

Akkreditierungsagentur  
im Bereich Gesundheit und Soziales  
Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Science



## **Assessment Report**

**for the Application of**

**Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad, Romania**

**Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry,**

**Department of General Medicine,**

**for the Recommendation for Accreditation of the Study Program**

**“Medicine”(Doctor Medic, M.D.)**

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## 1 Introduction

The Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Sciences (AHPGS) is an interdisciplinary, multi-professional organization. Its mission is to carry out quality assurance procedures regarding study programs, as well as Higher Education Institutions, in the fields of health and social sciences and in related domains. By implementing quality assurance procedures, the AHPGS contributes to the improvement of the overall quality of teaching and learning.

Study programs in Romania require authorization for provisional functioning, as established by Law no. 87 from 2006 approving the Emergency Decree no. 75 from 2005. The authorization for provisional functioning of a study program is decided upon by the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport. According to the Law of National Education no.1 from 2011 (hereinafter "Law of National Education"), art. 150, par. 1, the decision for authorization takes place on the basis of the external evaluation and subsequent recommendation of a quality assurance agency registered in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR).

Starting from 2009, the AHPGS is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). Since 2004 the AHPGS has been a member of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA). In 2006, the AHPGS also joined the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA) and became a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) in 2009. Since 2012, the AHPGS has been a member of the Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA).

After a positive decision for authorization for provisional functioning from the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport, the applicant higher education institution may enroll students in the respective study program. Following the successful graduation of the three subsequent cohorts (approximately 5 years), the higher education institution must submit its application for accreditation. The accreditation procedure is similar to that for authorization for provisional functioning: an external evaluation takes place from the part of a quality assurance agency, followed by the Government's decisions towards the accreditation of the study program.

The external evaluation regarding the authorization for provisional functioning takes place on the basis of the Romanian standards for such procedures, as stated in the afore-mentioned "Law of National Education" and in the "Methodology for external evaluation: standards, standards of reference, and list of performance indicators of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education", as approved by the Government Decision no. 1418 from 2006. Also considered are the "Quality evaluation activities guide for university study programs and for higher education institutions (approved by the RQAAHE Council during the meeting held on 17 November 2006) and "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area", as established by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

The external assessment procedure is carried out in four steps:

#### **I. The University's application**

The AHPGS verifies the sufficiency of the documents submitted by the University, namely the self-evaluation report and its corresponding annexes. These documents have to fulfil the assessment spheres as well as the AHPGS standards. As a result, the AHPGS produces a summary (see below), which is to be approved by the University and subsequently made available for the expert group, together with all other documentation.

#### **II. On-site visit (Peer-review)**

Alongside with preparing the documents, the AHPGS Accreditation Commission nominates highly experienced experts with professional experience in accreditation procedures as well as expertise in the specific academic area of the study program to be accredited.

The experts carry out an external on-site visit to the University. In the course of the visit, discussions with members of the University take place, starting with the University and department management to the degree program management, teachers and students. The experts' task during the on-site visit is verification and evaluation of the objectives of the program and its projected study results, structure, staff, material resources, course of studies and methods of assessment (selection of students, assessment of achievements, stu-

dents' support, etc.), as well as of the program management (program administration and external assurance of study quality).

Following the on-site visit, an Expert Report is issued by the expert group. The report is based on the results of the visit and the documents submitted by the University. The Expert Report is made available to the University, in order for it to issue a response opinion. The Expert Report and the University's response opinion – together with the submitted documents – are submitted to the AHPGS Accreditation Commission.

### **III. The AHPGS recommendation regarding accreditation**

The AHPGS Accreditation Commission examines the documentation provided, namely the University's self-evaluation report, its annexes, the summary comprised by the AHPGS, the Expert Report as well as the University's response opinion. These documents lay basis for the AHPGS Accreditation Commission's decision regarding the recommendation of the study program for accreditation. Consequently, this recommendation – together with all other documentation – is forwarded to the University.

## 2 Overview

### 2.1 Procedure-related documents

The Self-Evaluation Report of the study program “Medicine” of Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad (hereinafter the University), Romania, was submitted to the Accreditation Agency in Health and Social Science (the AHPGS) in electronic format on 1 July, 2014. The contract between the Vasile Goldiș Western University and the AHPGS was signed on 4 June, 2014.

On 5 August, 2014, the AHPGS forwarded the open questions and explanatory notes (hereinafter OQ) pertaining to the Self-Evaluation Report for the study program to the University. On 12 September, 2014, the University submitted the answers to the open questions and explanatory notes (hereinafter AOQ) to the AHPGS in electronic format.

This document presents a summary of the AHPGS for the study program “Medicine”. In the submitted documents, the University considers 2003 as the first year of study at the program.

The Self-Evaluation Report submitted by the University follows the outline recommended by the AHPGS. Along with the Self-Evaluation Report, the University provided documents specific to the study program “Medicine”:

Annex	Description
1	Module description (syllabus)
2	Specific standards for the medical field determined by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS)
3	Data sheet of the study program “Medicine”
4	CV of the teaching staff
5	General information about the Clinical Hospital of the Arad County
6	Data on research activities at the University
7	Schedule of scientific events in 2011
8	Declaration to the AHPGS regarding the accreditation of the program “Medicine” offered in Romanian, English and French languages

Table 1: Documents specific to the study program

Alongside the study-program-specific documents, the following documents pertain to all study programs submitted for the external evaluation:

<b>Annex</b>	Description
<b>A</b>	Regulations on students' professional activities (2013/2014)
<b>B</b>	Regulations on the Application of the European Credit Transfer System at Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad
<b>C</b>	Regulations for admission to bachelor, master and doctoral studies at Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad in the 2013/2014 academic year
<b>D</b>	Methodology for the contest of admission to the bachelor study cycle at the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry
<b>E</b>	Regulation on the recognition of study periods completed in other institutions based on agreements, contracts or international programs
<b>F</b>	Internal regulations on mobility within Erasmus community program
<b>G</b>	Regulation on the examination and grading of bachelor/master students
<b>H</b>	Facilities for payment of the tuition fee in the 2013/2014 academic year
<b>I</b>	Code of ethics of Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad
<b>J</b>	List of premises and equipment in laboratories and course rooms of the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry
<b>K</b>	An extract from the University charter
<b>L</b>	Quality manual of the University
<b>M</b>	Regulation concerning the conduct of the examinations in the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry
<b>N</b>	Contest methodology for employment on academic positions at Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad

Table2. Documents common for all three study programs

The Self-Evaluation Report, the open questions (OQ) and the answers to the open questions (AOQ) as well as the additional documents build the basis for the present summary. The layout bears no significance, as it solely reflects the agreed standard within the University.



## 2.2 Study program

### 2.2.1 Structural data

University	Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad
Type	Institution of private law and public utility
Faculty/Department	Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry; Department of General Medicine
Title of the study program	"Medicine"
Degree awarded	Doctor Medic, M.D.
Form of studies	Full-time
Language of instruction	Romanian
Period of education	6 years (12 semesters)
Credit Points (CP) according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)	360 180 (Cycle I) + 180 (Cycle II)
Hours/CP	25 hours = 1 CP
Workload	Total: 9,000 hours Contact hours: 2,856 hours Individual work: 3,148 hours Practice: 2,996 hours
Beginning of the study program	2003
First accreditation of the University	In April 2009, the University has been certified by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS)
Time of admission	Winter semester
Number of available places on the program	75
Number of enrolled students in 2013	75
Number of graduates in 2013	57
Particular enrollment Conditions	- high school diploma or equivalent with the minimum average grade not lower than 5

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- entrance multiple-choice test</li> <li>- language competence certificate in Romanian language for foreign students</li> </ul>
Tuition fees	1,490 EUR (6,590 RON) is the average annual fee as seen from the payment list allocated in the academic year 2014/2015

Table 3: Structural data of the study program

Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad was founded as a Higher Education Institution, having a legal status as an Institution of private law and public utility, part of the national education system. The University was founded in 1990 and it achieved institutional establishment by the Law no. 240 of 20 April 2002 published in the Official Gazette of Romania no.291, part I, of 30 April 2002. The Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy, and Dentistry was established in 1991.

One of the important current developments at the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry is the fact that the amount of study hours per week has been reduced to an average of 29 teaching hours in order to allow students to be more actively involved in research activities and also participate in other extracurricular activities. At the same time, the share of practical activities throughout the academic year has been increased (a minimum of 2 hours per week). Through these measures the Faculty wants to facilitate acquisition of vocational competences by students, to encourage their independent practical activity and develop their teamwork skills. Another change in the Faculty is the reduction of study weeks from 15 to 14 per semester, starting with the academic year 2013/2014.

In the submitted documents, the University considers the academic year 2003/2004 as the starting point of the program "Medicine" in order to demonstrate the last five graduate promotions. The didactic process of the study program is structured according to the requirements of the Bologna system in two cycles:

Cycle I – preclinical training stage – encompasses the initial three years (years 1-3) and presupposes teaching of basic biomedical sciences in order to prepare students to continue their studies. As stated in the Self-Evaluation Report, section 1.5.5, completion of the first cycle does not offer any profes-

sional qualification in Romania. Students complete the preclinical stage and move to the next cycle when they have accumulated all compulsory 180 ECTS credit points.

Cycle II – clinical training stage – encompasses the following three years (years 4-6) and also requires accumulation of 180 CP, which together with the previous level constitute 360 CP for the whole program. The clinical training stage envisages solidification of the acquired skills and optimization of further professional options. This period includes compulsory medical and surgical specialization subjects. As indicated in the “Regulations on Students’ Professional Activities”, studies at the faculties of Western University of Arad are finalized by a bachelor examination, which consists of two parts: the first is a written test and the second is presentation and defense of a bachelor thesis (see Annex A, Art.74, 75). Students complete their studies at the program when they pass these tests and successfully defend their bachelor thesis.

According to the regulations applied at the University, assessment of the final thesis is not included to the total amount of credits, if the regular study period at this program is longer than 4 years (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.1.6, page 4). Hence, at the program “Medicine” students are only awarded credits for collecting and presenting the necessary material for writing the thesis, whereas the bachelor thesis itself is not credited supplementary to the total of 360 CP.

According to the University, the first and the second cycles constitute together the complete graduate level of medical studies. The program comprises in total 6 years, or 12 semesters. In each cycle, students have to obtain 30 CP per semester and 60 CP per year. By the end of the first cycle, they have to acquire the total of 180 CP to be advance to the second cycle. There is no intermediate graduation examination. By the end of the second cycle, students have to acquire 180 CP as well. After they complete both cycles and pass the final bachelor examination, graduates receive the professional title of Doctor-medic, abbreviated as “MD” (Medical Doctor). The diploma awarded to students is issued by the Romanian Ministry of Education and Scientific Research.

However, graduates of the program can only start practicing as physicians in Romania after they complete postgraduate training in residency, which is a

part of Cycle III (postgraduate residency training and doctoral studies). Completion of this training and subsequent acquisition of the necessary license, enables graduates to join the national professional association of the College of Physicians. Graduates of the program can choose to pursue postgraduate studies in order to obtain the Doctoral degree, but it is not mandatory for practicing in the given field of medical care (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.5.5, page 22).

Cycle III (postgraduate residency training and doctoral studies) is neither a part of the program, nor is it the object of the accreditation procedure.

