

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



Assessment Report

on the Periodical Evaluation of

**the Study Program
"Medicine"
(Medical Doctor, M.D.)**

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

AHPGS Akkreditierung gGmbH
Sedanstr. 22
79098 Freiburg
Telefon: +49 (0) 761/208533-0
E-Mail: ahpgs@ahpgs.de

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1 Introduction

Study programs in Romania require authorization for provisional functioning, as established by Law no. 87 of 2006, which approved the Emergency Decree no. 75 of 2005. The Romanian Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport is responsible for authorizing provisional functioning of study programs. According to the Law of National Education no.1 of 2011 (hereinafter “Law of National Education”) Art. 150, Par. 1, the decision of whether to grant authorization is contingent upon the evaluation and subsequent recommendation of the study program by an external quality assurance agency registered in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR).

After authorization for provisional functioning has been granted by the Romanian Ministry, the applicant higher education institution may enroll students in the respective study program. Following the successful graduation of three subsequent cohorts (taking approximately five years for three-year study programs), 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 by an EQAR-listed quality assurance agency, takes place on the basis of which the Government decides whether to accredit the study program.

The AHPGS Accreditation Agency was tasked with the periodical evaluation of Bachelor study programs offered by the Vasile Goldiș Western University, Arad, Romania in September 2021.

In January 2022, to the experts were forwarded the relevant documents for the evaluation of the program and to review the available information, determine particular strengths and weaknesses, and identify any open questions regarding the study programs.

The on-site visit of the University took place on February 14th, 2022. During the on-site visit, experts conducted discussions with the University management, representatives of the faculties, the teaching staff of the programs as well as with students currently studying in the programs. Furthermore, they inspected the learning premises, such as lecture halls, seminar rooms, classrooms, library, and computer classes. Moreover, experts had the opportunity to see the equipment and the capacity of the laboratories and to attend a lecture.

The following Bachelor study programs were subjects of the periodical evaluation procedure:

Faculty of Dentistry:

- "Dentistry"

Faculty of Medicine:

- "Medicine"
- "Medicine in English"
- "Medicine in French"

Faculty of Medicine:

- "Medicine"
- "Medicine in English"
- "Medicine in French"

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

As representatives of academic institutions:

Mr. Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Arnold

University of Witten/ Herdecke, Germany

Professor for biological and material-scientific basis of dentistry, Faculty of Dental Medicine

Former Dean of the Faculty of Dentistry

Former President of the Craniofacial Group of the International Association for Dental Research

Former Head of the Department of biological and Material Sciences in Dentistry

Ms. Prof. Dr. Christina Erbe

Johannes Gutenberg-University of Mainz, Germany

Director of the Polyclinic for Orthodontics of the Johannes Gutenberg-University of Mainz

Conducting and taking responsibility for numerous scientific studies

Further training as a specialist dentist for orthodontics

Advanced training on pain therapy in the maxillofacial region

Mr. Dr. Rolf Heusser

National Research Program 74 "Smarter Health Care", University of Zurich, Switzerland

Former Director of National Institute for Cancer Epidemiology and Registration, Zurich, Switzerland

Former director of Swiss Accreditation and QA agency in Higher Education (OAQ)

Former Chairmen of the European Consortium of Accreditation in higher Education (ECA)

Mr. Prof. Dr. Hans-Jörg Jacobsen

Professor (em.) and Former Head of the Department of Plant Biotechnology at the Institute of Plant Genetics of the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Universität Hannover

Visiting Professor at the Department of Biology of Northeastern University in Boston (USA) for several years.

Former President of the German Association of Biologists (vdbiol)

Former Chairman of the Society for Plant Biotechnology

Former Chairman of the German Conference of Biological Faculties

Mr. Prof. Dr. Stephan E. Lehnart

Professor of translational cardiology, Clinic of Cardiology and Pneumology, University Medical Center Gottingen, Georg-August-University Gottingen, Germany

Research interests: Molecular function and nanoscopic organization of the intracellular calcium release unit, modulation of ion transport proteins by kinases

Principal Investigator of the German Center for Cardiovascular Research (DZHK),

Visiting Professor of the Biomedical Research and Medical Technology Center (BioMET), University of Maryland Medical School (USA)

