



**Strengthening of Higher Education in
Serbia**

An EU-funded project implemented by the Council of Europe



EVALUATION REPORT

of

THE UNIVERSITY OF NIŠ
FACULTY OF MEDICINE
UNFM

15th December 2009

Evaluation Report
of the
UNIVERSITY OF NIŠ FACULTY OF MEDICINE

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Report of Institutional Evaluation of the University of Niš Faculty of Medicine

Foreword

The Council of Europe (CoE) based on the request by the than Minister of Education and with the financial support of the European Union (EU) initiated in September 2007 a two year project “Strengthening Higher Education Reforms in Serbia”, aiming to help Higher Education Institutions of Serbia to reach the mainlines and outcomes of the Bologna process. This project has also been set up not only to facilitate the mobility of Serbian academic staff and students within European Universities, but also to enhance the eligibility of Serbian teachers and researchers to European financing of international research projects.

The Joint EU / CoE has been financed by European Union (90%) and Council of Europe (10%) and managed by the Council of Europe teams both in Strasbourg and Belgrade. It has been under the supervision of Mrs Silviya PANOVIC-DJURIC as Project Manager in the Belgrade CoE Office.

Pilot activity dedicated to improving quality at piloted HEIs was initiated in July 2008 and out of five HEIs that volunteered for this activity only Nis University Faculty of Medicine (UNFM) managed to undertake all required steps in order to get external evaluation. .

After completion of the second revised self-evaluation report and based on the Dean’s acceptance, external evaluation, under the Project auspice, was organized. The Dean of the UNFM proposed its institution to the audit considering the accuracy of his candidacy according to the following points:

- As it has been undergoing substantial reforms since 2000.
- As it has aimed to reach the Bologna process requirements for more than five years,
- As it had undergone, as part of University of Niš, an institutional evaluation programme (IEP) carried by the European University Association (EUA) in 2002 and since then is strongly committed in Quality Assessment and reforms in order to positively change.
- As it had performed a new internal self-evaluation report (SER) in 2007.

Higher Education Institutions audits have been defined as an externally driven peer review of internal quality assurance, of internal assessments and of improvements systems. Such audits are meant to focus, on the one hand, on the processes that are believed to produce quality and on the other hand, on the methods by which academics assure themselves that quality has been attained. These audits are not meant to evaluate quality of teaching and/or research as such, but to consider the management of teaching and research as fundamental aspects of the quality of the university. At the end of the day, external examiners have to evaluate how the institution satisfies itself that its chosen standards are being achieved.

By those means, the goal of this external review, was to offer UNFM leaders and staff an external insight from the former leaders of universities who have experienced different higher education system in Europe. The review process aims to be consultative providing tools to help the Faculty Dean and the Dean’s council to strengthen the reforms already in process and to continue and reinforce the enhancement of the quality.

Introduction

To prepare that evaluation, UNFM followed the SER guidelines for the usual EUA IEP process. The data collection and a first draft of the UNFM SER was previously realised in 2007 but had not been concluded by a formal external evaluation: it has been written for the official accreditation process which took place at that time.

The 2009 SER has been totally reviewed during the summer and early autumn by a new Self Evaluation Team (SET) appointed by the Dean on the purpose of the CoE evaluation.

Ass.Prof. Dr. Ivana STOVANOVIC was the coordinator of SET and has, also, been the liaison person with Mrs Silvija PANOVIC- DJURIC and with the team of external examiners.

SET was composed of nine members: the coordinator, three Pr.Dr. Vice-Deans, the Pr.Dr head of the Centre for Quality Assurance, two Prof. Dr. of the academic staff, the student Vice-Dean and the President of the student's parliament (6 full professors – 2 students).

In the 2007 SER process information came mostly from chiefs of the cathedra, heads of Departments and other academic or administrative remote units of the Faculty, all centralized at the Dean's office (rather bottom up procedure).

2009 SER is rather a "top" centered evaluation. Ass.Prof. Dr. Ivana STOVANOVIC and Vice-Dean Prof Dusica PAVLOVIC rewrote the whole document and produced chapter by chapter a SWOT analysis followed by action points.

