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## **Institutional Evaluation Programme**

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

### **UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE AND PHARMACY CAROL DAVILA BUCHAREST**

### ***EVALUATION REPORT***

*November 2012*

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## Table of contents

1. Introduction .....	3
1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme.....	3
1.2 Carol Davila and the national context.....	4
1.3 The Self-evaluation process.....	5
1.4 The Evaluation team.....	5
2. Governance and institutional decision-making.....	6
2.1 Governance structure.....	6
2.2 Finances.....	7
2.3 Staffing.....	8
2.4 Summary.....	9
3. Teaching and Learning .....	10
3.1 Students.....	10
3.2 Learning .....	10
3.3 Teaching characteristics .....	11
3.4 Summary.....	12
4. Research.....	14
4.1 The State of research.....	14
4.2 Developing research.....	14
4.3 Conclusion.....	15
5. Service to society.....	16
6. Quality culture.....	17
6.1 Ethics committees.....	17
6.2 Quality assurance measure.....	17
6.3 Conclusion.....	18
7. Internationalisation .....	19
8. Conclusion .....	20
8.1 SWOT.....	20

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8.2 Overall impression.....	20
8.3 Recommendations.....	21



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## 1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of the University of Medicine and Pharmacy “Carol Davila” Bucharest, referred to as simply Carol Davila in this report. The evaluation took place from June to November 2012, in the framework of the project “Performance in Research, Performance in Teaching – Quality, Diversity, and Innovation in Romanian Universities”, which aims at strengthening core elements of Romanian universities, such as their autonomy and administrative competences, by improving their quality assurance and management proficiency.

The evaluations are taking place within the context of major reforms in the Romanian higher education system, and specifically in accordance with the provisions of the 2011 Law on Education and the various related normative acts.

While the institutional evaluations are taking place in the context of an overall reform, each university is assessed by an independent IEP team, using the IEP methodology described below.

### 1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an independent membership service of the European University Association (EUA) that offers evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture. The IEP was selected by the Romanian authorities to carry out the second step required by the law, i.e. an institutional evaluation of 90 universities by an international agency.

The distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme are:

- A strong emphasis on the self-evaluation phase
- A European and international perspective
- A peer-review approach
- A support to improvement

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

- Decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management



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- Relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision making and strategic management as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms.

The evaluation is guided by four key questions, which are based on a “fitness for (and of) purpose” approach:

- What is the institution trying to do?
- How is the institution trying to do it?
- How does it know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

## 1.2 Carol Davila in the national context

Dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, Carol Davila is not only one of the oldest universities in Romania but also the oldest university of medicine and pharmacy. Strong historical ties between France and Romania as well as the fact that the founder, Carol Davila, was a French citizen, led the university to develop close relations with similar institutions in France, which still has an impact on the international relations between these two countries, although contacts with Anglo-Saxon countries are now predominant. Political events of the twentieth century also influenced and shaped the structure and priorities of the university: while Carol Davila had been very open to the outside world before WWII, the university had to eventually conform to the communist pattern stressing specialisation and compliance with government demands. The transition to more autonomy has now been work in progress from a legal perspective for about two decades, whilst Carol Davila staff's mindset has also been adjusting with the idea of having and making use of increased autonomy.

All findings — specific evidence is shown further on in this report — indicate that Carol Davila provides high level education and training for medical specialists at national level. In the past, professors gained international fame, the university is rightly proud of its 1974 Nobel Prize winner, George Emil Palade who shared the prize with two Belgian scientists Albert Claude and Christian De Duve. In the 1990s there was a phase where the staff and students were less dedicated to education, but motivation is increasing again, according to the leadership. In 2012/2013 Carol Davila has a total of 9424 students enrolled in the four faculties — Medicine, Dental Medicine, Pharmacy, and the recently established faculty of Nursing, Midwifery and Medical Assistants — with the 24 academic departments as functional units. Faculty buildings are found in different parts of the city; in addition, Carol Davila has links with the university hospital but also with 20 other hospitals in Bucharest.

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This geographical diversity makes communication between the various units rather challenging.

