the student learning environment
- A systematic approach to gathering student feedback would facilitate better use of this important evidence base to enhance quality

- A greater awareness of ESG and a QA methodology closer to the ESG would be useful in terms of European cooperation and important in developing further international partnerships.

In terms of internationalisation:

- Develop a pro-active strategy to target full-degree students from a range of countries, and reduce risk;
- Link the communications/marketing strategy for additional full-degree students to the success of the French language stream; use students and alumni as ambassadors as part of this;
- Review the list of partner universities to concentrate efforts where partnership is most effective, and to balance incoming and outgoing numbers;
- Invest in international office staff, including for European projects, and promote multi-lingual competences;
- Develop pro-active connections with the Romanian representation in Brussels and other key contacts, in order to ensure advance information regarding areas of strategic interest to the university;
- Make better use of EURAXESS for research and staff mobility, including the HR Excellence in Research tool;
- Internationalise research, including PhD studies.

In terms of teaching and learning:

- Review curriculum across whole university, to allow more joint provision of core modules across faculties and more flexibility for students in terms of electives;
- Explore all options to make the necessary learning materials and accessories available for all students;
- Use unoccupied positions to ensure a correct teaching load, which will also encourage a significant increase in research activity.

In terms of research:

- UMF Iasi needs a longer-term research strategy, led by the Vice-Rector Research, to ensure the university can contribute to the advancement of knowledge at regional, national and European levels, and benefit from adequate funding for this;
- The Research Office has an important role to play in these developments, but needs further professionalisation and specialisation;
- A specialised university like UMF Iasi has great opportunity to develop more interdisciplinary research in collaboration with other universities and research actors;

- In order to gain more exposure and access to European research partnerships and funding, the university should make better use of services such as EURAXESS, the Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions programme and the HR Excellence in Research label;
- Promote the use of new research facilities and equipment more widely;
- Develop a longer-term strategy to ensure that the new research facilities can be developed and maintained;
- Support the mobility of doctoral students in flexible ways which meet the needs of a broader range of students;
- Ensure that the doctoral students are enabled to achieve their primary role, i.e. to prepare the PhD thesis, rather than being overwhelmed by other duties, including large teaching loads;
- Integrate PhD students more systematically into larger research teams;
- Explore all options to ensure doctoral studies in Medical Bioengineering Faculty.

In terms of service to society:

- Ensure the role of UMF Iasi in the city and region is well understood by broader society;
- Examine what UMF Iasi can do to support community medicine, public health, and other health services across the region, particularly in rural areas
- Work with other universities and research institutes to promote Iasi as an international centre of excellent higher education and research;
- Work with students, both domestic and international, to support this.