### **2.2.2 Qualification objectives and employment opportunities**

According to the University (see Annex 3 and AOO), the main objective of the "Medicine" program is to train future physicians who can identify diseases, establish correct medical diagnosis of a disease, develop and implement an appropriate treatment procedure for a patient. Furthermore, program graduates are expected to be able to assess and ascertain the risk of disease recurrence taking into account the illness history of an individual patient as well as of larger communities in relation to their specific social, economic, and cultural circumstances. Students are also trained to conduct research projects and write scientific papers. Besides, the program objectives include the development of managerial skills that are deemed necessary for the future profession.

The University provides the following list of competences to be acquired by graduates of the program (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.3.2):

- Scientific competences/skills, which presupposes involvements of students in inter- and trans-disciplinary research teams, scientific clubs, and various projects; teachers and students are encouraged to work on research topics of national and European interest;
- Qualification competences; the University underlines that students can choose and continuously enhance their knowledge in certain disciplines, be that a clinical or preclinical, medical or surgical discipline;
- Competences of rational decision making based on critical thinking, which involves development of logical reasoning as well as acquisition of diagnostic and therapeutic algorithm by students; students are trained to structure, interpret and correlate the received information and

also to determine whether the circumstances of treatment are beyond their medical competencies;

- Competences of social responsibility, when students are involved in those areas of medical treatment that meet the needs of the local population and that also take into consideration the socio-cultural background of patients;
- Personal development competences, meaning improvement of communication skills and also enhancement of self-training capacities.

The program foresees effective use of information sources and communication facilities in Romanian and international languages. Modernization of research infrastructure is stated as one of the main priorities of the University. The University claims that the competences and skills offered in the program as well as national and international recognition of these competences are determined according to the National Framework of Qualifications in Higher Education approved by the Romanian Government.

As stated in the Self-Evaluation Report, section 1.4.1, graduated of the program "Medicine" can work as medical advisors, expert doctors, specialist inspector doctors, senior specialists, family medicine physicians, researchers and research assistants in general practice. Furthermore, graduates can also pursue a teaching career, work as medical sales representatives or find employment in administrative structures. The University emphasizes that socio-professional integration of students and graduates is one of its main goals, which is implemented through the organization of meeting for students with perspective employers.

Regarding the situation in labor market, the University refers to the statistical data from the National Statistics Institute, which shows a nationwide shortage of doctors in Romania. This is particularly true to northeast regions, where one doctor is assigned to 2,778 inhabitants (see AOQ, pages 2-3). The County of Arad is claimed to be among the regions with shortage of workers in health care. Due to the ongoing migration of Romanian doctors, their shortage might become even more perceptible. Consequently, unequal distribution of medical specialists and their lack in certain areas are said to be the main challenges for Romanian health care system. The University of Arad responds to these chal-

lenges by implementing medical study programs in demand, such as “Medicine” and training future Physicians.

### 2.2.3 Modularization and exam system

The regular study period of the program “Medicine” is defined to be 6 years, or 12 semesters. According to the University, the program curriculum comprises 63 subjects with different duration (from 1 to 4 semesters), of which 58 are obligatory and 5 are optional. Students have to choose one optional subject annually during the 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> years. As explained in the Answers to OQ, No.12, optional subjects are awarded with ECTS CP, 10 being the required amount for the whole period of studies. Besides, students have the opportunity to attend several facultative subjects, which are not credited and are not charged additionally.

Regarding the process of accumulation of ECTS CP, each student has to obtain the minimum of 30 CP per semester and 60 CP per year. The total number of credits for the whole program is 360, of which 350 CP (97.22%) are acquired for compulsory subjects and 10 CP (2.78%) for optional subjects (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.2.1). As for the final bachelor thesis, it is not credited additionally to the compulsory 360 CP, except for 2 CP that are granted in the last 12<sup>th</sup> semester for the module *Practical Preparation of the Diploma Paper*, for completing and processing of data for the bachelor thesis.

Detailed description of each subject, including number of credit hours, language of instruction, goals, study content, list of competences, and the methods of examination is available in Annex 1. The University states that the identical curriculum is implemented in the program “Medicine” offered in three languages: Romanian, French, and English (see Annex 8).

The study plan of the program includes the following subjects (AOQ, 11):

Sem.	Title	ECTS
1	Anatomy and Embryology	7
	Biochemistry	5
	Biophysics and Medical Physics	4
	Physiology	5

	Cellular and Molecular Biology	4
	Medical Informatics and Biostatistics	2
	Modern Language (for all students) or Romanian Language (obligatory for foreign students)	2
	Physical Education (sport)	1
<b>Total ECTS/semester</b>		<b>30</b>
2	Anatomy and Embryology	7
	Biochemistry	5
	Physiology	5
	Cellular and Molecular Biology	4
	Scientific Research Methodology	2
	Modern Language (for all students) or Romanian Language (obligatory for foreign students)	2
	Physical Education (sport)	1
	Optional (1): Legislation for Foreigners Sanitary and Social Legislation Environmental Health	2
	Specialized Practical Activities	2
<b>Total ECTS/semester</b>		<b>30</b>
3	Anatomy	6
	Physiology	5
	Histology	4
	Biochemistry	4
	Microbiology, Virology, Parasitology	4
	Medical Bioethics	2
	Behavioral Sciences	2
	Modern Language (for all students) or Romanian Language (obligatory for foreign students)	2
	Physical Education (sport)	1
<b>Total ECTS/semester</b>		<b>30</b>
	Anatomy	6

4	Physiology	5
	Histology	4
	Medical Genetics	3
	Microbiology, Virology, Parasitology	4
	History of Medicine	1
	Modern Language (for all students) or Romanian Language (obligatory for foreign students)	2
	Physical Education (sport)	1
	Optional (1): Pre-Hospital Emergencies, First Aid Techniques Medical Psychology	2
	Specialized Practical Activities on Medical Services	2
<b>Total ECTS/semester</b>		<b>30</b>
5	Pathophysiology	4
	Pathology	4
	Pharmacology, Clinical Pharmacology	4
	General Immunology	2
	Medical Semiology	6
	Surgical Semiology	5
	Primary Health Care	4
	Clinical Training on Medical and Surgical Subjects	1
<b>Total ECTS/semester</b>		<b>30</b>
6	Pathophysiology	4
	Pathology	4
	Pharmacology, Clinical Pharmacology	4
	Neurobiology	3
	Medical Semiology	5
	Surgical Semiology	5
	Optional (1): Patient Communication Cardiac and Vascular Surgery Clinical Microbiology	2



	Clinical Training on Medical and Surgical Subjects	1
	Specialized Practical Activities on Medical Services	2
<b>Total ECTS/semester</b>		<b>30</b>
<b>7</b>	Internal Medicine	7
	General Surgery	6
	Orthopedics and Traumatology	4
	Radiology	4
	Microsurgery and Reconstructive Surgery	3
	Occupational Medicine and Occupational Diseases	3
	Optional (1): Medical Imagic Geriatric-Gerontology Clinical Gastroenterology	2
	Clinical Training on Medical and Surgical Subjects	1
<b>Total ECTS/semester</b>		<b>30</b>
<b>8</b>	Internal Medicine	7
	Rearing of Children	3
	Physiology	3
	Oncology	4
	Pediatric Surgery and Orthopedics	3
	Urology	4
	Environmental Hygiene and Health	3
	Clinical Training on Medical and Surgical Subjects	1
	Specialized Practical Activities on Medical Services	2
<b>Total ECTS/semester</b>		<b>30</b>
<b>9</b>	Internal Medicine	7
	Pediatrics	7
	Neurology	4
	Ophthalmology	4
	Cranio-Maxillofacial Surgery	3
	Social Medicine, Public Health and Sanitary Management	2

	Optional (1): Clinical Immunology and Allergology Emergency Medicine: Pre-Hospital Emergencies	2
	Clinical Training on Medical and Surgical Subjects	1
<b>Total ECTS/semester</b>		<b>30</b>
<b>10</b>	Internal Medicine	7
	Pediatrics	7
	Endocrinology	3
	Oto-rhino-laryngology	4
	Clinical Hematology	3
	Clinical Biochemistry	3
	Clinical Training on Medical and Surgical Subjects	1
	Specialized Practical Activities on Medical Services	2
<b>Total ECTS/semester</b>		<b>30</b>
<b>11</b>	Family Medicine	5
	Infectious Diseases	5
	Epidemiology	2
	Forensics	5
	Psychiatry	5
	Obstetrics and Gynecology	6
	Medical Deontology	2
	Training on Emergencies	-
	Practical Preparation of the Diploma Paper	-
<b>Total ECTS/semester</b>		<b>30</b>
<b>12</b>	Family Medicine	5
	Infectious Diseases	3
	Dermatology	4
	Obstetrics and Gynecology	6
	Kinetic Physiotherapy and Medical Rehabilitation	2
	Advanced Individual Training (AIT) and Emergency Medicine	6

	Training on Emergencies	2
	Practical Preparation of the Diploma Paper	2
<b>Total ECTS/semester</b>		<b>30</b>
<b>Total ECTS for the whole program</b>		<b>360</b>

Table 4: Module overview

As affirmed by the University, all subjects are specific to the “Medicine” program and there are no joint subjects taught together with other faculty programs within the University (see AOQ, question 13).

Students of the program “Medicine” and of the Faculty in general, are said to have access to courses in such complementary fields as European Languages (French, English, German, Italian, and Spanish), professional techniques in marketing, management, informatics, communication and other, organized according to the norms and recommendations published by the European Union and European Council. This is possible due to the fact that Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad is a member of European Federation of Schools (FEDE), which is a non-governmental international organization, whose objective is to unite hundreds of European higher education institutions and thus create a single European university area. Furthermore, there is an International Centre of Linguistic Testing and Academic Counselling within the University, which offers language courses and organizes international language examinations required for studying abroad. The Centre is accredited by Cambridge Assessment of Great Britain and the Educational Testing Service of the USA authorizing it to implement international tests (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.2.2).

Concerning the aspect of co-operations with other universities and institutions, the University collaborates with Arad County Clinical Emergency Hospital where students of the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry do their clinical training. Besides, the University has contacts with such professional organizations as the Arad branch of National College of Physicians, center in Socodor for clinical research on Alzheimer’s disease, and the clinic for laparoscopic diagnosis in Sf. Gheorghe Hospital (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.2.2).

According to the University, methods of teaching used in the program “Medicine” are based on direct instruction and interactivity. It is claimed that course

material is presented with the help of modern methods of multimedia, such as power point presentations, educational films. The University informs that the number of weekly teaching hours has been reduced to leave more time for students to study individually and also to participate in research and various extracurricular activities.

The University emphasizes that lecture theatres and seminar rooms have the necessary technical equipment, such as whiteboards, projection screens, video systems, and multimedia equipment that facilitates and increases the learning activity of students (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.2.4). There are actual library and virtual library resources as well as the e-learning platform Moodle available for students for their research and studies. It is claimed that teachers can broadcast live using a closed TV system. Students have the possibility to do computer-based testing and communicate with their peers and professors on the University web-platform: <http://www.uvvg.ro>. The faculty is planning to introduce a digital mode of teaching in the years 2014-2016.