Ms. Dr. Anna Mc Laughlin

Senior Scientist Department of Clinical Pharmacy & Biochemistry, Institute of Pharmacy, Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

doctoral student: PharMetrX - Pharmacometrics & Computational Disease Modelling Freie Universität Berlin

Lewis Sheiner Student Award 2021 by the Population Approach Group Europe

Mr. Prof. Dr. Gerd Mikus

Senior Scientist at the Department of Clinical Pharmacology and Pharmacoepidemiology, University Hospital Heidelberg, Ruprecht-Karls-University Heidelberg;

Deputy head of the Ethics Committee of the Landesärztekammer Baden-Württemberg, Germany

Mr. Dr. Michael Patyna, DDS

Senior physician and assistant professor

Department of Periodontology and Operative Dentistry, University Medical Center Mainz, Germany

Member of the German Society for Periodontology (DG Paro)

Chairman of the Audit Committee, District Chamber of Dentists Rheinhessen (BBA-Z)

Ms. Nora Josefine Paulke

Student of human medicine at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Germany

Since 2020 MD (Doctor of Medicine) program embedded in the International Research Training Group 1816 (IRTG)

Student assistant in the field of medical basic skills

Student assistant in the field of microscopic anatomy,

Holder of a scholarship for academic excellence from the Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes (German National Academic Foundation)

Holder of a doctoral scholarship from the Universitätsmedizin Göttingen, Georg-August-Universität, Germany

Mr. Prof. Dr. Gerhard Scriba

Professor of Pharmaceutical Chemistry and former managing director at the Institute of Pharmacy, University of Jena

Former Dean of Student Affairs, Faculty of Biological Sciences

Advisor on Quality Assurance of Pharmaceuticals der World Health Organization

Member of the "Pharmaceutical Chemistry" Committee of the German Pharmacopoeia

Ms. Prof. Dr. Kirsten Steinhausen

Professor at Furtwangen University, Germany

Medical doctor and health economist

Former Coordinator of strategic processes at the European Science Foundation in Strasbourg in the field of health research

Former Officer at the Federal Ministry of Education and Research responsible for planning and designing funding programs and health and research policy processes (focus on clinical trials, health economics, health services research, personalized medicine and drug development).

The proceedings of the Process of Accreditation conform to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) as well as to the Art. 150 of Romania's Law no. 1 of National Education 2011; the Quality Evaluation Activities Guide for University Study Programs and for Higher Education Institutions: Part 1 Study Programs Accreditation External Evaluation Guide, and the Methodology for External Evaluation, Standards, Standards of Reference, and List of Performance indicators of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education ("Methodology").

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

The documents submitted by the University, the experts' feedback on the documents, the observations made during the on-site visit, the results of discussions with the representatives of the University serve as the foundation for the statements made in the Expert Report. Since the Expert Report 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.

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

2 The study program to be accredited

The study program "Medicine" is offered by the Faculty of Medicine at Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad, Romania. The period of education is twelve semesters (six years). The study program is offered in three languages of instruction: Romanian, English, and French.

The main objective of the study program "Medicine" is to train future physicians that can successfully integrate into the national and international labor market.

360 credit points (CP), i.e., 30 CP per semester, according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) are required in order to graduate from the program. One CP is equivalent to 25 workload hours. The total workload of the program constitutes 9,000 hours: 6,106 contact hours, of which 2,002 hours are theoretical activities and 4,104 hours are practical activities. The remaining 2,894 hours are individual study time. To the total amount of 360 CP another 10 CP are virtually added for the thesis.

The program consists of 67 modules. All modules are program-specific modules and have to be completed within one semester. Modules are divided into mandatory and compulsory. 62 modules are fixed in the curriculum. The remaining five subjects are chosen by the students during study years 1-5 (one subject each year).

Admission requirements of the "Medicine" program include a high school diploma or equivalent and an entrance test. Foreign students have to provide a Romanian, English, or French language certificate issued by institutions authorized by the Ministry of National Education. Students are informed about the amount of the tuition fees in advance.