At the national level, legislation has evolved, with several new laws or amendments being introduced in the last two decades. Recently, a major change to the law on education took place, the new detailed Law of National Education, which came into effect in January 2011. This has direct consequences on the institution governance (see below). In addition, the Bologna Process is being implemented, the country joined the European Union in 2007, Romania is in the midst of a severe economic crisis; and in higher education the international context is increasingly important. Moreover, a new rector and leadership team have been in place for only a few months, coming to power at a time when a new governance model is being implemented. All these factors add up to a constantly changing environment, making long-term strategic planning difficult. Beyond the aim of being “the best medical university in the country and one of the most famous universities in the Balkans” and positioning itself among the world’s 500 top universities the team felt that the university lacks a holistic vision despite the recent strategic development plan of the rector.

### 1.3 The self-evaluation process

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by an ad hoc group comprised of the four deans, three vice-rectors, a director and three members of top level administration.

The self-evaluation process as designed in IEP was a new approach for the SE group, as its members were not used to working as a team or developing a common project. This in itself sheds light on the traditional way of functioning in this institution. At the same time, the group recognised that self-evaluation was an enriching process, which helped them become aware of certain parts or aspects of the university, and improved communication. The report was discussed in the academic community and with the students during group meetings. The report itself is written descriptively.

### 1.4 The evaluation team

The self-evaluation report (SER) of the University Carol Davila along with the appendices was sent to the evaluation team (later the team) in May 2012 and put on the project web platform along with a number of background documents, such as the text of the new 2011 law translated into English. The visits of the evaluation team to University Carol Davila took



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place from 11-13 June and 15-18 October, respectively. In between the visits the university provided the evaluation team with additional documentation.

The evaluation team consisted of:

- Jean-Louis Vanherweghem, former rector, Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium, Chair
- Jacqueline Smith, former OECD analyst, France, team coordinator
- Nejat Erk, former Vice Rector, Cukurova University, Turkey
- Aine Hyland, former Vice-President, University College Cork, Ireland
- Tobias Walser, PhD student, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich, Switzerland

The team would like to thank the rector, Prof. Sinescu, his colleagues and students for their gracious hospitality, willingness to contribute freely to the discussions and share their experience. Special thanks should go to the liaison persons, Prof. Constantinescu and Prof. Vinereanu who gave the team so much of their time and were very helpful.



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## 2. Governance and institutional decision-making

### 2.1 Governance Structure — administration

The Senate is the main governing and decision-making body. The law states that the University Charter determines the composition, and Carol Davila's Charter indicates that the Senate should include 75% of the membership representing the academic staff and 25% of the students, all elected by their peers, with no mention of administrative staff nor external partners. The only involvement of external stakeholders appears to be in the areas of contracts regarding applied clinical research, and necessary relations with government bodies. Currently, the Senate includes 93 members who all serve in one of nine commissions; an executive bureau currently leads the activities. An Administrative Council assists the rector in the management of the institution. Up until the latest reform, all authority was given to the rector, the rector heading both the Senate and the Administrative Council. The recent law prescribes that the Senate President be a person (other than the rector) elected by its members, therefore instilling a certain degree of power-sharing. As from 2012 decisions are taken by the Senate, represented by its President, on proposals submitted by the rector. According to the law, the Senate decides but the rector bears the legal responsibility. However, as this modification in the power structure is still very recent, its impact cannot be fully assessed yet.

In terms of overseeing authorities, responsibilities are divided among several government bodies: for educational matters, Carol Davila is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, the university hospital – cardiology and emergencies – directly under the Ministry of Health, but the other hospitals are under the jurisdiction of local authorities. The health system operates in such a way that the university must be linked with several hospitals. In other words, the university is under the supervision of several authorities with sometimes surprising consequences such as when first year students are not allowed in the hospitals. However, Carol Davila is trying to develop a stronger link with some of those hospitals.

The rector's management plan was approved by the Senate. It serves as a strategic development plan for the four years of the rector's mandate, with seven main lines of action that affect all areas of activities listed in the present report and will be referred to in the paragraphs below: 1. improving teaching quality; 2. expanding the new faculty (namely the Faculty of Midwifery and Nursing, FMAM, acronym from its name in Romanian *Facultatea de Moase si Asistenta Medicala*); 3. developing postgraduate education; 4. collaborating with more universities; 5. developing international co-operation; 6. increasing

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research output; 7. ensuring transparent and efficient administration. Each of these can be adjusted as appropriate in the course of the four years.