Theoretical knowledge is complemented through practical activity specific to each subject and is conducted at seminars and traineeships in laboratories and clinics (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.2.3). Strategies of instruction applied in these classes include practical demonstrations, thematic debates, projects, case presentations and other. Laboratory premises are claimed to be adapted to real life work placements and meet hygienic, sanitation, and safety norms.

Practical classes are conducted in the University laboratories under the supervision of tenured teachers (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.2.5). Clinical training takes place in Arad County Clinical Emergency Hospital starting with the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of studies (for the general overview of the Arad County Hospital, see the Annex 5). It is monitored by tenured teachers from the University and designated teachers, the latter being members of the medical staff working at the hospital. Hence, both the University and the hospital take active part in the organization of practical traineeship. Besides, students perform their summer training between the 1st and the 5th years of studies also in the premises of the Clinical Emergency Hospital.

Contract between the University and Arad County Clinical Emergency Hospital is renewed annually by addendum that takes into account the objectives of the education program and the internal regulations of the hospital. Clinical

structures ensure the necessary conditions for clinical traineeship by providing over 1,200 beds, bandage rooms, demonstration rooms, modernly equipped course rooms and other.

Concerning the aspect of internationality of the study program "Medicine", the University informs that its curriculum complies with European and national standards. The University applies the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), implements Erasmus exchange programs (Annex F), and follows the specific standards for the medical field determined by the National Quality Assurance Agency and the Ministry of National Education (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.2.7). Thus, it ensures compatibility of its programs with the ones of other European educational institutions and enables students' exchange mobility within Europe (see the regulations on the recognition of study periods in other institutions in Annex E). Recently, the program "Medicine" has been offered in English and French, which the University sees as a step towards international openness and recognition. At the moment the faculty hosts students from 18 countries within and outside of the European Union (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.2.8).

The number of the medical students who attended other European educational institutions with the Erasmus program, or did their internship abroad, is currently increasing (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.2.8). Among its Erasmus partners, the University of Arad names the University of Calabria, the University of Bari, Italy and the University of Grenoble, France. Similar mobility opportunities are offered to the teaching staff; hence, in the year 2013/2014 members of the faculty visited Thomas More University in Belgium and later received a reciprocal visit. Promotion of exchange opportunities and attraction of students from abroad are organized on the faculty level by means of social network services, through the webpage of the Department of International Relations, and the activity of the Erasmus Office coordinators at the Department of International Relations located in the Main Office of the University.

Regarding research opportunities, the University claims to offer the necessary facilities both on pre-clinical and clinical levels (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.2.6). Between the years 2007-2014, the University has organized 5 international conferences and 5 international summer schools, it has obtained one international patent, and it has 24 scientific papers presented at international and

national conferences (Annex 6). On the faculty level, students can take part in the activities of science clubs managed by staff members and where topics are chosen by consulting students. The aim of such clubs is to stimulate interest and intellectual potential of students and, thus, to expand their vocational perspectives.

The examination system of the program "Medicine" is designed in accordance with the objectives and professional competences envisaged in the syllabus. Each subject coordinator is responsible for structuring the examination system of their modules. Examinations take place throughout the semester in the following forms (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.2.2.):

- ongoing assessment, which assures the acquisition of covered topics during the semester at colloquiums and seminars; ongoing assessment comprises 20% of course requirements
- practical assessment, which is compulsory for each subject that entails practical activities, laboratory classes or clinical traineeships; practical assessment comprises 30% of course requirements

Both forms of examination are conducted in the presence of at least two teachers: the course coordinator and the traineeship coordinator.

- summative-cumulative assessment, which is a computer-based multiple-choice test comprising 50% of course requirements

In order to be admitted to the third final examination on the subject, a student has to pass the ongoing and practical assessments with a minimum grade of 5 (grading scale being from 1 to 10). Besides, students are only admitted to the final subject examination when their course attendance comprises at least 70% and their laboratory and clinical activity reaches 100% of attendance.

The final form of assessment on each subject can be conducted in the form of a colloquium or an examination. Colloquiums are forms of examinations taken in optional subjects, practical activities, or in some complementary subjects (such as Foreign Languages, Physical Education, and Medical Terminology) with lower individual workload one week before the examination session. According to the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS), over 50% of verification forms must be examinations.

Examinations at the University are taken according to the schedule approved by the University Senate. In the academic year 2013/2014, examination sessions were scheduled for the following periods (Answers to OQ, table 5):

20 January – 7 February 2014	Winter exam session	3 weeks
02 June – 20 June 2014	Summer exam session	3 weeks
30 June – 11 July 2014	Retake session	2 weeks

Table 5: Examination sessions

Besides, with the conformation of the Senate the University has organized a one-week credit recovery session from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> of September 2014. Credit recovery session is a period introduced on students' request and with the approval of the Senate and the Faculty Council. It enables students to complete credits required for the promotion to the next year of studies (a minimum of 45 out of mandatory 60 CP), or from Cycle I to Cycle II (180 CP).

Students are allowed to take the same exam two times a year, meaning that after the first examination they can try to pass it once more. These two initial attempts are free of charge. The third attempt at the re-examination session is possible only with the approval of the Senate and the payment of a certain fee established by the Board of Directors (see Annex A, Art.26). Students have the right to appeal to the Dean of the Faculty within 48 hours after the examination in case they disagree with the received grade (see Annex G).

Academic feasibility of examinations and of the program curriculum in general is maintained by the University Senate, Faculty Councils and departments. The University claims that learning outcomes are assessed at all of these levels after each session. It is also stated that there is a Quality Commission whose function is to analyze the results of teaching evaluations and graduate surveys.

Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad applies the ECTS system to calculate and rank students' individual performance, to enable their access to other higher education institutions, at home or abroad, and to validate their acquired knowledge and skills (Annex B). This evaluation system is approved by the order of the Romanian Ministry of Education no. 3617/2005 on the generalized application of the European Credit Transfer System. Students are promoted to a higher year of studies if they have accumulated the minimum amount of credits, which constitutes 30 CP per semester and 60 CP per year.

Each student of the University receives a student card at the beginning of his or her studies. All grades obtained by a student, including failed examinations, are registered in this student card. Grades system at the Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad is the following (see Annex B, page 10):

Romanian grading scale	Definition on scale intervals	Correlation bet. grade and credit
10	EXCELLENT - remarkable result, few minor deficiencies	The total number of credits is allocated
9	VERY GOOD - over-average result, but with a few temporary insufficiencies	
7-8	GOOD - generally good result, but with a large number of important insufficiencies	
6	FAIR - honest result, but with important shortcomings	
5	PASSABLE - result at the level of minimal criteria	
4	INSUFFICIENT - additional effort is required to obtain the credit	No credits are allocated
1-3	INSUFFICIENT (completely unacceptable) – considerable additional effort is required	

Table 6: Grading System

The passing average for an examination test has to be at least 5 (five), whereas the passing average for the final bachelor examination, which encompasses a written and a practical test as well as presentation and defense of a bachelor thesis, has to be at least 6 (six) out of 10 on the grading scale (see Annex A, Art.75).

Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad recognizes credits obtained in other universities if they comply with regulations on students' professional activity (see Annex A, Articles 67-70 and Annex E). Faculty Committee is responsible for decisions on credit transfer. It establishes the compatibility of curricula and credit transfer systems, as well as the minimum number of credits per year, in order to validate studies at another institution.

#### 2.2.4 Admission requirements

The University emphasizes that admission contest takes place in conditions of transparency and equality (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.1.7). Admission requirements to for the program "Medicine" include:



- a high school diploma or equivalent with the minimum average grade not lower than 5
- a language competence certificate in Romanian for foreign students, or a language certificate in English or French for students applying for the program "Medicine" in respective languages
- an entrance test consisting of 60 multiple-choice and descriptive questions on topics from a recommended bibliography (for more details see Annex C, Art.4, 6, 7).

The bibliography is posted on the University website six months before the admission exams and the academic offer is distributed through flyers and posters as well as the activity of the Enrolment Centre (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.5.1). Admission results are displayed on the notice board at the University Campus and the University website (Annex C).

The main admission session takes place before the beginning of winter semester in July-August and consists of three stages: registration of applicants, multiple-choice test, and the final display of admission results. If there are vacant places left in the program, the second admission session is organized in September (see Annex C). Applications from the citizens of the European Union Member States, European Economic Area states and the Swiss Confederation are considered under the same conditions as of Romanian citizens. Applicants from third countries need a study visa issued by the Embassy of Romania in their home countries.

The same admission timeline, application conditions, and examination forms apply for the study program "Medicine" in foreign languages, namely in French and in English for EU students (Annex D).

According to the University, the decisive criterion of admission is the result of the entrance multiple-choice test (Annex D and Annex C, Art.4). If there are several applicants with the same results, they are selected based on, first, high school diploma average and, second, average grade obtained in Biology subject during high school studies.

In addition to the above mentioned documents, applicants have to provide also a health certificate, which must include general clinical examination as

well as information on any chronic illnesses of the applicant. Based on the results of medical certificate, special admission circumstances can be provided for applicants with disabilities or illnesses. The University admits that so far there has been no such case in the “Medicine” program (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.5.2).

It is the Central Admission Panel who is responsible for the entire admission process. The Central Admission Panel consists of the Rector, vice-rectors, presidents of faculty-level admission panels and the University Registrar.

According to the University, students are informed on how tuition fees are calculated through the student representatives, who attend meetings of the Faculty Council and the University Senate. Tuition fees constitute one of the financial resources of the University to purchase necessary equipment and support various short and medium term development projects. Furthermore, the University offers different discount options from 5 to 50% from the tuition fee to students who, for example, come from financially disadvantaged families or who are enrolled in a second study program within the University (for details, see the Annex H). The amount of tuition fees for the academic years 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 are presented in the table below (see the AOQ, question 9):

Years of study	2013/2014	2014/2015
I	1,293 EUR / 5,727	1,588 EUR / 7,033
II	1,226 EUR / 5,430	1,361 EUR / 6,028
III	1,293 EUR / 5,727	1,429 EUR / 6,329
IV	1,360 EUR / 6,023	1,474 EUR / 6,528
V	1,450 EUR / 6,422	1,497 EUR / 6,630
VI	1,538 EUR / 6,812	1,633 EUR / 7,232

Table 7: Tuition fees

## 2.3 Study conditions and quality assurance

### 2.3.1 Human resources

The teaching staff of the program “Medicine” comprises in total 139 members, out of whom 123 (74.10%) are tenured instructors employed on a full-time basis and 16 (25, 9) are adjunct instructors employed on a part-time basis (Self-Evaluation Report, 2.1.1). Among the full-time personnel, there are

33 (27.67%) tenured professors and associate professors, 28 (19.42%) tenured lecturers, and 62 (49.79%) tenured university assistants. Among the part-time personnel, there are 5 (31.25%) professors and associate professors, 8 (50%) lecturers, and 3 (18.75%) university assistants. For details on the experience and titles of the teaching staff, refer to Annex 4.

The amount of average teaching time per week equals to 28.4 hours. Besides, there are three additional teaching hours of clinical training in the years III-V and four teaching hours in writing a dissertation in the last VI year of studies. The current total number of students at the program is 730, which means that the student-teacher (considering the number of tenured instructors) ratio is approximately 5:1, i.e. 5 students per 1 instructor. Over 73% of the teaching load is performed by the tenured teachers.