Upon graduation, students are awarded a graduation diploma (Diploma de Licenta, cf. Law of National Education no. 1 from 2011), as well as a Diploma Supplement, composed in both Romanian and English, or French. Graduates of the Bachelor study program "Medicine" are awarded the academic degree "Medical Doctor, M.D."

The experts take note that the formal requirements of the study program are in accordance with the national Romanian requirements.

The first cohort of the "Medicine" study program was admitted in 1992. The program was evaluated by ARACIS in 2002. As a result, it was accredited by decision no. 944 published in the Official Gazette no. 944/29.08.2002

Currently, 250 students are enrolled in the study program (100 in Romanian, 90 in English, and 60 in French). The total number of graduates since the beginning of the program in 1992 was 2698. Annual admissions are organized in two sessions during July and September.

The University with its Administration Board confirms in a formal declaration that it is prepared and able to provide the financial support necessary for the effective functioning of the program in conditions that correspond to the standards of the Romanian program of studies.

3 Expert Report

At the beginning of January 2022, the application documents of the University were made available to the expert group for written evaluation. The expert group assessed the “Medicine” study program 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 this review were forwarded to the AHPGS in February 2022.

Based on the written evaluation of each expert and the on-site visit, the expert group jointly agreed upon the following Expert Report.

A. Institutional Capacity

A.1. Institutional, administrative and management structures

Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad (hereupon: the University) 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 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. In 2015, the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry was divided into three separate faculties by the decision of the University Senate no. 80 / 27.07.2015. As a result, the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Pharmacy, and the Faculty of Dentistry were established. The study program “Medicine” started in 1990.

Moreover, in 2017 the University was also subject to an Institutional Audit carried out by AHPGS.

The Faculty of Medicine currently runs six programs: Medicine, Medicine in French, Medicine in English, Balneo-physio-kinesiotherapy and medical recovery, General Nursing, and Biology. In the academic year 2019/2020, the total number of students at the faculty was 1189.

The expert group assessed the compatibility of the written documentation and the University’s mission and objectives. Based on 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. The programs aim to meet the needs of the Romanian labor market and comply with

national and international standards of education. The experts discern that there is a good regional focus. One of the main tasks of the University is to contribute to the social and cultural life of the local community of Arad.

Missions and objectives are clearly stated, and the institution supports the program and staff in line with the aims and objectives of the program and common standards of integrity (e.g. see "University Charter").

Furthermore, the experts assess positively the University's active involvement in the social structures of the region. The University makes an important contribution to the health of the community. In addition, students of the Faculty of Medicine have signed up as volunteers in hospitals, in the Arad Public Health Directorate, in the Social Assistance Centers to support the fight against Covid-19.

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, and students take an active part in management. Moreover, the needs of students with disabilities are taken into consideration (admission, exam requirements).

Internal assessment and audit processes take place in order to monitor the achievement of the objectives of the University. The experts have observed an active collaboration between the administrative and teaching structures. Moreover, they have 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.

Regarding the internationality, the experts took notice of the developments within the past five years. 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, and follows the specific standards for the medical field determined by the National Quality Assurance Agency and the Ministry of Education. The number of students benefiting from Erasmus + mobility and internships has increased greatly. Currently, the University has 86 partnerships through the Erasmus + program.

The increasing number of incoming students show that the University's efforts in internationalization are successful. The University also participates in international webinars and conferences to present itself, its research and the students.

The study program "Medicine" is offered in Romanian, English and French, which is also seen by the experts as a sign of international openness. At the moment, there are 786 international students from 48 countries. The largest groups of international students are from Italy, Morocco and France. Nevertheless, the experts recommend to keep up the efforts to increase the international visibility. Furthermore, the university's website is now accessible in English, Italian and Romanian.

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.

The experts emphasize that the University should enable more active collaboration between the programs offered in the Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry within the universities' possibilities. Interdisciplinarity work between the faculties is supported by the university. The experts see the opportunity to enlarge the number of interdisciplinary modules offered to students.

A.2. Material resources and infrastructure

Overall, the experts recognize that the University has sufficient material and financial resources with regard to the study programs currently being offered. Facilities are fully in possession of the University. The experts had the chance to see the Clinical Emergency County Hospital of Arad as well as the facilities within the University, such as laboratories and lecture halls. The laboratory premises are adapted to real life work placements and meet hygienic, sanitation, and safety norms.