The university appears to be operating according to a traditional style of governance with a centralised organisational structure and authority cascading down from Senate via the rector to individual units. However, departments seem to function quite independently from one another, with limited overall co-ordination or multidisciplinary. The end result is centralised authority over fragmented functional units. A striking example is that of the various administrative services: when looking at the organisational diagram, if one overlooks the rector's function, there is no single position overseeing non-academic functions. Even the statistics services seem to serve separate entities, data is available but not readily aggregated for the whole institution. The purpose of general meetings with administrative departments is essentially to inform the leadership.

Another point is that the university does not manage either the hospitals' activities or facilities, but shares the responsibility. If this responsibility without official authority is strictly maintained by the system it could become a source of difficulties.

The current law grants increased autonomy to HEIs, in the areas of organisation and governance, finances and administration, teaching content and mode of delivery, and internal rules. The university admits that "it takes advantage to a certain extent of" this increased autonomy, but how this was not always evident. This opportunity needs to be integrated in an overall development policy. The leadership clearly aims to improve various aspects of the university functioning — in administration, teaching, research, international involvement — but has not yet translated these aims into a holistic strategy with a step-by-step implementation plan.

## 2.2 Finances

According to the Romanian public funding system, Carol Davila receives funding from the public purse for 4601 students. The university can enrol more students, from Romania or abroad, who pay tuition, for a total enrolment of 9424 students in 2012-2013. The tuition fee is decided by the senate, but cannot exceed the amount per student funded by the state, and the government also decides on the total number of students the university is allowed to enrol. In summary, with a total income of 181.000.000 lei, Carol Davila receives about 43% of its funding from the state, including for research and 57% from other sources – mainly tuition fees, but also from services and donations.

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Up until a year ago, faculties did not have their own budget, the central financial department dealt with all budget issues. Starting in 2011-2012, and thanks to the financial autonomy rights as granted by the new law, the university' budgeting follows a bottom up process: departments' budgets are calculated first, then modulated and integrated at faculty level, and so on. As for the change of governance mentioned above, this budgeting mechanism is still too recently implemented for benefits or problems to become evident yet.

While the university is free to manage its own resources as it sees best, and can more or less predict the level of income from these sources for several years to come, public funding is known only one year ahead of time. Therefore, effective financial planning for periods extending beyond the following year becomes very difficult for the university. While philanthropic donations are mentioned as possible additional sources of funds – there are even some tax incentives – in practice they are quite rare because donations to universities are not part of the culture in Romania and the institution has not made any specific fundraising effort. This could become an area of development, along with alumni association (see below).

The current economic crisis caused a major financial drawback in 2009 when all salaries in Romania decreased by 25%. The effect of this is clearly shown in the sudden decrease of total income after 2008. Carol Davila tried to soften the impact by using its own funds to partially compensate its staff for salary loss.

Even though the leadership expressed the need for more funding – as most institutions do considering the overall economic situation –, Carol Davila appears to do fairly well, no dire need of equipment or maintenance was visible, and the staff-student/ratio remains very favourable, although gradually less so in recent years.

### 2.3 Staffing

In terms of staffing Carol Davila employs 1607 (2010-2011 figures) academic staff – 44% males, 56% females – but is accredited for 2356 posts -, and about 1000 administrative staff. This means that a high percentage of posts, nearly one third, are not filled, at least not permanently filled. The following may account for this deficit: difficulty in recruiting due to current national staffing policies, stricter qualification requirements to be hired as a professor and to earn a promotion, reduced financial means and a tendency for young staff to emigrate.

One can observe that:



- the total number of academic staff slightly decreased between 2008-2009 and 2010-2011 from 1638 to 1607 while student numbers increased from 7351 to 8103 during the same period, and are continually increasing;
- the most significant decrease is found within the 25-34 and over 65 age-groups, but the younger staff is much more numerous than the older, thus raising concern about the replacement of older staff, should this trend continue in the future;
- the percentage of staff aged over 55 has remained stable at around 15%.

However, another recent drastic measure that reduced the retirement age to 65 deprived the university of some of its talented and experienced professors. The government has now relaxed this rule, allowing for a smoother transition to a new staffing situation. While it is necessary to monitor these trends, they currently apply to a period which is too short for definite conclusions to be drawn. In addition, the very favourable staff-student ratio, a strength of this university, alleviates any immediate concern regarding staffing.