As claimed in the Self-Evaluation Report, section 2.1.2, selection of the teaching staff is based on the principle of public contest, by means of which the University seeks to increase its competitiveness and maintain its national and international visibility. Employment process is conducted according to general employment provisions of the University (Annex N) and the specific standards for the medical field applied at the program "Medicine" (Annex 2). It is emphasized that a contest for a vacant position can be organized only if that position is supported by financial resources of the University.

Proposals for promotion to higher academic degrees are made according to the results of annual evaluation of teachers. Instructors must have obtained a PhD degree in order to start teaching at the University. Regarding the question of continuous education opportunities, Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad is said to be the first private university in Romania to be attested as an institution implementing doctoral degree studies (Self-Evaluation Report, 2.1.3). Students can acquire a PhD in Medical Sciences in the following specialties: Internal Medicine, Family Medicine, Orthopedics, Traumatology, Urology, Radiology, Psychiatry, and Gastroenterology. Besides, the University organizes regular scientific meetings, symposiums, conferences, schools of advanced studies, and roundtables to encourage the academic activity of the teaching staff.

Further human resources of the Faculty include a secretarial office run by the chief secretary, the office for foreign student affairs coordinated by one in-

structor, laboratory assistants, the IT staff, and members of the Counselling and Career Guidance Center.

### 2.3.2 Facilities

As indicated in the Self-Evaluation Report, section 2.3.1, the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry currently has three campuses that are all situated on the territory of the University. There are 16 course and seminar rooms, 33 laboratories, and 8 computer laboratories that serve the purpose of the program "Medicine". Seminar rooms have the capacity from 60 up to 80 seats. Technical equipment of each laboratory is said to be specific to each subject and includes blackboard/whiteboard, video projector, slide projector, retro projector/epidiascope, and a projection screen (see Annex J for details on the equipment of the laboratories and course rooms at the Faculty).

There are 28,755 volumes of scientific literature, 1,917 titles, and 55 periodicals at the disposal of the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry. Students of the program "Medicine" have access to three libraries: the Central Library (Arghezi Complex, the Medical Library, and the European Library for Biomedical Sciences with the following opening hours:

Libraries	Daily hours	Daily hours during the Examination session
The Central Library	Mon-Fri: 9:00-20:00 Sat: 9:00-12:00	Mon-Sat: 8:00-22:00 Sun: 8:00-18:00
The Medical Library	Mon-Fri: 9:00-20:00 Sat: 9:00-12:00	Mon-Sat: 8:00-22:00 Sun: 8:00-18:00
The European Library for Biomedical Sciences	Mon-Fri: 12:00-17:00	Mon-Sat: 12:00-17:00

Table 8: Library opening hours

The Faculty has its own computerized system of data collection, communication, procession, and analyses through the use of internet. Moreover, teachers and students of the medical faculty have access to the University Centre for Informatics, the University Library, and the computer Laboratories in the university campus. The electronic data processing (EDP) infrastructure of the University comprise the following components: web server, accounting and management server, student management server, online course server, and online exam server (Self-Evaluation Report, 2.3.3). Since 2002 the University

has been subscribed to springerlink.com and since 2008 to CEEOL (Central and Eastern European Online Library).

Arad County Clinical Emergency Hospital provides premises for the practical activity of the program students, according to the contract between the University and the Hospital. The hospital consists of 3 buildings, which are said to be situated in the convenient proximity to the University Campus and the Academia Hotel complex that offers accommodation for visitors and dining facilities. There are over 27 clinics and clinical departments, and the total of 1,368 beds within the hospital. For more detailed information on the number of material resources of the County Hospital, please refer to Annex 5.

For the acquisition of new material for the libraries, the Board of Directors establishes a financial plan. The University affirms that it has sufficient internal financial resources as well as external funding sources to ensure maintenance and development of its educational and material equipment. The University claims to allocate one third of its funds to various investments, such as acquisition and modernization of its buildings, purchase of equipment, computerization of services and other (Self-Evaluation Report, 2.3.4). The institution seeks to attract more external funding by founding, for instance, a university polyclinic, which will provide work placement for the university staff and serve the interests of the local community.

### **2.3.3 Quality assurance**

According to the Self-Evaluation Report, section 1.6.1, quality assurance system is sustained at the University by the activity of the following structural components: Commission for Quality Assurance and Evaluation (CQAE), Quality Assurance Committees from faculties, Vice-rector for Bachelor and Master Programs, Quality Assurance and Student Affairs, and Quality Assurance Department (QAD). Members of the Commission for Quality Assurance and Evaluation and of the Quality Assurance Department are approved by the University Senate. The function of the QAD is to monitor the entire teaching activity of the program as well as of examination sessions. In 2013, the Department has prepared the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Quality Manual for internal use (Annex L).

At the end of each academic year “Internal evaluation report of the quality of education and research” is presented to the Senate for its approval and then presented on the official website of the University. The University claims that the quality assurance and assessment system of the program “Medicine” is realized by involving all teachers and students into the process (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.6.2). Evaluation process of the teaching staff takes into account individual level of expertise, potential in scientific research, teaching skills and abilities, achieved professional prestige, and international recognition. Evaluation of teachers is based on their self-evaluation reports, peer assessment by colleagues, and students’ evaluation. It is conducted annually, whereas students’ feedback is done every six months. This assessment of the teaching staff by students is implemented at the University as a quality assurance tool aimed at the improvement the content and methods of teaching at the faculty. Apart from this, regular meetings of the Quality Assessment and Assurance Committee with students contribute to the improvement of communication between students and instructors.

Quality assurance within the faculty is a process that involves teachers and students in the assessment of the teaching process, ongoing monitoring of course attendance, monitoring and mentoring of students (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.6.3). The evaluations conducted within the faculty are aimed at the creation of a productive and effective working environment. The faculty level Quality Assurance Committee submits its conclusions of the internal audit report to the Faculty Council. Peer review, which is a summarized assessment of a teacher to be tenured, is also submitted to the Faculty Council. At the end of each year all the data for the given period, including evaluations of teaching performance, is gathered and further directed to the Senate for it to take corrective actions and issue the quality improvement plan.

The level of teaching activity and the relevance of the study program to its practical implementation are evaluated at the University by means of questionnaires. On the average, 93% of students express their contentment with the work of course instructors and 94% of students evaluate their experience at seminars and clinical trainings as positive (for details, see the AOQ, pages 11-13). Regarding the situation of graduate students, over 80% of graduates of the University are said to start practicing their profession within two years after the graduation: 64% in Romania and 34% abroad (Self-Evaluation Re-

port, 1.6.4). The University appears to pay a particular attention to communication with its graduates, which is realized through the activity of the Alumni Association. Such communication helps maintain correlation between the objectives of the study program and the needs of employers.

Regarding the aspect of student workload, the University asserts that at least two thirds of it should consist of practical activities (practical laboratory works, clinical internship, training in institutions of the health system) to acquire clinical skills and competences, while the remaining third is allocated for theoretical activities (see Annex 2).

Information regarding the study program, its modular system, exam requirement and compensation measures, as well as the general information about the available support of students, is provided on the official website of the University (<http://www.uvvg.ro>), in the Regulations on Students' Professional Activities (Annex A), brochures, and flyers. There are various organizations within the University, such as the Counselling and Career Guidance Centre, Medical Students Association "Arad-ASMA" whose main function is to support, help, and inform students in the aspects of career guidance, personal development, and learning optimization (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.6.8). Besides, teachers and tutors have their individual office hours when students can refer to them directly.

To the issue of equal opportunities and gender equality, the University claims that the admission competition, studying and teaching processes offer equal opportunities for all candidates regardless of gender, origin or social class. The University ascertains its readiness to provide special conditions of admission and studies for students with restricted and low financial resources (see Annex H).

Concerning support and compensatory measures for students with disabilities and chronic illnesses, the University indicates that an applicant has to submit an official certificate about his or her health status. The University further states that there is a consultation program as well as a Centre for Career Counselling and Guidance which is expected to help students with learning

difficulties (Self-Evaluation Report, 1.2.2). Students' guide for the academic year 2013-2014 is available on-line on the website of the University<sup>1</sup>.

## **2.4 Information about the university**

Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad was established in June 1990. The identity of the University is conferred by the Law of National Education no.1/2011 and by the University Charter approved by the Ministry of Education in 2011. It is emphasized in the Self-Evaluation Report, section 3.1, that all founding members of the University are parts of local administration: the Prefecture, the County Council, the City Hall, the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, the Orthodox Diocese. Hence, Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad is a legal entity of private law and public utility. It is a non-profit institution involved in the national education system, though at the same time, maintaining its academic and financial autonomy.

The initial Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Marketing, Management and Informatics were established in 1990. They were followed by the Faculty of Stomatology and the College of Dental Technology in 1991, the Faculty of General Medicine in 1992, and the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports in 1993. The University has been acknowledged by the Magna Charta of European Universities and was also granted the "High Confidence" Certificate by the Commission for external institutional evaluation of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS). Besides, the University has obtained positive evaluation from the European University Association (EUA) in 2013 (Self-Evaluation Report, 3.1).

In the academic year 2013/2014, the total number of students at the University comprised 10,400 people. Currently, the University has six faculties: Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry; Economics; Humanities, Politics and Administrative Sciences; Law; Educational Sciences, Psychology, Physical Education and Sports; Natural Sciences, Engineering and Computer Science. There are 46 programs of bachelor's degree and 23 programs of master's degree. The University comprises also an Institution Organizing Doctoral Studies (IODS) with two doctoral schools of Biology and Medicine. Regarding the

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<sup>1</sup> See the link: <http://www.uvvg.ro/ro/docs/studenti/student%20guide.pdf>



staff structure on the institutional level, there are 327 tenured faculty members, 237 of whom have a PhD title.

The main office, faculties, and various supporting facilities (libraries, dormitories, a sports complex, student policlinic etc.) of the University are distributed among 20 locations, either owned or rented, that are mainly situated within the city of Arad. Although most of the buildings are concentrated in the city center, there are research and entrepreneurial centers, training bases, as well as venues for scientific and cultural events, spread along the County of Arad. Among the facilities assigned for students' leisure and vocational training, the University mentions the central unit of the library comprising reading rooms with more than 300 places, the European Library of Biomedical Sciences, Museum of the University, ITA GOLDTECH Business and Technology Incubator, "Friedrich Schiller" center of German culture as well as Italian and French cultural centers, the students dormitory providing 492 accommodation places, UNIVEST sports complex and others (Self-Evaluation Report, 3.1.1).

The Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry was founded in 1991 and was integrated into, by then primarily humanitarian, profile of the University. The Faculty was assigned by the institutional accreditation of Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad, by Law no. 240 in 2002. The function of each member of the faculty management is established by the University Charter, the Internal Regulation of VGWU Arad, the Internal Regulation of the faculty, the Framework Regulation of the Departments and Framework Regulation of for the General Medicine Department.

The Faculty runs eight programs: Medicine, Medicine in French, Medicine in English, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Balneo-physio-kinesiotherapy and Medical Rehabilitation, Dental Technology, Nutrition and Dietetics. In the academic year 2014/2015, the total number of students at the Faculty amounted to 3,485 people.

### 3 Expert report

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### **3.1 Introduction**

The Accreditation Agency AHPGS was assigned to carry out the assessment and accreditation of the bachelor study program "Medicine" (Doctor Medic, M.D.) offered by "Vasile Goldiș" Western University of Arad, Romania. The on-site visit of the University took place on 17 and 18 April 2015.