In October 2009, Mrs Silvija PANOVIC- DJURIC hired, on behalf of [the Project](#), a team of three external evaluators trained in the EUA IEP for many years:

- Professor Ferdinand DEVINSKY head of the Department of Chemical Theory of Drugs at the Faculty of Pharmacy of Comenius University in Bratislava, former Rector of that university and member of the steering committee of EUA IEP; Slovakia.
- Bastian BAUMAN present Secretary General of Magna Charta Observatory for fundamental universities values and rights in Bologna (expert in Bologna process); Germany.
- Bertrand WEIL Emeritus Professor of Paris 12 University, honorary Dean of the Faculty of Medicine of Creteil (part of Paris 12 University), former vice president of Paris 12 University ; France.

The visit of UNFM was perfectly organized, prepared and followed by Mrs Silvija PANOVIC- DJURIC. The visit took place on Monday November the 9th and Tuesday November the 10th 2009 in Niš. The team wishes to thank Mrs. Silvija PANOVIC- DJURIC for her kind and effective concern, for her continuous presence with the team (out of debriefing times) and for her facilitating cooperation during its stay in Belgrade and Niš.

A few days before their departure for Serbia, Ass.Prof.Dr. Ivana STOVANOVIC sent the team members, by e-mail, as attached document, a very comprehensive, informative, complex, and well presented Self Evaluation Report. Some additional data were requested to be handed in before the beginning of the visit. The team could obtain these data in time before the visit. Still, the team has been a little surprised and disappointed not to receive, before, during or after the visit, data they asked for, concerning the rate and reasons of the student's drop out (if any).

The three members of the team had only a very short time to read and analyze the Status of the Faculty document they received the day before departure.

The 2009 SER, produced in a 49 pages document, using essentially the developments and data

collected during the 2007 SER (many cuts and pastes could be discernable) but included a new Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threats (SWOT) analysis followed by a list of not prioritized action points. To be of any utility, these action points would have to be put into a prioritized action plan.

Members of the team took enough time to deeply analyze all the data presented and the terms of the different SWOT analysis and defined action points. They had the opportunity, in Belgrade before their travel to Niš, on Sunday night, to debrief on their different analysis of the SER and data received, as to draw up the major points they wanted to highlight during their interviews.

Members of the team particularly appreciated the high quality of the three conclusion pages of the 2009 SER which could prefigure a good future action plan.

As for other university audits the team meant to consider in priority the management and the quality issues as to help UNFM's main actors in the daily decision-making processes.

The team neither wished to provide UNFM a blueprint for its developments or judge the teaching and learning processes or the quality of research, nor did they wished to provide any ranking of the Faculty within Serbia or elsewhere.

During the visit, in presence of Mrs. Silvija PANOVIC- DJURIC, the team interviewed more than 70 people: Dean, Vice-Deans, self evaluation team, leaders, the acting rector of the University of Niš, members of the academic staff from research centre laboratories and from clinics, the head of continuous medical learning, the representative of the Medical Chamber, some administrative staff including the Secretary General, and some members of the student's parliament including the Student Vice-Dean and the President of the students' parliament. The general enthusiastic and highly supportive commitment made a strong impression on the team.

The team has had to deal with a very tough agenda, wasting no time, and with too shorter than usual formal debriefing meetings. Nevertheless, all along visit, the team aimed and tried hard to:

- disseminate examples of efficient European, and international, practices,
- validate common concepts of strategic thinking and to elaborate shared ideas on quality culture.
- check the actual UNFM implementation of Bologna principles in terms of:
 - ECTS and learning outcomes,
 - workload for students as well as for teaching staff,
 - local recognition of externally obtained ECTS,
 - learning rather than teaching approaches,
 - diploma supplements deliveries,
 - opportunities for students and younger academic staff to perform basic and applied research,
 - given priority to the enhancement of research activity in the action plan,
 - internal and external mobility,
 - consideration of students as "competent, active and constructive partners" (Prague Communiqué 2009) in the decision-making bodies of the Faculty.

The meetings, all along the visit, were always helpful, friendly and frank. The goodwill and strong commitment to excellence were always evident throughout the Faculty.

The team would like to warmly acknowledge the cooperation and hospitality it benefited from during all its interviews in Niš. A large amount of new information from all the members of UNFM was obtained, so that at the end of the visit, the team could understand better how the Faculty was dealing with Quality and reforms and how much the objectives were achieved.

Before leaving Niš the team presented to the Dean and Vice-Deans a short summary of the future content of the audit report and recommendations. This written report mainly takes in account the topics developed during this last meeting.