The majority of the academic staff are graduates from the university itself raising concerns about academic inbreeding. Apparently, this is a common situation in Romania as many graduates prefer to stay in the area where they received their education. In addition, according to interviewees, the most highly qualified candidates come from Carol Davila, therefore selecting new staff among its graduates is a logical choice. Still, it would be in the institution's interest to diversify, especially in view of the demographic trend.

## 2.4 Summary on governance

As a consequence of the 2011 law on education, Carol Davila appears to be undergoing a major change in governance. Previously, authority was solely part of the rector's function, but it is now being shared between Senate and rectorship. However, the structure remains fairly traditional with hierarchical delegation of authority, but academic, and especially administrative units, remain fragmented. It would be in the university's interest to develop a more integrated structure with further coordination between the various units in order to extend and harmonise communication channels and devise a long-term strategy. In doing so they would apply the recommendations of Ministers of education who "stress the importance of developing more efficient governance and managerial structures at higher education institutions."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bucharest communiqué, Bologna Process – European Higher Education website, <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=43>



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### 3. Teaching and learning

While research is an essential activity at Carol Davila, the interviewees considered that top priority should be teaching, although research is increasingly linked to it. The leadership aims to increase teaching standards and the level of education of graduates and develop postgraduate training so all students become excellent doctors. In order to achieve this aim the university is further developing links with other institutions in Romania and abroad, and the possibility of implementing a reward scheme for improved teaching was mentioned.

#### 3.1 The students

The high level of teaching and learning stems in part from the fact that Carol Davila selects some of the higher performing students at entrance. Students are attracted to the university's reputation as well as its location in the capital city with all its opportunities; the candidates with the highest achievement rate – a number limited by the government – are selected from the entrance examination. Similarly, when residency positions are available, the most qualified candidates following the results of the admission process come from Carol Davila. Therefore the level of students enrolled represents another strong point of Carol Davila. However, with the demographic downturn in Romania and the increasing opportunities for students to study in other countries, one wonders what will become of this advantage; a long-term student recruitment policy is indicated. Some initiatives in this direction have started with visits to secondary schools, launched by the service of Marketing and Image. So far, the students have proven to be proactive and efficient at organising various activities, including student exchanges and industrial fairs. They receive financial and administrative support from the university for social and professional events.

#### 3.2 Learning

Considering that students and academics frequently referred to lectures and taking into account the courses taught (list available on website), it indicates that teaching at Carol Davila follows a fairly traditional approach. In fact, the previous structure where education is delivered *ex cathedra* is still in place, simply renamed "disciplines", with no or few multidisciplinary approaches. However, the university is taking advantage of increased autonomy and is trying to update the curricula with new subjects, individualise teaching via modules, starting in the third year, and encourage independent studying habits. In doing so, Carol Davila would also start to implement the commitment expressed by the European Education Ministers at their meeting in Bucharest last April: "to promote student-centred

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learning in higher education, characterised by innovative methods of teaching that involve students as active participants in their own learning.”<sup>2</sup>

Students also need to improve their writing and presentation skills. To support this need, the university aims to provide the same standard of education as other well-known European medical universities. The university is increasing contacts with other universities, developing twinning programmes and dual or joint degrees as well as offering courses and programmes in English (this aspect, however, is still limited, but should expand considerably).

Carol Davila intends to involve students in research more and more (this point is further discussed below). Practical training is obviously an essential part of medical education: from third year onwards students spend more time in the hospitals and start performing clinical work on their own. The students appreciate the variety of opportunities but find it difficult to meet the different types of expectations from various hospitals. However, practical experience opportunities remain limited, particularly for dentistry students. In addition, a rather surprising rule applies in some of the hospitals linked with the university: the manager of the hospital is not a medical doctor and has barred the presence of first year students. For this reason and the complexity of reporting to several overseeing authorities Carol Davila is trying to become more involved in the running of the hospitals.

Like all institutions of higher education in Romania, Carol Davila is implementing the Bologna Process, but essentially in its formal aspects: a flexible three-tier structure in which the official degree granted after five years is the bachelor rather than a master's, ECTS, diploma supplement. Attempts are underway to define degrees in terms of learning outcomes and study loads. Overall the Bologna Process has had a limited impact on Carlo Davila's structure and culture; the staff feels that the Bologna Process is not really appropriate for medical training.