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS nominated the following experts to conduct the on-site visit:

#### **Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Arnold**

Former Dean of the Faculty of Dental Medicine, Witten/Herdecke University, Germany, President of the Craniofacial Group of the International Association for Dental Research, Member of the Senate of the Witten/Herdecke University, Germany

#### **Prof. Dr. Peter Dieter**

Former Dean of Medical Education, Faculty of Medicine Carl Gustav Carus, Dresden University of Technology, Germany, President of the Association of Medical Schools in Europe (AMSE), Member of the Executive Committee of the Association for Medical Education in Europe (AMEE)

#### **Mr. Dr. Rolf Heusser**

Director of the National Institute for Cancer Epidemiology and Registration, Zurich, Switzerland, Former Chairmen of the European Consortium of Accreditation in higher Education (ECA)

#### **Mr. Dr. Dirk Häger**

Head physician at the psychosomatic preventive clinic, Regenesa, Juist, Germany, Team physician at the German Red Cross Blood Donation, Service, Niedersachsen, Germany, Bologna expert with broad experience in the area of quality assurance in the higher education sector

#### **Ms. Martha Hofmann**

Student of Human Medicine at Witten/Herdecke University, Germany

**Mr. Prof. Dr. Adrian Kasaj**

Department of Operative Dentistry and Periodontology, University Medical Center of the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany, Chairman of the New Working Group in Periodontology (NAGP)

**Mr. Prof. Dr. Gerd Mikus**

Deputy Medical Director of the Department of Clinical Pharmacology and Pharmacoepidemiology at the University of Heidelberg, Germany, Deputy head of the Ethics Committee of the Landesärztekammer Baden-Württemberg, Member of the Expert Committee of controlled substances of the Federal Ministry of Health, Germany

**Mr. Prof. Dr. Gerhard Scriba**

Professor of Pharmaceutical Chemistry, University of Jena, Germany, Former Managing Director, Institute of Pharmacy, Member of the German pharmaceutical society, Member of the „Gesellschaft Deutscher Chemiker“ (GDCh) Member of the American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists

The main task of the expert group during the on-site visit and the peer review was to assess the study program and verify its compliance with European and Romanian regulations. These regulations are determined in the *Methodology for External Evaluation, Standards, Standards of Reference and List of Performance Indicators of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education* (hereinafter, Methodology), as approved by the Government Decision No. 1418 of 2006, and according to the Law of National Education No. 1 of 2011 (hereinafter, Law of National Education).

Thus, the expert group surveyed the proper implementation of the criteria, standards and performance indicators as specified in the above mentioned legal acts, and the compliance of the program with the normative criteria, as stated in the Methodology.

The following Fields of Activity pertaining to the program and the University were assessed: (A) Institutional capacity, (B) Educational effectiveness, and (C) Quality management, each with the corresponding Criteria and Standards.

In addition to that, the expert group observed the implementation of the international criteria given in the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* established by the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

The present Expert Report summarizes the results of the on-site visit and the evaluation of the application documents. Since it investigates the fulfilment of the standards and criteria specified in the “Methodology”, the structure of the Expert Report follows the logical succession of these criteria, as they are formulated in the document.

### **3.2 The study program**

The study program “Medicine” offered by “Vasile Goldiș” Western University of Arad, Romania, Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry, covers the total of 360 ECTS credit points (CP). It is a full-time program taught in Romanian.

The same program is offered in the English and French languages.

Upon graduation, students receive the title of Doctor-medic, abbreviated as “MD” (Medical Doctor). The diploma is issued by the Romanian Ministry of Education and Scientific Research. The regular duration of the program is 6 years, i.e. 12 semesters. Admission requirements include a high school diploma or equivalent, an entrance multiple-choice test and a language competence certificate in Romanian, English or French depending on the instruction language of the program.

The program consists of the preclinical and the clinical training cycles, each lasting for 3 year and covering 180 CP. Completion of the first cycle does not offer students any professional qualification in Romania. Students complete their studies when they pass the final examinations and successfully defend their bachelor thesis. According to the regulations applied at the University, assessment of the final thesis is not included to the total amount of credits.

According to the national regulations, graduates of the program can only start working as physicians after they have completed a postgraduate medical training of residency. The training period is not considered in the following accreditation procedure. Apart from training, graduates of the program can choose to

pursue their academic career in order to obtain the Doctoral degree (PhD) in the given field.

The program curriculum consists of 63 courses, of which 58 are obligatory and 5 are optional. The total amount of students' workload in the program is 9,000 hours; 25 workload hours are equal to 1 CP.

The program has been offered in the current form since 2003. According to the university, over 80% of the University graduates are said to start practicing their profession within two years after the completion of their studies: 64% in Romania and 34% abroad. The average tuition fee for the academic year 2014/2015 constitutes 6,590 RON or 1,490 EUR.

### **3.3 Expert report**

On 10 November 2014, the application documents of the University were made available to the expert group for written evaluation. The expert group assessed the program "Medicine" based on the Romanian standards and regulations specified under Section 1. They have also examined the factual and other program-related aspects described in the documents. The results of the review were forwarded to the AHPGS by 30 January 2015.

The on-site visit was carried out on 17 and 18 April 2015, according to the previously agreed schedule. The expert group was accompanied by representatives from the AHPGS.

In the course of the on-site visit, the experts conducted interviews with the University and the Faculty management, study program directors and the teaching personnel, as well as a group of students currently enrolled in the study program in question. The following additional documents were made available to the expert group during the on-site visit: evaluation results and evaluation reports.

On the first day of the on-site visit, the experts inspected the learning premises and the facilities available at the University. The University library, seminar and course rooms, the department offices, as well as several clinics and laboratories were the subject of assessment on this stage of the visit. Furthermore, the University presented its mission, strategy and history to the group of experts.

In the evening following the preliminary meetings and the guided tour of the University, the experts exchanged their first impressions of the study program and of the University in general. They held extensive talks about the application documents and also reviewed the results of the written evaluations. As a result of the first day, a number of initial questions became clear; at the same time, though, new issues and open questions arose. At the end of the evening discussions, the expert group agreed upon the plan for the next day of the on-site visit.

The second day of the on-site visit was dedicated to the interview with students and the final talks between the experts and the University representatives.

## **A. Institutional capacity**

### **A.1. Institutional, administrative and management structures**

"Vasile Goldiș" Western University of Arad achieved institutional establishment by the Law no. 240 of 20 April 2002. In April 2009, the University has been certified by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS). Based on that, it is assured that the University meets the requirements set by the national Romanian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

At present, the University offers bachelor study programs in 19 fields and 40 specializations, of which 4 are offered in foreign languages. The number of bachelor students is currently 7,054 people. About 1,300 of them are international students.

From the viewpoint of the University management, also master study programs play an important role in the study programs offered at "Vasile Goldiș" Western University. Currently, the University offers 24 master study programs in 17 fields, of which one is in a foreign language. The number of master students is 500.

During the on-site visit, the expert group assessed the correspondence between the written documentation and the University's mission and objectives.

Based on the information obtained during the on-site visit as well as the information provided in the written documentation, the experts have determined

that the main objective of the University is to offer a variety of higher education study programs which meet the needs of the Romanian labor market and which are compatible with national and international standards of education. Furthermore, the University strives to contribute to the social and cultural life of the local community, and to facilitate the application of quality management mechanisms and thus increase the implementation of the educational act in Romania. In addition to that, the University aims at the development of a master and doctoral training system and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities and programs.

Another aspect of the University mission is to sustain and further intensify research activity among students, thus enabling them to contribute to the general advancement of knowledge in their respective fields. The scientific research strategy of the University covers three fundamental aspects: (1) basic and applied research (2) development (generating innovative prototype products and services through research) and (3) innovation (implementation of innovative services and products in the socio-economic environment).

The expert group has been convinced of the University's commitment – as an institution – to offer high quality education opportunities. It was asserted that the University and its study programs function within the Romanian legal framework and that the institution promotes academic integrity and freedom among its students. Besides, the University regularly monitors its own activities.

In addition to the above mentioned facts, the experts gave the University's active involvement in the social structures of the region of Arad and of other nearby areas a particularly positive assessment. It was clearly emphasized that the stakeholders of the University, particularly the city and the Archdiocese of Arad, recognize that the University plays an integral and essential role in the development of the whole region. Therefore, they provide the University with all sorts of support and assistance.

Internal assessment and audit processes take place in order to monitor the achievement of the above-mentioned objectives. The University developed a code of ethics, which is communicated to all members of the institution. The experts have observed an active collaboration between the administrative and teaching structures, and have also identified a clear division of the hierarchical



units and their functions in the University. All members of the University are aware of the strategy of the institution and they actively contribute to the achievement of its goals.

The Department of General Medicine complies with the general regulations of the whole University and, at the same time, with the regulations applied on the level of the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry. Hence, the Faculty defines its own set of admission and examination requirements and procedures specific to the field of medical care. The experts recognize a clear and well-functioning administrative structure behind the collaborations between the department, faculty and university units.

With regard to the aspect of internationality, the experts positively highlight the measures enforced by the University in order to pursue its international orientation. Thus, the University achieves mobility of its students by means of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and by taking part in Erasmus exchange programs. Furthermore, the University follows the standards specific for each medical field determined by the National Quality Assurance (ARACIS) and the Romanian Ministry of National Education, which allows students to practice their profession in other EU countries.

Thus, the University ensures the compatibility of its programs with the ones of other European educational institutions, and enables students' exchange mobility within Europe.

The program "Medicine" is offered – besides Romanian – in English and French, which is also seen by the experts as a step towards international openness and recognition. At the moment the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry hosts students from 18 countries within and outside of the European Union.

The number of medical students who attended other European educational institutions with the Erasmus program, or did their internship abroad, is currently increasing. Among its Erasmus partners, the University names such institutions as the University of Calabria and the University of Bari in Italy as well as the University of Grenoble in France. Similar mobility opportunities are offered to the teaching staff.

From the experts' point of view, the University should present its internationalization measures in a more open and distinct manner so that, apart from maintaining its significant role in the region, the University could further promote its attractiveness and unique character differentiating it from other higher education institutions.

Taking these facts into account, the expert group regards Criterion A.1 as fulfilled.

The experts discern the possibilities for further development in the strategic alignment of the Faculty and of the University in general.

The experts define the current teaching and research mission of the institution as rational and well defined. Furthermore, the University pursues clear and achievable objectives, in accordance with the legal norms and the requirements of the national qualifications framework. The University mission contains also elements that are specific for the region and, at the same time, relevant for the whole country.

For the realization of medium- and long-term strategies, the experts suggest that the University could use the tremendous support of the stakeholders to develop its faculties into innovation centers of the region. The Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry offers, for instance, a combination of diverse study programs, including general medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, balneo-physio-kinestotherapy, medical rehabilitation, dental technology and nutrition/dietetics. They focus on a range of specializations and areas of knowledge. In this regard, the experts recognize for example the opportunity of reforming the Faculty into the so-called 'Health Region' center based in and around the city of Arad.

Furthermore, the experts emphasize that the University should enable more active collaboration between the programs offered in the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry. They point out at the advantages of offering some of the modules in English for all students, independent of the instruction language in their respective programs. Hence, students doing the "Medicine" program in Romanian and French could have the chance to attend modules in English together with other students of the University. Such a synergy could create a productive atmosphere for students to work in teams and to obtain intercultural competences.