The team wants to especially thank for their excellent help and hospitality Professor Milan VISNJIC, Dean of the Faculty and Assistant Professor Ivana STOVANOVIC, who made in a very short time a marvelous job to provide the data the team asked for as well as to manage and optimize the visit agenda. The team is very grateful to Professor Dusica PAVLOVIC Vice-Dean for Teaching Process Affairs for the very informative CDs she provided containing Power Point Presentations of Quality Assurance in UNFM and Bologna process incentives, as well as the detailed information concerning the Serbian Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance of which she is a permanent member. The team wishes especially to thank Pr PAVLOVIC for her presence (in spite of a recent painful personal sorrow) in many interviews and events which has been particularly useful.

The team also wants to thank all the other members of the dean's council and express its gratefulness to the Faculty members seating in the organized meetings, for their friendliness and hospitality.

1. History, Institutional norms and values

1.1 - Niš is a very ancient city of the Roman Empire. Formerly named Naissus, it was located in the south east of Serbia, on the roman military road from Belgrade to Sophia and Constantinople. Naissus is very famous for being a Roman "imperial city", and the birthplace of Konstantin.

Although it was regularly invaded and destroyed successively by the Huns, the Goths and more recently by the Turks and others, it has been for a while the capital city of Serbia and is obviously, nowadays, one of the main cities of this country. It is the major city of a large geographical area hosting more than three million inhabitants (A University Clinic hospital requires large market radius and pathologies diversity).

Since 1960, under the patronage of the University of Belgrade, the Republic of Serbia parliament established in Niš, a Faculty of Law and Economics, a Faculty of Engineering and a Faculty of Medicine (using the commodities of the large Clinical Centre already in activity).

Niš became a full university city under the Yugoslavian period. The University of Niš was incorporated as an independent degree-granting institution in 1965. The University progressively grew later on: since 1965, 13 Faculties were established, maintaining, nevertheless, a peculiar autonomy inside the University for the 3 "Autonomous" Faculties founded in 1960.

Anyway, according to the Serbian Higher Education Law, even if they are part of the Universities they belong to, Faculties enjoy a real autonomy. On the one hand, EHEA recommends the Universities autonomy as a major goal; on the other hand, a too large autonomy of Faculties within their University is somewhat in contrast with EHEA spirit...

The University is responsible for the diploma delivery (also signed by the dean of Faculty) and some central services but the rector is not dealing with the estate, the equipments, the incomes or the accountancy of the Faculty of Medicine. The University has no rights to control the programme courses or continuous education of professionals of health care content, for instance.

1.2 – Having read UNFM SER and the content of additional data requested, making use of the very important results of interviews they had in Niš, the team aimed to investigate:

- The Mission and Vision of the Faculty of Medicine: What is the Faculty trying to do?
- The implementation programme: How is the Faculty trying to do it?

- The evaluation processes: How does the Faculty know it works?
- The strategic planning: How does the Faculty plan to change in order to improve?

As a very short summary,

- According to the Statutes and to the SER the Faculty major mission is to provide society with capable graduates dedicated to good practices and the development of sciences.

The mission statement highlights continuous education.

From the beginning the Faculty has graduated a large number of Medical Doctors and Dentists or Stomatologist Doctors (and more recently Pharmacists) which are, as the team has been told, well accepted in the country and even abroad (missions and visions).

- As a consequence of the strong internal wish of the Dean and Dean's board, since 2000 and partially under external constraints, many reforms on management, teaching and research were initiated. Meanwhile, Faculty has set up several new courses and has implemented the Bologna process incentives. The changes in the approaches of teaching and the set up of a research policy have been included in the new Faculty strategy (implementation programme).

- To implement the quality culture a "Centre for Quality Assurance" has been established. Through the strong wish of quality enhancement Faculty developed many types of evaluation, such as student's questionnaires, students assessments monitoring, etc... (Evaluation processes)

- Each chapter of the SER has been concluded by a clear SWOT analysis and a list of action points. The conclusion chapter indicates clearly a strong willingness for positive changes with elements of "strategic planning". (Faculty improvement)

2. Context and environment

Since Professor Milan VISNJIC was elected Dean of the Faculty at the same time as his Vice-Deans team in 2000, UNFM has been undergoing substantial reforms and has aimed to reach the Bologna process requirements for more than five years.

Still, UNFM faces considerable constraints and threats:

- Scarcity of public resources in Serbia is a major problem, especially for Higher Education which is hardly the first priority of the government.