### 3.3 Teaching characteristics

Teaching is almost entirely full-time for postgraduate training, yet short courses must be organised, on campus or online, as health specialists (physicians, dentists, pharmacists or nurses) need regular updating of their knowledge and skills. However, the university shows

<sup>2</sup> Bucharest communiqué, Bologna Process – European Higher Education website, <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=43>



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little concern about employability (and has no need to do so) — enrolment numbers are controlled by the state and employment market demands are always high in this field. Besides, a number of doctors who trained in Romania find employment in other countries. In fact, the emigration trend is already causing shortages in this country. The leadership is concerned about this situation and the threats it brings. The recent marketing initiatives may represent the first steps towards offsetting this trend, but the team did not get the impression that these initiatives were dictated by an overall policy.

All academic staff has a dual appointment for teaching and research. However, as one of the benefits of the self-evaluation process, the SE group discovered that some academics feel they spend too much time giving lectures and not enough on their research: as a consequence these staff members were given more time to concentrate in particular on grants applications. Thanks to the very favourable staff-student ratio, academics maintain availability to the students, for which the students are quite appreciative. However, in view of the demographic and economic trends, this favourable ratio and its advantages may not last, and alternative approaches may need to be considered. Besides, with high demands from teaching, research, care of patients, and outside representation, the academic staff often feels overburdened.

Teaching and research equipment appear quite adequate, but perhaps underused. Library facilities are comprehensively equipped. Students benefit from adequate facilities for both studies and social life including teaching rooms, laboratories, libraries in terms of number of seats and books available, housing, dining, and sports facilities.

In general, a very good atmosphere pervades: the students expressed esteem for their teachers, who are supportive and take their comments into account; students are satisfied with the education they receive; they appreciate the variety of practical experience while having further expectations; as members of both the Senate and the Administrative Council they feel part of the organisation.

Some points could be improved such as information about courses, the grading system and learning outcomes; but this information is available but scattered among different sources. Their integration in a comprehensive, coherent system is suggested. Similarly, students do not find the internet platform easy to navigate and the assessment system itself appears inconsistent, especially for oral exams. Considering the positive attitude towards improving all aspects of teaching and learning there is no doubt that solutions to these types of difficulties can be found. A students association is actively involved in support services and student exchanges, but there is no alumni association. Apparently the latter is not part of cultural traditions, yet, the university maintains contacts with the Romanian diaspora and

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with graduates now in the work force. It could be beneficial to transform these contacts into an alumni association which could contribute to recruiting, marketing, and fundraising.

The Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery and Medical Assistants, FNAM, was established recently, in 2005, at the government's request in order to meet EU requirements. Up until then, in Romania, these health specialists were trained within the secondary education system, or two-year college courses. The new system created a transition problem regarding staffing the faculty as no nursing academics were trained for higher education teaching. During the transition period, academics from other faculties were teaching at FNAM, and its own teachers are gradually being trained. In 2012-13, for the first year, academics in this field only will teach at FNAM. Several nursing schools, i.e. nursing faculties in other medical schools, and FNAM have agreed to implement similar curricula.

### 3.4 Summary of teaching and learning

Students who enrol at Carol Davila are among the highest achievers, as shown by the exams results. They are taught by renowned and dedicated academics, they benefit from a favourable staff-student ratio, very satisfactory facilities for both learning and social life and a good, overall atmosphere. These are all assets for this university. The delivery of teaching remains traditional and multidisciplinary is limited. However, the leadership and academic staff seem intent on updating the teaching methods. They should consider more student-centred approaches, as recommended by the Bologna Process. Moreover, in relation to learning outcomes expected, a list of competences acquired in courses combined with an exact description of the grading process would support the students in their studies. Easy access to grades and credit points through a university-wide student platform would be an asset.

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## 4. Research

### 4.1 The state of research

The fact that all academic staff hold dual appointment in teaching and research, the number of research centres (19 listed in the SER) including a centre of excellence, all highlight the importance of research at Carol Davila and the leadership has made it a priority to involve more students in research. Basic research is carried out in the university itself and clinical research is done within hospital departments. The university wants to implement the “bench to bedside” medicine approach but admits it is far from it. Figures for 2011 give an idea of research in this institution: 745 registered PhD students, 115 PhD theses, 470 articles in ISI web of science journals, 30 contracts obtained or performed from international competition, and 16 patents. The high number of PhD students is partly due to the economic situation: graduates cannot be hired in an academic position because of the various restrictions, so by doing a PhD they remain in the field, at least.