According to the experts, similar effects can be achieved, by offering interdisciplinary modules for all students of the Faculty on a common basis. For instance, modules on public health or modules focused on communication and personality development competences could be attended by students of different study programs. Thus, the University could provide students with an interdisciplinary approach towards their specialization, which is considered to be a particularly important skill in the field of health care sciences. Moreover, such organization of modules would also allow the University to save material and teaching resources. Finally, the experts consider these changes as an opportunity to enlarge the number of interdisciplinary modules offered to students.

As an example the discipline Pharmacology might be useful: all three study programs within the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry need Pharmacology teaching. There could be a basic Pharmacology module offered for all students of the three disciplines, thereafter modules referring to the special need of each discipline. Such an approach would offer a common interdisciplinary platform to synchronize knowledge within the faculty thereby reducing material and teaching resources and enhance outcome.

To conclude, the strategic plan of the University and the Faculty should be further developed according to a clearly described plan of medium- and long-term actions.

## **A.2. Material resources and infrastructure**

The University has sufficient material and financial resources to offer the bachelor program "Medicine" in the English, Romanian and French language.

This was verified by the expert group during the on-site visit. The experts had a chance to see the Clinical Hospital of the Arad County as well as the facilities within the University, such as laboratories and lecture halls. The lecture halls and seminar rooms are well equipped for providing adequate teaching and learning processes. The laboratory premises are adapted to real life work placements and meet hygienic, sanitation, and safety norms.

The University has extensive resources enabling students and the teaching personnel to acquire broad experience in academic studies and work. It is also possible to use a library of the state university and an e-learning platform. The

expert group encourages the University library to establish partnerships with similar institutions (libraries, publishing houses) within the country and abroad, in order to provide students and teachers with access to a wider range of data bases as well as learning and scientific material.

The present study program is offered in the Romanian language for 100 students. In addition to that, 60 students are admitted to the program taught in the English and 40 students to the one taught in the French language. From the experts' point of view, the resources of the University are sufficient with regard to the number of prospective students and the required teaching staff.

Taking into account the University's endeavor to enhance its infrastructure and to improve the teaching and learning settings, the expert group considers Criterion A.2 to be fulfilled.

With regard to the aspect of financing, the experts recognize that the University, whose main source of funding is students' tuition fees, is quite restricted in terms of finding new resources. This is caused by the declining number of students in the region, as a result of significant demographic changes in Romania. As a response to the current difficult situation, the experts recommend to the University to raise the amount of tuition fees for international students.

Nevertheless it is recommended to develop a fundraising system to generate external financial support for the students. This should include local industries and private persons as well as alumni.

## **B. Educational effectiveness**

### **B.1. Content of the study program**

The study program "Medicine" (Doctor Medic) is offered by the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry. The program's mission, its general and specific learning objectives, curriculum, and its outcome competences were presented in a clear and transparent manner. The curriculum description specifies the learning results expressed in the form of cognitive, professional and affective results achieved by the end of each course.

As its main mission and educational objective, the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry strives to combine the acquisition of fundamental and

clinical/practical knowledge with specific professional and transversal competences.

The study program "Medicine" is aimed at a wide range of employment positions, for instance as a medical advisor, expert doctor, specialist inspector doctor, senior specialist, family medicine physician, researcher in general practice, and a research assistant in general practice. The program also enables its students to pursue a teaching career, work as medical sales representatives or find employment in administrative structures.

With regard to the improvement of graduates' employment opportunities, the University emphasizes the importance of such factors as being in compliance with European norms of international recognition, realization of student-centered education, development of cooperation programs with other European countries, enhancement of students' and teachers' mobility, and provision of continuous education.

The program "Medicine" is aimed at training general practitioners/physicians who can conduct complete clinical examination and perform a case treatment; hence, students learn to establish the diagnosis of an illness in order to design and implement the appropriate treatment procedure. Furthermore, program graduates are taught to assess and ascertain the risk of disease recurrence taking into account the illness history of an individual patient as well as of larger communities in relation to their specific social, economic, and cultural circumstances. In the courses and practical sessions, students learn to design a corrective/treatment plan taking into account specific factors that influence the state of health of an individual patient or a community negatively, such as family circumstances, environmental hygiene, risk factors, history of chronic diseases and other.

With regard to interpersonal competences, students acquire ethical principles related to health science aspects. Moreover, they are acquainted with patients' and their own duties and rights, with legal and administrative procedures related to their services. In cases when there are several treatment options, students are trained to select and establish priority among them in order to meet patients' needs and requirements in the best possible way.

With regard to academic competences, students are trained to conduct research projects and write scientific papers. Besides, they are encouraged to

actively use different librarian and digital information sources and communication facilities. The University emphasizes that socio-professional integration of students and graduates is one of its main goals, which is implemented through the organized meetings between students and prospective employers.

The objectives of the program are considered to be reasonable and appropriate with regard to the structure and content of the curriculum.

The credit system applied in the program "Medicine" and at the University in general complies with the *Order of the Romanian Ministry of Education no.3617/2005* on the generalized application of the European Credit Transfer System. One ECTS credit point corresponds to 25 hours of studies. The program follows the ECTS framework and the Bologna requirements in an exemplary manner. The allocation of credit hours for 1 ECTS point is done in accordance with European requirements.

The program "Medicine" covers 360 credits, of which 180 are obtained in the preclinical cycle and 180 in the clinical training cycle. The curriculum comprises 63 courses. Bachelor thesis is not credited, except for 2 credits granted for submitting the material required for writing the thesis in the last semester. The program is offered on a full-time basis only (12 semesters/6 years). The total workload of the program is 9,000 hours, which is divided into 2,856 contact hours, 2,996 practical hours and 2,856 hours of independent work.

The amount of practical hours at the hospital is calculated in compliance with weekly timetable. Students have to take part in specialized practical activities each summer for approximately 4 weeks between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> years of their studies. Starting with the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, students participate in clinical trainings in parallel with theoretical and practical courses. Students' performance in specialized practical activities and clinical trainings is monitored by tenured teachers from the University and by the medical staff of the Clinical Hospital of the Arad County, where these sessions are usually conducted.

The type of examination and assessment for each course is based on the expected competences. For the evaluation of students' performance in the exams, the University applies a 10-point grading system, 1-3 being the lowest grade and 10 being the highest grade. The minimum pass grade is 5. The program "Medicine" in Romanian is taught only in the respective language; the

English and French versions of the program are also taught only in the respective languages, apart from optional foreign language courses envisaged in the curriculum of each program.

Graduation examination consists of two parts: a written task and the presentation of the bachelor thesis. Students are given a cumulative grade based on their performance in both parts. Given the fact that the writing and the oral defense of the bachelor thesis constitutes an important part of the final grade, the experts recommend to the University to award ECTS credit points for the final paper. According to structural guidelines for bachelor and master study programs applied in Germany<sup>2</sup>, the student workload for writing a bachelor's thesis may be at least 6 ECTS CP and it may not exceed 12 ECTS CP.

The expert group evaluates the fundamental structure of the study program to be coherent and reasonable. The course content and examinations are considered to be feasible to be accomplished within the envisaged period of time.

The study program is aimed primarily at the needs and the labor market of the Arad region and the surrounding counties. The regional demands are integrated into the curriculum content.

Among other aspects, the experts draw a great attention to the fact that the program is offered not only in the Romanian language but also in French and English.

The admission procedures in the program are determined by the *Regulations for admission to bachelor, master and doctoral studies* applied on the University level and also by the *Methodology for the contest of admission to the bachelor study cycle* applied on the level of the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry. Based on these documents, the experts confirm that the University applies a transparent policy, which is based exclusively on the applicant's academic competences. The Admission requirements for the program "Medicine" include a high school diploma or equivalent with the minimum average grade not lower than 5, a language competence certificate in Romanian for foreign students, or a language certificate in English or French for stu-

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<sup>2</sup> *Ländergemeinsame Strukturvorgaben für die Akkreditierung von Bachelor und Masterstudiengängen* (Beschluss der Kultusministerkonferenz vom 10.10.2003i.F.vom 04.02.2010)

dents applying for the program "Medicine" in respective languages, as well as an entrance test consisting of 60 multiple-choice and descriptive questions on topics from the recommended bibliography.

From the expert's point of view, the admission procedures of the program comply with the requirements of the University and Faculty as well as with the national standards.

Based on the described conclusions, the expert group considers Criterion B.1 to be fulfilled.

As a recommendation for further development, the experts see potential to introduce more modern teaching and testing methods like PBL, OSCE, interdisciplinary learning, and didactical courses to train the teaching staff.

## **B.2. Learning results**

From the expert's point of view, the study program can be successfully classified within the Romanian higher education system. The final qualification responds to the demands of the national labor market. The knowledge, competencies and abilities gained throughout the study program correspond to the final academic degree to be awarded. The teaching and didactic methods are student-oriented.

Considering these facts – as observed from the application documents and during the on-site visit – the expert group sees Criterion B.2 as fulfilled.

According to the University, the main responsibility of each course instructor is to apply student-centered methods of teaching and to create a productive learning environment. Furthermore, course instructors are responsible for the development of students' degree specific as well as general competences, which are specified in the course descriptions provided by the University. For instance, courses such as "Medical Semiology" and "Surgical Semiology" are focused on disciplinary aspects and abilities, where such a course as "Patient Communication" serves to impart interdisciplinary competences. Essential academic abilities and skills are taught in the last year of studies through courses like "Scientific Research Methodology" and "Practical Preparation of the Diploma Paper".



The practical activities and clinical trainings, which have been described under the Criteria B.1, enable students to adapt to real life circumstances, to directly apply their theoretical knowledge and to gain experience in dealing with patients' health problems.

Such courses as "Physical Education" and "Behavioral Sciences" serve to cultivate students' abilities of social commitment and also to encourage their personal development.

The educational concept of the study program is coherent and well-designed. The distribution of direct contact, indirect contact and individual study hours is well balanced. Within the modules, adequate forms of teaching (lectures, practical sessions, seminars, practical work, tutorials and consultations) are employed.

In terms of further development opportunities, the experts recommend the program, as it was mentioned earlier, to offer a larger number of interdisciplinary modules/courses that can be attended by students from different programs. It would allow students of various specializations to learn from each other and, at the same time, provide the University with cost-saving options since several modules/courses will be combined into one.

Furthermore, the University could also consider the possibility of awarding ECTS credit points for extra-curricular and voluntary activities. Such a reward could effectively motivate students to participate in various projects, conferences, seminars and scientific experiences. Hence, they will be able to broaden their academic perspectives, learn about the latest developments in respective fields of health care, and meet other students and scholars with similar interests.

Along the same lines, the experts encourage the University to introduce a greater number of facultative courses/modules that could, on the one hand, provide students with more profound knowledge in degree-specific topics and competences, and on the other hand, to offer an interdisciplinary perspective to the chosen specialization. This, meanwhile, could inspire students with new and original ideas for writing their thesis about.

With regard to both voluntary activities and facultative courses/modules, the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry as well as the University in gen-

eral might contemplate upon the development of a general framework of regulations and conditions according to which students' performance will be recognized and credited.