- The tremendous rise of cost in the health services is a common threat for all the developed countries; it is especially true for hospital financing and obviously a threat for all the clinics linked to Niš Faculty of Medicine.

- For a Faculty of Medicine in such a rapidly changing environment, there is necessarily a strong national competition for the scarce resources they receive from the government.

- Even in western and northern European countries, shared and transferable data bases of patients' individual observation records are very expensive to set up and often very weakly developed. Such databases are however essential to perform good clinical research. The lack of such databases is obviously a real harm for UNFM of clinicians' and teachers' scientific activities.

- The rapid increase of research cost leads to the necessity to raise money from abroad: more participation in European research programmes could be a way to solve such difficulties.

- There is also for UNFM a growing awareness of the importance and difficulty of international alliances and of the need for interdisciplinary studies and research.

- Unemployment of students who graduated from the Faculty of Medicine is another threat that could be helped by a strong mobility culture, among students and academic staff, inside the country or abroad.

Back at home, the team members have been able to watch the different Power Point Presentations

on the CDs they received during the visit. They show that UNFM heads are perfectly aware of all Bologna process requirements and EUA statements and recommendations through the different “communiqués” for Quality Assurance and capacity for institutional change.

These Power Points Presentations also demonstrate that UNFM is on the right way to improve teaching methods as well as quality assessment and incentives. It is a constraint but a real strength of the Faculty.

3. Autonomy

UNFM, according to the higher education Law of Serbia, enjoys a measure of autonomy comparable to that enjoyed by other Faculties in Serbia, and by many Universities in western and northern countries of Europe.

This autonomy is traceable in key areas such as:

- Organizing its internal structures
- Appointing Assistants, Associates and full Professors (within national norms)
- Enrolling “state founded” and “fee paying” students (in accordance with accreditation)
- Managing finance within the Faculty.
- Generating their own income from tuition fees or from research activities.
- Organizing national and international cooperation and exchanges.
- Organizing research initiatives and activities.

4. Management and decision making bodies

4.1- The Dean:

«The Dean of Medical School is elected, among full professors who are Faculty of Medicine full-time employees, for a three years period with a possibility of re-election» (*Statute Article 27*). The Dean is formally appointed (and could be dismissed) by the Faculty Council. Five months before expiry of the three years mandate of the previous Dean and the decision-making bodies, the Faculty Council set up a Committee composed of three members of the Council to conduct the election of the new Dean. Present members of the Departments, the Assembly for Education and Science and the Faculty Council will vote for the future Dean before the election of the future Council. Dean Candidates are proposed by departments. A department can propose only one Dean Candidate. If candidates have been presented by at least five departments, the Committee submits the list of the proposed candidates to the Assembly for Education and Science whose vote can suppress some names on the list. The list adopted by the Assembly is submitted to the Faculty Council. To become a new Dean the candidate has to receive more than 50% of the total members' votes (10 ballots including students) of the Faculty Council.

According to Statute article 30, the Dean of Faculty of Medicine has a real power:

He/she orders implementation of the financial plan of the Faculty of Medicine; he/she decides upon the use of resources of the Faculty of Medicine in the limits of authorizations and in relation to the decisions of the Faculty of Medicine Council; he/she prepares and presides at Assembly for Education and Science meetings; he/she prepares and presides meetings of the Dean's Board and Extended Board; he/she decides about teachers' and teaching assistants' promotions upon propositions of the departments and of the Dean's Board.

The election council, when hiring new teachers, is chaired by the Dean; it is composed by all the teaching staff of the Faculty and votes require the majority of the members composing that special assembly.

The Dean establishes the number and the duties of the Vice-Deans he needs. He chooses and proposes the Vice-Deans to the approbation of the Faculty Council.

He/she appoints chiefs of staff, heads of departments, chiefs of services, managers of study programmes, of centers, of laboratories and other organizational units in the Faculty of Medicine.

He/she decides about employment of the non-faculty staff.

He/she signs diplomas obtained in the Faculty of Medicine. He/she delivers diploma supplements.

The Dean reports directly to the Faculty of Medicine Council for his/her actions.

4.2- The Dean's Board or Dean's Council:

The Dean and his Vice-Deans rule the Faculty since 2000. The Dean and his team have achieved many reforms and settled Quality thinking all over the Faculty.

In this Faculty, an unusual great number of Vice-Deans give the opportunity to have in the dean's permanent council a fair representation of academic staff for pre clinics and clinics in Medicine, for Dentistry, for Pharmacy, for Vocational School and for Research Centers.