Carol Davila aims to become one of the best research universities in the region; however it is still lagging in citation and extent of research in comparison to many European universities. A simple analysis, e.g. in 2010/2011, 409 publications for 1607 academic staff shows a relatively low rate of publications per faculty member. However, in many articles, authors often listed the hospital rather than the university as their affiliation and therefore the university was not credited for these articles – which is why the university now requires that an author lists the university affiliation first.

### 4.2 Developing research

To improve the situation the university is trying to encourage development of research in several ways: staff have been given more time to apply for grants and students are encouraged to participate in research, already from their first year on. However this voluntary participation must take place during a student’s own extra time, with no credit advantage. The next step should be to formalise this form of participation with some credit benefit, which the Senate can approve under the increased autonomy granted. Another example of taking advantage of autonomy is the Senate’s approval of another measure (just a week before the team’s visit in June) to encourage research: PhD students can now apply for research grants from internal funds, 20 of the 45 applications were granted. Regarding publications, an internal rule now applies which requires authors to list the university as their affiliation, and the hospital in second position. In addition, the university tries to encourage the publication of articles in international journals.

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Carol Davila also expands collaborative research with other universities in Romania and beyond, for example, with the University of Physics for bio-molecular research. Carol Davila has signed a number of formal agreements with other European universities and contact between individual staff/professors is frequent. The newly established Senate Ethics commission — in Spring 2012— oversees research practices and projects, but can conform to the ethics requirements of another country in case of collaborative research with an institution of that country.

The university wants and tries to improve its research output, as the above-listed measures show, but is confronted by a number of hurdles. It can apply for European funds from the FP6 and FP7, but all too often the research topics do not correspond to the needs or possibilities in Romania. The university acknowledges that it needs to enlarge dialogue with its potential partners, and adapt its research to European priorities. A recent law aimed to increase the level of research has modified the requirements for doctoral supervision. Consequently, a number of professors who had successfully supervised doctoral theses can no longer do so, and the number of doctoral degrees awarded will most likely decrease until all the new habilitation requirements are fully met by supervising professors. As an attempt to offset this problem the government has allowed universities to increase the number of theses that an authorised professor is allowed to supervise, but this measure will only have a limited impact on research capacity.

### 4.3 Conclusion

Carol Davila has launched several constructive initiatives to raise the level of research and outputs, but what appears to be lacking is an overall research policy with clearly visible goals, priorities and an implementation plan. It was mentioned however, that the initial aim was to broaden the research base, and for that purpose all research will be encouraged. Setting priorities would be part of the next phase. A nascent institutional policy targets publications and collaborative research. The university seems to be on the right track to increase the level of research and output; it should develop its research policy along these lines and should provide sufficient seed funding for research in order to undertake larger research projects together with industry.

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## 5. Service to society

By nature, this medical institution already contributes to serving society, not only in preparing health specialists for their future role but also during the training period when students and residents apply their newly acquired knowledge in hospital settings. In addition Carol Davila contributes by taking part in several patients associations.

Carol Davila has developed relations with several external partners, mostly small companies dealing with medical equipment or research. Both partners find benefit in these partnerships: the latest in corporate-oriented research and opportunities to use the outcome of research, and the university students get practical experience. However, these partnerships seem rather limited in number. The team is not aware of initiatives to extend them.

The recent Marketing and International Image service has taken several initiatives to popularise science and medicine, organising scientific congresses and attracting famous specialists as speakers. Some activities, even though not specifically of a "service" type, contribute to developing contacts with society, for example, marketing initiatives to secondary school students, or establishing links with a community of the Romanian diaspora.

Service to society is definitely part of a medical university's mission, here as in other institutions, but despite what is done at Carol Davila, the university does not appear to emphasise it as a major focus of concern in its strategic vision.

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## 6. Quality culture

### 6.1 Ethics committees

The new law on higher education focuses on quality — the whole purpose is to raise the standards of Romanian education, and as the Ministers of Education stated during their meeting “Quality assurance is essential for building trust”. At institutional level it means new structures. At Carol Davila a new Senate Commission on quality assurance was established in spring 2012 to oversee research issues as well as a new University Ethics Committee to deal with internal cases. Firstly, its role is to survey all activities and partnerships within the university. It has identified the need to revise the educational process, to train new competencies, to encourage the development of new approaches. The committee tries to find ways to harmonise the different demands from regulations and to standardise procedures, but reports that it is hindered by the frequent legislative changes.