The discussions with a group of students revealed an outstanding level of satisfaction with the University on their part. Among other aspects, they gave a particularly high estimate to the intensive counselling they receive in the program and also to the approachability of the teaching staff. These advantages in academic guidance stem from the open atmosphere and communication ethics within the Faculty, as well as due to a well-balanced student-teacher ratio.

Regarding student support measures, members of the teaching staff have regular office hours when they can provide academic guidance to individual students. Moreover, the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry has 3 coordinators responsible for the respective departments; their responsibilities include support of outgoing Erasmus students, coordination of studies for incoming exchange students and assistance of students applying for training scholarships.

The program achieves its learning outcomes also thanks to the use of numerous equipment and modern technologies, ranging from blackboard/whiteboard to flipchart and video projectors.

The final qualification gained by students corresponds to the local, regional and national demands. The graduates are able to take up work as medical advisors, expert doctors, specialist inspector doctors, senior specialists, family medicine physicians, researchers in general practice, and research assistants in general practice. The program also enables its students to pursue a teaching career, work as medical sales representatives or find employment in administrative structures. The University explained its strategy in implementing the program not only in Romanian but also in the English and French language by its objective towards internationalization.

Among the reasons for having chosen the study program offered by "Vasile Goldiș" University, which were mentioned by the current students during the on-site visit discussion, the experts underlines a favorable correspondence between the "financially affordable" study programs and the high quality of teaching standards.

The University encourages its alumni to pursue postgraduate studies at the institution. It also supports their participation in international conferences and workshops, as well as publications in national and international journals.

### **B.3. Scientific research activity**

During 2007 and 2014, the University has organized five international conferences and five international summer schools. It has obtained an international patent and has presented 24 scientific papers presented at international and national conferences.

From the expert's point of view, the University develops and implements short-, mid- and long-term research programs, which include collaborations with international higher education institutions and participation in scientific conferences and workshops. The expert group was able to assert that there were sufficient financial and material resources for promoting research activity.

It should be emphasized that the University has an Institute for Life Sciences. It is accredited by the Academy of Medical Sciences as a medical research unit constituting a part of the research platform of the Academy of Medical Sciences. Hence, the Institute of Life Sciences enables the members of the University to conduct research project on a high scientific level.

During the discussions of the on-site visit, the teaching personnel of the program revealed a high potential for producing qualitative research and academic work. The research activity is materially supported from the University resources which facilitate the release of conference papers and publications.

On the faculty level, students can take part in the activities of science clubs managed by staff members where topics are chosen by consulting students.

Considering these observations, the expert group regards Criterion B.3 as fulfilled.

In terms of further development opportunities, the experts recommend to the University to promote research among students and the teaching staff, and also to issue a clear research development plan complying with the general strategy of the University for the coming years.

#### **B.4. Financial activity**

The University holds and receives sufficient revenue for running the study program as well as the related activities. The expert group could see the results of the financial activity at the University. The experts determine the annual tuition fees for the program as appropriate given the non-profit status of the University.

Criterion B.4 is therefore regarded as fulfilled.

Nevertheless, as it has been mentioned under Criterion A.1, the experts recommend to the University to increase the amount of tuition fees for international students in order to be able to maintain a solid financial basis of the institution.

It also could be helpful for a sustainable financing to look for other financial options besides the tuition fees of the students.

Furthermore, the experts suggest integration of the University's strategic considerations into one consistent business plan, where the financing options should be clarified in a transparent manner.

### **C. Quality management**

#### **C.1. Quality assurance strategies and procedures**

The University has developed a quality assurance system implemented by means of corresponding evaluation procedures. The University presented its quality assurance system in the written documents and also during the discussions of the on-site visit

The quality assurance system of the University consists of the following units: Commission for Quality Assurance and Evaluation (CQAE), Quality Assurance Committees from faculties, Vice-rector for Bachelor and Master Programs, Quality Assurance and Student Affairs, and Quality Assurance Department (QAD). The members of the Commission for Quality Assurance and Evaluation and of the Quality Assurance Department are approved by the University Senate. The function of the QAD is to monitor the entire teaching activity of the program as well as the conduct of examination sessions. The University has developed a Quality Manual, which defines the objectives and the organizational structure of quality assurance procedures as well as units involved in it.

With regard to the transparency of the quality assurance policies and developments, the University annually issues an “Internal evaluation report of the quality of education and research”. After approval by the University Senate, the report is published on the official website of the University at the end of each academic year.

During the visit and the discussions with the responsible people, it became obvious that the University’s quality assurance system involves both teachers and students in the assessment of the teaching process, continuous evaluation of the courses, and monitoring and mentoring of students within the Faculty.

The process of quality assurance can be described as follows: the Quality Assurance Committee from the faculty submits its conclusions regarding the internal audit report, along with the results of peer reviews, to the Faculty Council. At the end of each year, all the data for the given period, including evaluations of teaching performance, is gathered and further directed to the Senate to take corrective actions and issue the quality improvement plan.

The University has an internal quality management system. Students take part in the quality management system; they are required to fulfill course evaluations and provide feedback to the teaching performance. The results are processed by the Quality Assurance Committee, who then integrates the final recommendation into its report.

The inspection of the facilities and premises designated for quality assurance was also part of the on-site visit.

Considering the thorough implementation of the quality assurance system and the active participation of all University members in quality assurance procedures, the expert group concludes that Criterion C.1 is successfully fulfilled.

## **C.2. Procedures on the periodical initiation, monitoring and revision of the programs and activities carried out**

The University implements procedures of periodical revision and evaluation of the study program “Medicine” by the stakeholders involved. Hence, the teaching staff is required to conduct self-evaluations and peer assessments annually, whereas students evaluate teaching every six months.

Based on the information of the written documents and the observations from the on-site visit, the experts conclude that the study program is evaluated by different stakeholders on a regular basis by means of rational and effective methods.

The assessment of the teaching personnel is discussed in detail below, under Criterion C.4.

The University maintains communication with graduate students through the Alumni Association, whose function, among other, is to distribute questionnaires to graduates and, thus, to contribute to the correlation between the objectives of the study program and the needs of the labor market. The professional degree awarded to students at the end of studies corresponds to the set of competences and practical skills taught in the program.

The experts underline that the quality assurance system of the University enables productive application of the obtained teaching and learning evaluation results. This refers to the introduction of necessary corrective measures and better organization of the program courses, as well as the improvement of teaching methods, envisaged in coming academic years.

Considering these facts, the experts conclude that Criterion C.2 is fulfilled.

### **C.3. Objective and transparent procedures of learning results evaluation**

The evaluation and examination of students' performance is implemented according to the University's *Regulation on the Examination and Grading of Bachelor/Master Students*. During the discussions with the University management and teaching personnel, various student examination methods were explained.

Each coordinator is responsible for structuring the examination system of their courses. Examinations take place throughout the semester in the forms of ongoing assessment, which assures the acquisition of covered topics during the semester in colloquiums and seminars (ongoing assessments comprise 20% of the course requirements) and practical assessment, which is compulsory for each course that entails practical activities, laboratory classes or clinical traineeships (practical assessment comprises 30% of course requirements). Both forms of examination are conducted in the presence of at least two teachers: the course coordinator and the training coordinator.

The third examination is conducted in the form of summative-cumulative assessments, which are computer-based multiple-choice tests (50% of course requirements).

Students are admitted to the final examination when their course attendance comprises at least 70% and their laboratory and clinical activity reaches 100% of attendance. Furthermore, they must have passed the ongoing theoretical and practical assessments.

The final assessment in each course can be conducted in the form of a colloquium or an examination. Colloquiums are forms of examinations taken in optional courses, practical activities, or in some complementary courses (such as Foreign Languages, Physical Education, and Medical Terminology) with lower individual workload one week before the examination session.

The content of examinations remains at the discretion of the course instructors. Student examinations are performed in an impartial and transparent manner. Students' actions in case of appeal and re-examinations are well defined and described in the regulations of the University. Hence, there are clear procedures established for the above mentioned examinations, and students are informed of these procedures in advance. The main function of examinations conducted in the program is to objectively evaluate students' achievement of the specific learning outcomes.

Taking the above described facts into account, the expert group concludes that Criterion C.3 is fulfilled.

As it has already been mentioned under Criterion B.1, the experts recommend to the University to award credit points for writing the final paper because it constitutes an important part of an academic study process and requires a considerable amount of effort and time investment from students. This input should therefore be reflected appropriately in the workload and the credit register of the study program. In addition to that, recognition of the final paper in terms of awarded credits is a standard practice on the international level.

#### **C.4. Periodical evaluation procedures of teaching staff quality**

There are 166 teaching instructors employed in the program "Medicine, including 123 (74.10%) tenured instructors employed on a full-time basis and 16 (25, 9) adjunct instructors employed on a part-time basis. Among the full-

time personnel, there are 33 (26.83%) professors and associate professors, 28 (22.76%) lecturers, and 62 (50.41%) university assistants. Among the part-time personnel, there are 5 (31.25%) professors and associate professors, 8 (50%) lecturers, and 3 (18.75%) university assistants.

Overall, the teaching and academic staff of Arad University shows a high level of commitment and potential for the execution as well as further development of the study programs they are responsible for. The expert group came to the conclusion that there is a strong corporate identity and positive group dynamics among the university and faculty administrations.

Teachers' performance is evaluated at the University of Arad every year. Results of these annual evaluations serve as the basis for promotion proposals.

The selection and employment of teaching staff are based on the principle of public contest; these procedures are regulated by the University's *Contest Methodology for Employment on Academic Positions* as well as by the Romanian legal requirements. According to these regulations, teaching and other positions are publicly announced and the University chooses candidates for these positions based on an open and independent contest procedure. These procedures are transparent and available for potential candidates from the academic and work field. By means of such transparent contest regulations, the University seeks to strengthen its competitiveness as well as its national and international visibility.

Based on the written documentation and the observations during the on-site visit, the experts concluded that the professional and academic qualifications, as well as the amount of the teaching staff, are appropriate and sufficient for successful implementation of the program submitted for accreditation. The student-teacher ratio is to 5 to 1, which satisfies students' demand for academic support and guidance.

Based on these facts, the expert group considers Criterion C.4 to be fulfilled.

Regarding the question of continuous education opportunities for the teaching staff, Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad became the first private university in Romania to be attested as an institution implementing doctoral degree studies starting with the year 2005. In 2007, the University obtained the



right to offer postgraduate specialty medical training in residency and also training in the second residency.

Given the fact that the program is offered in Romanian, English and French, the experts emphasize that the University has to ensure whether the teaching staff has the necessary level of competences in respective languages.

The teaching staff is periodically evaluated by means of both peer and student reviews. Student evaluations are performed at the end of each semester. They are anonymous, which encourages an objective assessment. The results of the reviews are discussed in the University Senate meetings. Following these meetings, students are informed about the results of the evaluations.

Should any member of the teaching staff receive an unsatisfactory evaluation result, a course of action will be implemented in order to eliminate the existing problems. Hence, the results are carefully monitored and the improvements are continuously observed. If there is no improvement after a maximum of 3 evaluation periods, the respective member of the teaching staff will be dismissed.

Peer evaluations are also performed regularly. They are based on the criteria of performance and human interaction. These procedures are monitored by the quality assurance unit of the department, in which the assessed person is tenured. Further on, peer evaluation results are analyzed and summarized by the head of the department; afterwards, they are presented to the Faculty Council as part of the quality assurance audit.