The President of the Faculty Council and the Secretary General are members of that managing board.

The Student Vice-Dean may sit in that board "depending on the need"; he/she is not actually a full member of the board.

The Dean's Council is an advisory board without any formal direct power: it may propose, the Dean makes the decision. Nevertheless, the Dean delegates his power to Vice-Deans and members of that board (except the Faculty Council chairman), in order to practice duties and tasks he needs them to deal with.

«Vice Deans perform duties and tasks delegated by the Dean» (*Statutes article 27*).

During his interview with the visiting team, the Dean stated that his Vice-Deans team is actually "very good", fulfilling all the task of the Faculty Academic management with a particularly high and willingness for reforms, quality culture, as well as for keeping the high tradition of the Faculty. Each Vice-Dean reports to the Dean for the sector he or she is dealing with.

4.3- The Faculty Council:

This Council is meant to be the major decision-making body of the Faculty but it decides and adopts everything "*upon the proposal of the Assembly for Education and Sciences*".

It elects and can dismiss the Dean and the Vice Deans. It accepts the financial plan, adopts a business report and annual accounts report of Faculty of Medicine. It approves the Plan for the use of investment funds. It decides about internal education organizational units. It decides about tuition fees...

The Council is composed of 19 members elected for a three year term of office (mandate).

11 members are elected from the academic staff at the majority of the whole of the academic staff. These eleven members have together the absolute majority of the Council. 3 of them must be teachers of preclinical studies, 5 must be teachers of clinical medicine, 2 must be teachers of Dentistry and 1 must be a teacher of Pharmacy.

2 members from the administrative staff are elected by all the members of administrative staff at the majority of the total number of members composing the administrative staff.

3 members of the students' parliament are elected at the majority of all the members constituting the students' parliament.

3 members are representatives of the founders' authorities.

The chairman (President of the council) is necessarily a representative member of the permanent Academic staff of the Faculty. He/she is elected during the first meeting of the newly elected Council at the majority of the members sitting in the Council.

The deputy chairman is necessarily one of the three representatives of the founders, elected in the same meeting by the same majority.

The Dean, Vice-Deans and the Secretary General cannot be members of the Faculty Council. But they have to attend and participate in meetings of the Council. They have no right to take part in the decision-making process of the Council, nor do they have the right to vote.

The Dean reports directly to the Faculty Council on his/her actions.

4.4- Assembly for Education and Science

The Assembly for Education and Science is exclusively made up of academic staff.

Each of the 30 independent Departments of the Faculty of Medicine elects one representative. (Except the two departments of Internal Medicine and Surgery with War surgery that have two representatives). The representatives are elected in each department by a public vote and at a majority of all the Department members, for a three years term, the same as for the Dean and for the Faculty Council.

The Dean and all the Vice-Deans are *ex officio* full members of the Assembly for Education and Science and have right to take part in decision-making and vote. Thus, Assembly for Education and Sciences is an about 40 members' assembly with neither any representatives of administrative staff nor any permanent students representatives.

The Dean is the chairman of the Assembly for Education and Science.

According to statutes article 41, the Assembly for Education and Sciences is the actual most powerful decision-making body of the Faculty as it "determines the proposal of the Statute of Faculty of Medicine; proposes candidates for the Dean of Faculty of Medicine; elects Council members of Faculty of Medicine from the line of Faculty representatives; determines the proposed financial plan, business report and annual billing of Faculty of Medicine; proposes the Plan of use of funds for investment; determines the proposal for education of internal organizational units; determines the draft decision on the amount of tuition fees; suggests study programs for all types and levels of study; determines the proper scientific field; decides upon scientific research programs and continuous medical education programs for innovation of knowledge; determines measures to encourage the development of highly successful and talented students; makes a general act of monitoring, securing, improving and developing the quality of study programs and teaching in Faculty of Medicine; approves topics for final papers (for both undergraduate and graduate studies); decides about master of science studies and defenses of doctoral theses; elects representatives of the Council and the University Senate; elects members of the Ethics Committee; suggests the number of students who enroll in the first year of all study programs; decides on the engagement of retired teachers in accordance with the law; decides on reviewers and reviews in publishing activities; establishes its permanent and temporary committees; considers and makes decisions upon requests of students from the scope of its activities; discusses the success of students; proposes awarding the title of Professor Emeritus to a full professor; proposes candidates for the Rector of the University; considers and prepares proposals about other issues upon which the Faculty Council decides; writes Rulebook about its own activities; performs other duties in accordance with the law, Statute and other acts of Medicine".