The ethics committee has no formal link to the quality assurance commission, but its decisions apply to the entire institution. The code of Ethics applies to the entire university community; it can easily be accessed on the website. A procedure is in place for action by the ethics committee, with an appeal mechanism if needed. Since June of this year already 13 cases have been submitted, indicating that the university community is rapidly accepting and taking advantage of the new procedure.

### 6.2 Quality assurance measures

Information transparency is one of the principles of quality culture pursued by the university, it is inscribed in the regulations, and described in the SER (p. 19). Apparently, the university relies mostly on disseminating information on paper. Considering the communication difficulties due to geographical dispersion, more systematic use of electronic tools — website platforms, email, twitter, etc.— is highly recommended, but also implies, however, high IT performance and therefore a very good ICT service. Similarly, it would be important to develop indicators, which appear to be lacking at the moment, in order to monitor the use and outcomes of the various quality assurance measures. These indicators could be centrally monitored and reported (e.g. by the statistics office), and then the consequences drawn up by the relevant bodies.

Staff and students are fully aware of the need for quality assurance and of the measures taken in this direction. Each staff member receives an outline of his/her duties and responsibilities. The rector is informed and monitors the implementation of these outlines.

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In addition, course evaluations began three years ago and are now standard for all courses. It is noteworthy that students are not only taking part actively in these evaluations, but are aware of their impact, as teachers take the results into account and try to resolve whatever problems are expressed, for example exam scheduling. Course evaluations are conducted in several forms (see SER p. 18) to assess what is taught and how, but also interactions between students and staff. Staff performance evaluations also take place regularly. The process is well described in the SER.

Open debates follow course evaluations for the purpose of devising improvement measures. It is interesting that “the rector establishes targets and implementation of time length of the development processes” (see checklist for SER p.13).

Researchers follow European standards for their research, e.g. for immunology, and research outputs are evaluated against these standards.

### 6.3 Conclusion

The concern about quality assurance is fairly recent in its formal dimension — committees, course evaluations — but taking hold rapidly. While the university shows concern for quality improvement in several aspects and is implementing appropriate measures, the team was not aware that the ESG play an important part, or that an overarching policy was in place. It would be useful for the university to develop relevant indicators to monitor the implementation of such a policy when it is defined.

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## 7. Internationalisation

At Carol Davila, internationalisation comprises staff and student exchanges, international collaborative research, joint/dual degrees, and programmes in other languages. The university recognises the importance of the internationalisation dimension and has created a vice-rectorship specifically responsible for activities in this area, at the head of a European and International Office and even a department to deal with “National and International Image”, among other responsibilities. It is important, however, that the persons in charge of these services would be able to communicate in English and, if possible, another language too.

Students have taken part in the Erasmus exchanges for several years, but with 40 outgoing and 20 incoming students the number remains rather low. Besides the 50 or so bilateral agreements at university level, there are many agreements at specialty levels. In 2012/2013 the university enrolled 1468 “foreign” students — Romanians from abroad and non-Romanians — or about 15% of its student body, a percentage comparable to that of many European universities.

A more unusual approach is that student associations organise themselves most of the short-term didactic exchanges. While students must be complimented for being so efficiently involved in contributing to their education, one would wonder why these activities are not integrated formally into the university structure. At the moment these programmes are not granted any credit, although negotiations are under way.

In research most laboratories are in contact with their counterparts in universities in other countries, some have engaged in collaborative research. Carol Davila staff attend international conferences, some of them being hosted by Carol Davila. Carol Davila has launched courses taught in English for 200 first year students in order to help attract more international students, or to integrate more easily Romanian students from abroad. Students highly appreciate these courses and only wish that there were more at different levels. Indeed, if these courses are successful they would certainly contribute to developing Carol Davila’s visibility outside Romania. But students who would wish to follow an entire curriculum in Romania must be able to communicate easily in Romanian in order to deal with patients.

Yet for all these measures, which indicate deliberate efforts to increase activities in this area, the team did not perceive that a comprehensive policy for internationalisation had been developed. As for the other domains studied in the paragraphs above, it is the integration and holistic approach that appears to be missing.