According to the university, the institution possesses sufficient financial resources and equipment for the program. Furthermore, a scholarship system has been established. Looking at the premises and resources available for the desired number of students in the study programs “Medicine” (100 per year), “Medicine in English” (90 per year), and “Medicine in French” (60 per year) the experts conclude that the University can offer this number of study places.

Furthermore, with regard to the library and lecture halls, the experts assess that the lecture halls and seminar rooms are sufficiently equipped for providing adequate teaching and learning processes (e.g., computers).

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 financial sources. During the last years, the university focused on investing in centers (e.g., Traditional Chinese Medicine Center) to create a substantial source of income on a long term. The experts recommend expanding the search for additional funding sources, such as support from the local authorities, national foundations, sponsorships from companies or private donors/alumni.

The expert group considers Criterion A.2 to be fulfilled.

B. Educational Effectiveness

B.1. Content of the study program

The study program “Medicine” is affiliated with the Faculty of Medicine. The study program’s mission, general and specific learning objectives, curriculum and outcome competences were presented in the written documentation in a clear and transparent manner. The curriculum description specifies the qualification objectives, competences (knowledge and understanding, explanation and interpretation etc.) and learning outcomes for each module.

The study program’s goal is to train future physicians. The program should, therefore, prepare graduates to be able to respond to the current labor market demands in Arad, Romania and abroad. Judging from the curriculum and module descriptions, students completing the program are fit for a professional position in Romania.

The University provides a list with the following examples of career opportunities for graduates: director, deputy director, chief physician (polyclinic, rescue

station, blood collection center, chief physician of the department, laboratory); resident physician, expert physician, specialist medical inspector, specialist medical reviewer, primary care physician, family medicine doctor, researcher in general medicine, research assistant in General Medicine, specialist doctor, hygienist, doctor expertise of the work capacity, forensic doctor, psychiatrist, family doctor with mental health skills, medical representative, researcher. They can also continue a career in teaching.

The University provides the following list of competences to be acquired by graduates of the program:

- Scientific competence/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 competence; 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;
- Competence 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 competence;
- Competence 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 competence, meaning improvement of communication skills and also enhancement of self-training capacities.

The experts agree with the above mentioned qualification objectives. Moreover, the study program "Medicine" also focuses on qualifying students for social responsibility and personal development throughout all modules. The experts conclude that graduates have good employment opportunities on the Romanian

job market. 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 curriculum of the study program "Medicine" comprises of mandatory and compulsory subjects.

The experts find the program to be well structured; modules are described in detail (e.g., with objectives, aimed competences, content and literature) and the program is relevant as the intended career is clear. The objectives of the program are considered to be reasonable and appropriate with regard to the structure and content of the curriculum.

Starting with the 3rd year of studies, the specialized practical activities are carried out within the Arad Emergency County Clinical Hospital where many teachers are involved in the clinical structures, as heads of clinics and clinical departments, being also PhD coordinators, or resident coordinators. Hence, both the University and the hospital take active part in the organization of practical traineeship. Additionally, students can perform their summer training between the 1st and the 5th year of studies also in the premises of the Arad Emergency County Clinical Hospital. The experts compliment the hospital's development over the past five years.

The expert group points out that research elements are integrated in some modules. Hence, students develop a basic understanding of qualitative and quantitative research. They also develop the ability to plan and conduct a fundamental or applied research in their area of expertise and write scientific papers.

Additionally, the University implemented the recommendation of the last accreditation and awards ECTS for extra-curricular and voluntary activities. It motivates the students to broaden their academic perspectives while allowing them to interact with other students and academics with similar interests. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the students volunteered in hospitals and participated in the vaccination campaign.

The credit system applied in the "Medicine" study program 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 subjects in the curriculum can be evaluated at the end of the semester through written exams (such as computer-based multiple-choice test) and oral exams (colloquiums). Usually, one assessment method is applied per module.

There are winter and summer exam sessions. They extend over a period of three weeks after the period of teaching activities. Should students not pass the exams during these sessions, 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 included in the structure of the academic year.