According to the University's Contest Methodology for Employment on Academic Positions at "Vasile Goldiș" Western University of Arad, candidates for assistant teacher positions are required to hold a doctoral degree. The experts suggest that the University might consider the doctoral degree as a non-obligatory condition. This will allow the University to increase its chances to find sufficient additional personnel and, at the same time, to facilitate the academic advancement of students who are either in the process of obtaining a doctoral degree or who are only starting their doctoral studies. Such students could receive a chance to enhance their didactic skills already during their doctoral studies.

From the experts' point of view, although the University has already achieved considerable progress in terms of teacher exchange opportunities, there is still some room for improvement. Hereby, the experts particularly underline the advancement of the internationalization strategy of the University by means of teaching experience exchange with other higher education institutions abroad.

### **C.5. Learning resources accessibility**

During the on-site visit, the expert group had an opportunity to see the condition of study premises as well as learning resources. Overall, it was concluded that the University offers appropriate facilities in sufficient number and good quality for the execution of the study program "Medicine".

The University campuses are located in a convenient proximity to the Arad County Clinical Emergency Hospital where students conduct their clinical training. The campus Vasile Goldiș contains a Conference room with the capacity of 95 seats and is equipped with a video system. There are 16 course and seminar rooms, 33 laboratories and 8 computer laboratories that serve the objectives of the program "Medicine".

Laboratories, seminar and class rooms used for the education and practical training of program students are all provided with modern digital and technical equipment. Laboratories are designed according to the specific nature and needs of courses taught and skills trained. Students of the program "Medicine" have access to three libraries: the Central Library, the Medical Library that are available from 9:00 till 20:00, and the European Library for Biomedical Sciences that is available from 9:00 till 17:00. All libraries have longer opening hours during examination sessions.

The Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry, to which the program belongs, provides its students with 28,755 volumes of scientific literature, 1,917 titles, and 55 periodicals. The library contains ample print and internet resources for academic research. Students can order books or find necessary scientific publications in the online library of the University. It is also worthwhile to mention the considerable number of high quality computer stations available for all students.

The material resources and the library funds are sufficient to provide students with an optimal learning environment. Additional facilities, such as Italian,

French and German cultural centers, sport complex, a botanical garden and others are also available for students' personal development. The University encourages students' learning processes by offering resources and opportunities for extra-curricular activities.

Considering these facts, the expert group regards Criterion C.5 as fulfilled.

The University offers various forms of academic supporting and counselling to students: consultations, tutorials, therapy, as well as mediation services.

The expert group also addressed the question of access-friendly facilities for students with disabilities. The University demonstrated that nearly all classes are constructed and equipped in a way that allows students with physical restrictions to attend the courses without impediments. For example, seminars and courses are held on the ground floor of the building and special assistance is provided.

In this regard, the experts draw the University's attention to the possibility of developing a special approach or concept for representing the interests of students with disabilities in various institutional proceedings and decisions. Such a concept should establish the official status of the previously agreed measures and actions. The same document should determine the responsibilities of the people or administrative units representing disabled students and staff members. By doing so, the University could acquire a prominent position with regard to the improvement of study conditions adapted to the needs of disabled people and, thus, become attractive for a larger group of applicants.

#### **C.6. Systematically updated data base, with regard to the quality internal assurance**

The University has designed and currently employs an internal quality assurance system, which was also surveyed during the on-site visit. The University has established structures for monitoring and developing the quality assurance concept. Parts of the internal quality assurance system are peer and student reviews taking place on a regular basis, as well as feedback meetings organized for this purpose. A more detailed description can be found under Criteria C.3 and C.4.

A regular track of the evaluation and review results is maintained, and strategies for the necessary improvement are designed. A corresponding electronic system and database are being implemented.

The expert group considers Criterion C.6 as fulfilled.

In terms of continuous development opportunities, the experts suggest to expand University's information management system so that it will be possible to save the large amount of data and the information collected in the course of quality assurance procedures, and then to apply this information in order to take strategic decisions on the institutional level. Thereby, the information management system of the University should facilitate the realization of the institutional strategy in general.

### **C.7. Transparency of public interest information concerning study programs and, if the case, the granted certificates, diplomas and qualifications**

The faculty provides accurate and updated information on qualifications, study programs, diplomas, teaching and research staff, student facilities and any other aspects in a transparent manner.

The results of quality assurance activities are summarized in a report, which is annually published on the website of the University.

The University promotes its study program through the University's webpage, local printed media, and by running open days and workshops in high-schools and other institutions. The information provided is clearly formulated, transparent and accurate.

Criterion C.7 is, thus, considered by the expert group to be fulfilled.

Nevertheless, the experts recommend to the University to provide more details about the study program and its requirements online, and particularly in the English version of the University website.

### **C.8. Functionality of education quality assurance structures, according to the law**

During the interviews with the University management, the board of the University and the representative of the units responsible for the quality assurance activities, the expert group was provided with an overview of the quality evaluation mechanisms and institutional structures.

The Quality Management Commission regularly elaborates and reviews all corresponding policies and strategies as well as operational procedures.

The expert group was able to assert the validity of the information provided in the application documentation, and its accordance with the legal framework, as stated in the "Methodology".

Thus, Criterion C.8 is considered to be fulfilled.

For more details on the structure, functioning and members involved in the Quality assurance procedures at "Vasile Goldiș" Western University see also Criteria A.1, A.2 and C.1.

### **3.4 Summary of the evaluation**

In the view of the expert group, the program "Medicine" (Doctor Medic) successfully complies with Romanian standards and regulations, as specified in the "Methodology", as well as in the "Law of National Education". The study program complies with the Romanian standards, criteria and performance indicators, as well as with all legal normative requirements.

In general terms, the experts give a particularly positive evaluation to the University's active involvement in the social structures of the region of Arad and of other nearby areas. It has been clearly emphasized that the stakeholders of the University, particularly the city and the Archdiocese of Arad, recognize the University' integral and essential role in the development of the whole region and therefore, provide it with the necessary support.

The excellently comprised documentation and the favorable results of the on-site visit enable the expert group to recommend the accreditation of the study "Medicine", offered by the "Vasile Goldiș" Western University of Arad, to the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS.

Given the fact that the program meets all normative requirements and standards listed in the performance indicators determined by the Romanian national quality assurance agency, the experts group recommends the accreditation of study program "Medicine" also by the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport.

At the same time, the experts attempt to provide constructive feedback and recommendation for further improvement regarding the concept, structure and content of the program.

The following recommendations are thus proposed for the University's consideration:

**A) Institutional Aspects:**

- For the realization of medium- and long-term strategies, the University could use the tremendous support of the stakeholders to develop its faculties into innovation centers of the region. In this regard, the experts recognize the opportunity of reforming the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry into the so-called 'Health Region' center based in and around the city of Arad (section A.1).
- The strategic plan of the University and the Faculty should be further developed according to a clearly described plan of medium- and long-term actions (section A.1).
- With regard to the aspect of financing, it is recommended to adequately raise the amount of tuition fees for international students and to look for other financing options besides the tuition fees, in order to maintain a sustainable financial basis of the institution (section A.2 and B.4).
- The integration of the University's strategic considerations into one consistent business plan, where the financing options should be clarified in a transparent manner, is suggested (B.4).
- The University should present its internationalization measures in a more accessible and distinct manner so that, apart from maintaining its significant role in the region, the University could further promote its attractiveness and unique character differentiating it from other higher education institutions (A.1).
- The University should further pursue its internationalization strategy by means of teaching experience exchange with other higher education institutions abroad (C.4).

- It is recommended to develop a fundraising system to generate external financial support for the students. This could include local industries and private persons as well as alumni (A.2).

### **B) Curriculum:**

- The University should enable more active collaboration between the programs offered within the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry. Hence, students doing the "Medicine" program in Romanian and French could have the chance to attend modules in English together with other students of the University. Such a synergy could create a productive atmosphere for students to work in teams and to obtain intercultural competences (section A.1).
- Given the fact that the writing and the oral defense of the bachelor thesis constitutes an important part of the final grade, the experts recommend to the University to award ECTS credit points for the final paper. It requires a considerable amount of effort and time investment from students and, therefore, should be reflected in the workload and the credit register of the study program (B.1 and C.3)
- With regard to both voluntary activities and facultative courses/modules, the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry and the University might consider the development of a general framework of regulations and conditions according to which students' performance can be recognized and credited. (B.2)
- The University might consider the review of the program's current curriculum with the aim of (B.2):
  - a) offering a greater number of facultative courses/modules that could, on the one hand, provide students with more profound knowledge of degree-specific topics and competences, and on the other hand, to offer an interdisciplinary perspective on the chosen specialization.
  - b) awarding ECTS credit points for extra-curricular and voluntary activities, which could effectively motivate students to broaden their academic perspectives, to learn about the latest developments in respective fields

of health care, and allow them to meet other students and scholars with similar interests.

- The University should promote research among students and the teaching staff, and also issue a clear research development plan complying with the general strategy of the University for the coming years (B.3).

### **C) Facilities and Teaching staff**

- Given the fact that the program is offered in Romanian, English and French, the University should further develop the teaching staff regarding the necessary level of competences in respective languages (C.4).
- The University should consider the possibility of employing on assistant positions without the mandatory requirement of a doctoral degree (C.4).

### **D) Quality Assurance**

- The University should consider developing a special approach for representing the interests of students with disabilities in various institutional proceedings and decisions (C.5).
- The University should expand its University's information management system so that it will be possible to save the large amount of data and the information collected in the course of quality assurance procedures, and then to apply this information in order to take strategic decisions on the institutional level (C.6).
- The experts recommend to the University to provide more details about the study program and its requirements online, and particularly in the English version of the University website (C.7).



#### **4 Decision on the recommendation for accreditation**

##### **Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad, Romania, Bachelor Study Program "Medicine"**

The decision is based on the "Law of National Education" no.1 from 2011 of Romania and the "Methodology for external evaluation, the standards, reference standards and the list with the performance indicators of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher education", as approved by the Government Decision no.1418 from 2006.

The decision of the Accreditation Commission is based on the University's Application documents, the Expert Report, which covers the expert reviews and the results of the on-site visit, as well as the University's response opinion send by the University at the 5 May 2015.

The on-site visit took place on the 17 and 18 March 2015 at the Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad, Romania.

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS has discussed the procedural documents and the vote of the expert group as well as the University's response opinion.

In the response opinion, several factual corrections have been made.

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS reached the following decision:

The Bachelor program "Medicine" is recommended to the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport for accreditation. The program is to be completed with the academic degree "Doctor Medic" (M.D.). The program is offered in the full-time form in the English, French and Romanian language. It covers 360 credit points and has a foreseen duration of six academic years (twelve semesters). 25 workload hours are equal to 1 CP.

There are 100 places available for enrollment per annum for the Romanian program, 60 places available for enrollment per annum for the English program and 40 places available for enrollment per annum for the French program. The initial beginning of the study program had been in the winter semester 2003/2004.

The Accreditation Commission considers that the Romanian criteria, standards and performance indicators, as well as the normative requirements, as specified in the abovementioned legal documents, are fulfilled. The Accreditation

Commission recommends the awarding of the accreditation for duration of five years. The recommendation proceeds with no further conditions.

The recommendations formulated by the experts in the expert report are to be considered.