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## 8. Conclusions

### 8.1 SWOT

One of the strengths is the rector's management plan which gives the institution strategic developmental directions for a four year period. In the area of teaching, strengths include: the quality and dynamism of the students, the excellence of the teaching staff, the very favourable student-staff ratio, the well-equipped facilities, the regularly performed evaluations, and the good atmosphere between staff and students. Regarding research, one notes the well-equipped facilities, and the dedicated individuals and the existence of centres of excellence.

A number of weaknesses need attention: in the past institutional policy has been lacking in research — a weakness currently in the process of being corrected — regarding reference to the university in publications, and the promotion of publications in international journals; the number of international publications remains relatively low in relation to the number of academics/researchers. The extent of international mobility of staff and students, as well as international involvement in research, also remain low. Facilities appear underused. In teaching and learning, multidisciplinary is very limited; students experience problems accessing practical experience in some fields, especially in dentistry. Although difficult to avoid at the moment, the recruitment process leads to academic inbreeding which could decrease the university's ability to renew itself. The fragmentation of the administrative structure may result in inefficient communication, and the geographical spread of several campuses/hospitals causes waste of time and overburdening of staff.

However, Carol Davila could take advantage of a number of opportunities. The increased autonomy granted by the new law gives the institution a chance to compensate weaknesses and develop new strategies. The increasing competition to reach a better position in international rankings should give occasions for benchmarking and stimulate improvement initiatives. The latter could be enhanced by EU openings in terms of networking and funding especially for research. But the bright and impressive students, and the clear commitment to change and improvement by the university community may constitute the most important opportunity for this university, as well as strength.

However, the university will have to take several threats into consideration. The declining demography is affecting Romania as well as many European countries; it is compounded by emigration, often of young and talented nationals. These two trends are already causing shortages in the medical workforce of the country. While increased international

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competition can be considered an opportunity, as stated in the paragraph above, it is also a threat as it further increases the standards to be met.

## 8.2 Overall impression

- This university provides good medical education, in part because it draws on high performing students. Facilities for education and student support appear quite adequate.
- Education is delivered in a traditional way; content and approach seem rather rigid, teachers may present a “professorial” attitude, but students are satisfied with this style.
- There is a good atmosphere between staff and students; they all feel part “of the same family”. Students may be somewhat unsure of themselves, they appreciate their teachers’ high level of knowledge, availability, and willingness to listen to students and take their opinion into account.
- In spite of the many contacts between Carol Davila specialists or laboratories and other countries, this university seems to function self-sufficiently: with few Erasmus or other exchanges, hiring mostly from among their own graduates.
- Taking advantage of the increased freedom granted by the new law, the university has adopted a new power and organisational structure, thus transforming its type of governance and adopting a model that can also be found in some other European universities.
- Two major obstacles hinder this institution’s functioning: the geographical spread of departments and faculties, and the constantly changing environment.
- Most importantly: the university has taken some constructive initiatives in terms of strategic development. Very recently, the rector proposed a strategic development plan for the next four years, and the Senate approved it. This plan addresses the university’s intention to increase the level of education of its graduates and the research output, and to improve administrative processes. However, a comprehensive strategy for implementation and collection of data for monitoring are still lacking.

## 8.3 Recommendations

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A number of recommendations have already been mentioned in this report. They are summarised here.

- Carol Davila is already providing education at a well-respected level, with a fairly traditional mode of delivery. The university should consider more student centred forms of pedagogy. This should include some form of recognition of students' involvement in research and international exchanges.
- The efforts to improve research outputs, international involvement and mobility of both students and staff should be pursued and extended whenever possible.
- All efforts to improve will be more efficient when appropriate performance indicators are constructed to monitor the implementation of the management plan. Sharing of the strategic plan by means of its key performance indicators could be a very important tool to establish institutional goals and an opportunity for communicating with the stakeholders.
- Efficiency will also be improved with greater coordination structures of both academic and administrative units.
- A more visible long-term strategic plan, with a clearly identifiable implementation or action plan would help integrate the different activities.

All these recommendations aim to accomplish the European Ministers' goal stated in their Communiqué in Bucharest: "Higher education should be an open process in which students develop intellectual independence and personal self-assuredness alongside disciplinary knowledge and skills. Through the pursuit of academic learning and research, students should acquire the ability to confidently assess situations and ground their actions in critical thought".

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