Bachelor's degree studies end with the Bachelor's exam, held in accordance with the current legislation on the general framework for organizing the graduation exams in higher education, based on its own methodology/procedure, approved annually by the University Senate, which consists of two tests: a written test and the presentation of the Bachelor's thesis.

For the evaluation of the students' performance in exams, the University applies a 10-point grading system (10 being the highest grade). The minimum passing grade is 5 points. The minimum grade for passing the graduation exam is 6. The Bachelor thesis is not included in the workload of 360 ECTS and is supplementary credited with 10 ECTS.

From the experts' point of view, the thesis is an obligatory part of the curriculum. Thus, the final thesis should be part of the official workload of the study program. Nevertheless, the experts acknowledge that the addition is a singularity in Romania due to the National Law.

The "Medicine" study program contains 360 + 10 credits. The curriculum is comprised of 67 modules. The program is only offered on a full-time basis (twelve semesters/six years). The total workload of the program is 9,000 hours, which is divided into 6,106 contact hours, 4,104 hours of practical activities and 2,894 hours of individual work hours. The university has implemented the recommendation of the last accreditation procedure and has increased the number of practical activities significantly.

From the experts' point of view, the student workload should be evaluated on a regular basis in order to make sure that students are not overloaded or

underchallenged. Additionally, the implementation of evaluation results to improve the study programs should be clearly documented.

According to the University, the admission contest takes place in conditions of transparency and equality. The admission requirements include a high school diploma or equivalent and an entrance test. The University assures that students may apply for academic or social welfare scholarships in order to assure equality throughout the University.

Annual admission takes place in June-August. Foreign students must submit a Romanian, English, or French language certificate, issued by institutions authorized by the Ministry of National Education.

From the experts' point of view, the admission procedure of the program complies with the requirements of the University as well as with the national standards. The general recruitment and admission policies for students of the University are clearly stated. The University makes it also clear that all discrimination is prohibited.

According to Art. 7, 8, 20, 77, 78, 79, 80 of the Regulation on the professional activity of students (Annex B), the University recognizes the studies carried out in other universities in the country and abroad. In this respect there is within the faculty a commission for the equivalence of transferable credits (approved by the Senate of the University), which after comparing the two curricula and the discipline sheets, establishes the recognized credits, the recognized period of study and the higher education year in which the student can be enrolled.

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

B.2. Learning outcomes

From the experts' point of view, the "Medicine" study program can be successfully classified within the Romanian higher education system. The final qualification gained by its graduates corresponds to the demands of the Romanian labor market. The knowledge, competencies and abilities gained throughout the study program correspond to the final academic certificate to be awarded. The practical activity, which has been described under criterion B.1, enables students to adapt to real life circumstances and to directly apply their theoretical

knowledge. Moreover, graduates of the study program have the opportunity to apply for a doctoral study program in Medicine or in Biology at the University.

The discussion 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 as well as due to a well-balanced student-teacher ratio. Regarding student support measures, members of the teaching staff have regular office hours in which they can provide academic guidance to individual students.

Judging from the curriculum and the module descriptions, students completing the program obtain a thorough overview on medical issues.

In terms of further development opportunities, the experts recommend the program, to offer a 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.

The methods of teaching used in the program "Medicine" are student-focused and aim at fulfilment of learning objectives and acquisition of competences specific for each subject. Teaching methods applied in both theoretical and practical classes are carried out with the help of modern methods of multimedia. Most common instruction strategies are based on the principles of directness and interactivity and include practical demonstrations, thematic debates, projects, case presentations and others.

The expert group thinks that employability is given for graduates of this program. They conclude that this positive outcome and development stems on the one hand from the dedicated academic staff and but on the other hand also from the open atmosphere and communication at the University.

The expert group considers criterion B.2 to be fulfilled.

B.3. Scientific research activity

Regarding research opportunities, scientific research is carried out in the clinical research centers of the University, as well as in private clinics or University

clinics and the annexed structures of the Emergency Clinical Country Hospital of Arad. 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.

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

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.

It should be emphasized that the University has an Institute for Life Sciences. Hence, the Institute of Life Sciences enables the members of the University to conduct research project on a high scientific level.

