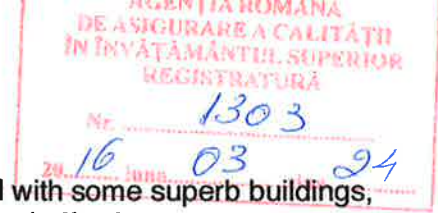


TG University Mission and objectives



This is a mature, small, specialist university built on a fine campus and with some superb buildings, well maintained and modern, sometimes brand new. There is a clear and effective management structure with roles carefully defined and understood. Students and staff seem to be content working in this excellent institution which, on the face of it, is an effective and significant provider. This is a university with true ambition and which has evident strengths. There is a clear and articulated vision for the university and a strategy to achieve it. It is a university which is conscious of its strengths but aware too of areas where it can perform better, an institution that knows how to evaluate itself, conscious of its strengths and its weaknesses. At a meeting with a range of administrative staff I detected a sense of frustration at regular changes in the law that prohibited long-term planning and a lack of freedom for the university to manage its own affairs. This is not intended to be a criticism of the university, rather a remark that the university does not seem to have much control over its own destiny.

The buildings seem to be well managed and in excellent physical shape, with a rich mixture of the old and new. The Advanced Center for Medical and Pharmaceutical Research, opened in December 2015 thanks to European funds, is an exciting venture which will offer real potential for the university when it is fully staffed. The sports facilities for staff and students are similarly superb with a brand new state of the art swimming pool and associated developments.

The Quality Processes in the university are well managed and in conformity with the expectations of the European Standards. There is full documentation on the university home pages, including a description of processes and a quality manual. Courses are evaluated by students, results are surveyed and disseminated and reports are duly produced. There is a good system of ensuring student evaluations are carried out and effective procedures for ensuring that peer review of teaching takes place. The processes seem to work well and are understood both by staff and students. There is welcome transparency in these processes and public awareness is good. It is recognised and accepted that in time more staff will be required to manage this area of activity. Of particular note is the presence of external examiners in some areas of activity (pharmacy), unusual in my experience in universities outside the UK but a clear manifestation of the desire to maintain excellence and standards and a model perhaps for other disciplines and other institutions.

Research: Clearly of fundamental importance for the institution which has systems in place to monitor the quality of the outputs. Of particular note is the process of annual self evaluation when colleagues evaluate their work and publications. An ethics committee is in place to oversee ethical issues relating to research in the areas covered by the university. Of concern, clearly, is the difficulty in appointing top class researchers who are attracted by larger salaries overseas. There is an internal fund for priming research, available through competition with external judges, and there is also research carried out in conjunction with local pharmaceutical industries and private hospitals. As always, finance is important and scientific research is expensive. Difficult decisions need to be made but the infrastructure is in place and there is huge potential here, if the funds can be found to appoint staff in sufficient numbers and of sufficient quality.

The University has a rich network of partners both in and outside Romania. Of note is the Qualimed project, now completed but clearly of interest and of value. With some 45 Erasmus partners the university caters for students wanting to spend time in European institutions - there is competition for places and of particular note is the practice-based work that takes place during the summer and that is particularly beneficial for students of medicine and dentistry. There are also strong links with Hungarian universities, as one would expect from a university in this location.

Meetings with students, graduates, employers. These were not very productive meetings as the various participants did not willingly enter into debate. The students were happy with the university and would change little if anything. They appreciated the fact that they had a voice, that there was open dialogue with staff and that they were given good feedback on their comments and evaluations. The graduates felt that they could have benefitted from more practical work on

A handwritten signature or set of initials in black ink, located at the bottom right of the page.

individuals rather than simulations, but recognised too that the university could only do so much in preparing the new graduates for future work and that the crucial element was the way in which the university taught them how to learn effectively. The employers spoke highly of the students they employed from the university with no real or consistent areas of weakness. They expressed the wish that the university would give them more notice about the numbers of students needing practical training. The view was expressed that the university did not always train students on the very latest equipment, but this will surprise nobody, given the cost of upgrading material. They felt too that the University could do more to further train professional staff after they had left the university, with more opportunities for continuing professional development. There was a view expressed that the University did not teach its pharmacy students the 'rules of good practice', although the meaning of this was not clear to me, a non-specialist.

At a smaller meeting arranged for me with recently-appointed staff there were no real surprises. There was some disappointment expressed about the low salaries and some suggestion that staff doing doctorates were required to do quite a lot of teaching (16 hours). The feeling was that the supervisory process was working exceptionally well with a main supervisor and 4 secondary supervisors - this is extremely generous and clearly much appreciated. There were no serious issues raised here that have not been seen elsewhere. Clearly, low salaries can lead to undesired consequences, highly trained individuals leaving the country for higher salaries elsewhere and a loss to the country which formed them.

At a small meeting with students there was evident enthusiasm. The public information about the university was accurate and there were no unpleasant surprises on arrival or during the course of their studies. A minor comment was that the teaching quality of staff was, as is often the case, of variable quality, and especially in those areas where no curriculum changes had led to a consequent recycling of teaching material and a lack of innovation. On the whole, the students were pleased with the education they received and of the facilities they encountered in terms of sports facilities, catering and recreation. More advanced students were similarly enthusiastic but made a number of thoughtful comments: The university was a mature institution that allowed genuine dialogue between students and staff; that the current review of the curriculum was important and would bring welcome change; a view was expressed that the university had made great progress over the past 5 years or so and had become one of the top providers in the country; it was a delight to be learning in a multi-cultural environment; that some of the equipment on which they were being trained was obsolete and of limited interest; that the move towards problem-based learning was a welcome initiative; that they wished there could be more evidence-based practice incorporated into the curriculum; that there were many excellent teachers and some less so - how can good or best practice be better disseminated across the university? How could the teaching 'champions' teach others?

It became clear from discussions and from documentation that the vision of the university was one that was shared by staff and students; there was evident ambition to improve and the process of self evaluation, of individuals and of the collectivity was a movement in the that direction. Student satisfaction rates are good and meet national expectations but there is still room for analysis and improvement; there is evidence of excellence in the institution but no clear evidence of what we would call an enhancement policy - what the university is deliberately doing to spread good practice? There is at present no formal alumni association and the University may be missing out as a consequence; it may be that communication between the university and the local hospitals could be improved.


This is a university with evident strengths and qualities; the management, learning resources, buildings and estates, student lodgings and catering, research environment, quality of the student body, are all first class. The university is already in the process of instituting change and this will no doubt bring transformation of various kinds. It would appear to be a university in which students like to study and staff like to work, a university with a reputation that is strong and recognised. Like so many institutions in Romania it suffers from a lack of freedom, freedom to change, freedom to adapt, freedom to govern itself. It suffers too from a shortage of funds - to buy expensive



equipment and to pay staff salaries that are competitive in Europe and that might prevent students of the highest quality leaving the country for more remuneration elsewhere.

In conclusion, the impression gained from this short visit was highly favourable, showing a university with many strengths and very few weaknesses.

Malcolm Cook, Emeritus Professor, University of Exeter, GB.

 21/3/2016