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

B.4. Financial activity

Currently, the University holds and receives sufficient revenue for running the study programs. The experts determine the annual tuition fees for the program as appropriate given the non-profit status of the University. Nevertheless, it could also be helpful for a sustainable financing to look for additional income options besides imposing tuition fees on students (e.g., sponsoring, research, further education; *see also A.2*).

The University has confirmed in a formal declaration that they are prepared and able to progressively ensure, for all years of study, the financial support necessary for the program to function in conditions that correspond to the standards of the Romanian program of studies.

Criterion B.4 is fulfilled.

C. Quality Management

C.1. Quality assurance strategies and procedures

The University has developed an elaborate quality assurance system implemented by means of corresponding evaluation procedures. The University presented its quality assurance system in the written documents.

The 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.

With regard to the transparency of the quality assurance policies and developments, the University issues an annual "Internal Evaluation Report". After approval by the University Senate, the report is published on the official website of the University at the end of each academic year.

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.

The University has an internal quality management system. Students take part in the quality management system; they are required to fulfil course evaluations and provide feedback to the teaching performance. The level of students' satisfaction with their studies and the relevance of the study program to its practical implementation are evaluated at the University by means of assessment questionnaires. On site, the students describe the effects of their feedback,

which is highly appreciated by the University. The University maintains communication with external stakeholders (Order of Physicians, Employers Association of Family Physicians of Romania, etc.) as well as its graduates with the help of the Alumni Association.

The experts highlight that students as well as teaching staff evaluate the curriculum of the Bachelor study program "Medicine".

During the visit and the discussions with the responsible people, it became obvious that the University's quality assurance system involves both teaching staff and students in the assessment of the teaching process, continuous evaluation of the courses, and monitoring and mentoring of students within the faculty. According to the experts, the University is on track to establish a comprehensive quality assurance culture.

With regard to the students' development of social responsibility and personal development in the course of studies, the University points out that it has its own University Ethics Code. The code lays down rules of conduct, ethics and deontology for all members of the academic community of the University.

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 fulfilled.

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

The experts highlight that the quality management system is ensured by central and decentral commissions and a quality management department. The commissions act in accordance with the quality assurance strategy of the University. Moreover, a "Quality Manual" is approved by the Senate for each study year. Students assess all teaching staff regularly.

The University implements procedures of periodical revision and evaluation of the study programs offered. Hence, the teaching staff is required to conduct annual self-evaluations and peer-assessments; students evaluate the teaching process every six months.

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 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 programs, as well as the improvement of teaching methods, envisaged in upcoming academic years.

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

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

Based on students' evaluations, the teaching process and the learning outcomes undergo a constant optimization process. Additionally, the University has established clear examination rules and a structured process for dealing with exceptional cases. Furthermore, the form of examination and the learning outcomes are clearly specified for each module.

In order to qualify for the final examination of a module, students must have met all subject requirements, i.e., attendance, passing the ongoing assessments and practical works. These are presented to the students by the lecture coordinator in the first course lesson.

The final assessment in each course can be conducted in the form of a colloquium or an examination. Colloquiums are forms of written or oral examinations taken, for example, in optional courses.

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.

The experts sum up that criteria and regulations about grading are present (see *B.1 for details*). The forms of examinations generally fit the competence aimed for by the study program and the modules. The evaluation of learning outcomes is, thus, appropriate.

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

C.4. Periodical evaluation procedures of teaching staff quality

The University has provided an overview about the teaching staff of the study program.

The teaching staff of the program "Medicine" comprises a total of 129 tenured members, of whom 26 (20.16 %) are professors and associate professors, 48 (37.21 %) are lecturers, and 55 (42.63 %) are university assistants. Additionally, there are 25 adjunct teachers (three professors and 22 lecturers and assistants). Thus, a total of 154 teachers teach "Medicine". The current total number of students at the program is 1,193, which means that the student-teacher ratio is approximately 7:1.

The experts take note that all teaching positions are established in compliance with the requirements of legal norms and completed with tenured teaching staff in higher education in accordance with the Romanian law. The University states that selection of teaching staff is conducted according to the Law of National Education no. 1/2011, and internal regulations, which are based on the principle of public contest.

Overall, the teaching and academic staff of the University shows a high level of commitment for the execution and further development of the study program. The expert group came to the conclusion that there is a strong corporate identity and positive group dynamics among the University and Faculty administrations.

Based on the written documentation and the observations during the on-site visit and rounds of talk, 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.

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 the respective languages.

The minimum necessary and mandatory standards for the teaching title of university assistant, according to national legislation, includes holding a doctoral degree in the field of the disciplines of the position held or at least enrolment in doctoral studies, with the obligation to be completed. At the level of the Faculty of Medicine there are 44 doctoral students occupying the post of university assistant for a fixed period. Thus, at the level of the Faculty of Medicine, the

aim is to mobilize the teaching staff employed on fixed-term contracts in the educational institution in order to complete their doctoral and specialist studies in the following years and to mobilize the tenured teaching staff in the educational institution in order to ensure that as many as possible meet the minimum standards for submitting their applications in the following year for promotion to the post of lecturer and university professor.

The teaching staff is periodically evaluated by means of both peer and anonymous student reviews. Student evaluations are performed at the end of each semester. 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 a member of the teaching staff receive an unsatisfactory evaluation result, a course of actions will be implemented in order to eliminate the existing problems. Hence, the results are carefully monitored and the improvements are continuously observed.

The peer evaluation is carried out on objective criteria, performance, but also human interaction and is coordinated by the quality assurance representative of the department.

The self-evaluation is done by each teacher based on the "Annual Self-Evaluation Document", which includes evaluation criteria and performance indicators. The multi-criteria evaluation takes into account all the components of the academic activity, i.e., didactic activity, research activity, auxiliary activities associated with the quality of teacher. The self-evaluation is conducted annually, whereas students' feedback is done every six months.

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

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". Students have access to the "Tudor Arghezi" University Library.

The University encourages students' learning processes by offering resources and opportunities for extra-curricular activities. Moreover, the University offers various forms of academic support and counselling to students: consultations, tutorials and therapy. However, regarding infrastructure (e.g., wheelchair

accessible buildings, elevators), accessibility for people with a disability should be improved.

Furthermore, it has to be acknowledged that there are clear procedures concerning teaching staff training (“Organization and Functioning of the Teaching Staff Training Department” and “Organization and Functioning of the Continuous Professional Training and Operational Programs Department”). During the Covid-19 pandemic, the University organized online courses and supported the teaching staff in their didactic activities.

The expert group considers criterion C.5. as fulfilled.

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

The University has designed an internal quality assurance system and established structures for monitoring and developing the quality assurance concept. Parts of the internal quality assurance system are regular peer and student reviews, as well as the 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 by the University. Strategies for improvement are designed therefrom. A corresponding electronic system is also implemented. The experts conclude that the data and information policy seem to be adequate at the University.

The expert group considers criterion C.6. as fulfilled.

C.7. Transparency of public interest information concerning study programs

The results of quality assurance activities are summarized in a report in order to improve the programs’ quality.

Through its website, the University supplies relevant information concerning its programs and its structures to the public. Main parts of this information are available in English. Thus, the University promotes its study programs online, through local printed media, and by running open days and workshops in high-schools and other institutions. The information is also available through a printed “Student Guide”. There is also published information concerning the compensation regulations for students with disabilities.

The experts conclude that the faculty provides information on qualifications, study programs, diplomas, teaching and research staff, student facilities and

other aspects. The website should be revised though in order to offer the latest and relevant information.

All in all, the expert group considers criterion C.7 to be fulfilled.

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

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 is convinced of the validity of the information provided in the application documentation, and its accordance with the legal framework, as stated in the "Quality Manual". Quality assurance and evaluation for the currently running programs is well developed at the University.

Structured processes and an evaluated organization underline the importance of the quality management at the University; the organization strives for continuous improvement. Central and decentral staff are involved in the quality assurance process. The experts conclude that the institutional structure for quality education seems to be adequate. 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 the University see also criteria A.1, A.2 and C.1.

4 Evaluation Summary

The main task of the expert group during the peer review was to assess the running “Medicine” study program and to verify its compliance with European and Romanian regulations (*see part 1 Introduction*).

In the view of the expert group, the “Medicine” study program complies with Romanian regulations as specified in the “Methodology” and the “Law of National Education”. Hence, the study program complies with the pertinent Romanian conventions as well as with all legal normative requirements.

The expert group acknowledges the high motivation and engagement of all persons involved in the program. In addition, the students are satisfied with the University and the commitment of their teachers. The efforts in internationalization pay off and are reflected in high number of incoming and outgoing international students in the study program “Medicine”.

Furthermore, the experts see a strong, positive development of the university within the last five years and the implementation of the recommendations of the previous accreditation (e.g. the awarding of ECTS credits for extracurricular activities).

The on-site visit in addition to the documentation provided by the University, enable the expert group to recommend the re-accreditation of the “Medicine”, “Medicine in English” and “Medicine in French” study program offered by 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 expert group recommends the re-accreditation of the “Medicine” (in Romanian, French and English) study program also by the Romanian Ministry of Education.

At the same time, the experts attempt to provide constructive feedback and recommendations 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 Capacity:

- the University should enable more active collaboration between the programs offered in the Faculties of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry within the universities' possibilities. The experts see the opportunity to enlarge the number of interdisciplinary modules offered to students
- the University should expand the search for additional funding sources, such as support from the local authorities, national foundations, sponsorships from companies or private donors/alumni.

B) Educational Effectiveness:

- the Bachelor thesis is an obligatory part of the curriculum and should therefore be included in the workload of the study program
- the University should offer interdisciplinary modules/courses that can be attended by students from different study programs.

C) Quality Management:

- Given the fact that the program is offered in Romanian, English and French, the experts emphasize that the University should ensure whether the teaching staff has the necessary level of competences in the respective languages.
- the University should improve the accessibility for people with a disability through elevators and wheelchair accessible buildings.

5 Decision

Decision of the Accreditation Commission of March 28, 2022

The proposed resolution of the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS is based on the University's application, as well as the expert review and the on-site visit described in the Expert Report.

The on-site visit of the University took place on February 14th, 2022 according to the previously agreed-upon schedule.

The accreditation decision is based on the Expert Report. The Expert Report, i.e. the proceedings of the Process of Accreditation conform to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) as well as to the Art. 150 of Romania's Law no. 1 of National Education 2011; the Quality Evaluation Activities Guide for University Study Programs and for Higher Education Institutions: Part 1 Study Programs Accreditation External Evaluation Guide, and the Methodology for External Evaluation, Standards, Standards of Reference, and List of Performance indicators of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education ("Methodology").

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS discussed the procedural documents and the recommendations of the expert group.

The study program "Medicine" is offered by the Faculty of Medicine at Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad, Romania. The regulated study period is twelve semesters (six years). The study program is offered in three languages of instruction: Romanian, English, and French.

360 credit points (CP), i.e., 30 CP per semester, according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) are required in order to graduate from the program. One CP is equivalent to 25 workload hours. The total workload of the program constitutes 9,000 hours: 6,106 contact hours, of which 2,002 hours are theoretical activities and 4,104 hours are practical activities. The remaining 2,894 hours are individual study time. To the total amount of 360 CP another 10 CP are virtually added for the thesis.

The program consists of 67 modules. All modules are program-specific modules and have to be completed within one semester. Modules are divided into mandatory and compulsory. 62 modules are fixed in the curriculum. The remaining five subjects are chosen by the students during study years 1-5 (one subject

each year). The bachelor study program "Medicine" is completed with awarding of the academic degree "Medical Doctor".

The Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS considers that the Criteria (according to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) as well as to the Law no. 1 of National Education of Romania, 2011, Art.150, and Art.193; the Quality Evaluation Activities Guide for University Study Programs and for Higher Education Institutions: Part 1 Study Programs Accreditation External Evaluation Guide, and the Methodology for External Evaluation, Standards, Standards of Reference, and List of Performance Indicators of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) are fulfilled and therefore adopts the following decision:

The study program "Medicine" (in Romanian, French and English) is recommended to maintain the accreditation for the period 2022-2027.

For the further development and enhancement of the study program and the University as a whole, the Accreditation Commission of the AHPGS supports the recommendations articulated in the Expert Report.