This very powerful assembly does not usually accept any student's or administrative staff

representation which is in contradiction with Bologna imperatives: given the Prague Communiqué, like in many other higher education institutions in Europe, UNFM should welcome student's representatives as full members with a right to vote in all governing and academic bodies and, of course, in the most powerful of them.

According to article 40 of the statutes : "When deciding on matters relating to assurance of teaching quality, reform of study programs, analysis of efficiency of studies and determining the number of ECTS credits, *students are obliged* to participate in the work of the Assembly for Education and Science and they comprise 5% of the total number of members (= 2 students) of the Assembly for Education and Science and 20% of board members of the Assembly for Education and Science" (= 1 or 2 students).

The Article 43 of the statutes indicates that "The Assembly for Education and Science forms permanent and temporary boards" but does not precise the composition of such boards.

Some interviews of academic staff, administrative staff and students gave the team the feeling that the minutes of the Faculty Council or the Assembly for Education and Science meetings are not distributed widely enough to all the persons involved in the Faculty (actors and commoners). The students as well as many academic or administrative staff members seem to currently ignore what is decided in these Assembly or Council meetings.

Elected representatives at the Council and at the Assembly should report monthly to their respective constituency giving information about their meetings in order to enhance transparency throughout all the Faculty members and commoners (students).

4.5- Recommendations.

The team recommends UNFM to:

- enhance wide information sharing of the governing bodies decisions all over the departments and laboratories and within the Student's Parliament to make the processes more transparent.
- put on the website all the minutes of the meetings of the decision-making bodies. (The team could not check the website: the English language version was "under construction")
- recommend and ask elected representatives at the Council and at the Assembly to report to their constituencies, as soon as possible after the meetings, information about their decisions.
- enhance the number of students and administrative staff sitting in higher decision-making bodies with rights to vote.

5. Finances

According to the Dean, the major constraints for the Faculty management are the scarcity of financial resources, the old and spoiled buildings and the insufficient square meters dedicated to convenient classrooms and research.

As a matter of fact the yearly Faculty income per student seems to be on an average of 2 800 € which is a very low amount of money (about one third) compared to average western Europe Faculties of Medicine. The yearly externally funded research is about 3% of the total income which is also dramatically too low. The faculty owns income is about 21% of the whole budget.

The team found the "financial" part of the SER very unsatisfactory. There were no relevant data presented in a way that the team could have any opportunity to evaluate the financial situation, the budget and generally cash flow of UNFM.

However, during a special meeting, the team was very much impressed by the quality of the interview they had with the head of finance and accounting affairs and by the accuracy of the data that they received during this interview, as well as by the perfect and constant equilibrium of the budget allowing significant reports (savings) each year. This equilibrium is unfortunately mostly reached due to the very low salaries. Employees (salaries and remunerations) expenses are 12% of the total budget (which on an average represents of 60% of the western European universities total budget). These 12 % are to be compared to the 30% permanent (structural) expenses and to the 19% maintenance and reparations expenses (together about the half of the budget). Advance training of the employees is 1,1%; administrative services represent 1,2% of the total expenses. On a separate budget, capital assets are 10 800 000 €out of which 40% come from the Faculty's own incomes or "reports" (savings). The team, nevertheless, did not understand why the Faculty did choose to spend its own money on investments on buildings rather than to spend it for salaries enhancements, for better funding faculty research projects or for support mobility of students or juniors academic staff.

However, the team wishes to congratulate the Faculty for its optimal use of its scarcest resources and would recommend to the Serbian government to enhance the public income of this Faculty of Medicine on the basis of its educational reforms and Quality Assessments as to enhance incentives-based salaries and remunerations of employees.

6. Research

6.1 - According to statutes article 9, the organizational units for scientific, research and medical work consists of an electronic microscopic laboratory (unique centre for electron microscopy in Serbia, nevertheless, with old and outdated equipment), a department for experimental surgery and pathology, a laboratory for biological, biochemical and molecular research, a general laboratory, a laboratory for cell structure, and a shared vivarium. All these six entities are located in the basement of the same building, partly and recently renovated and partially re equipped (HPLC for instance). Permanent teachers-researchers belonging essentially to preclinical medical staff host and manage these laboratories as a research centre. Clinical medical teachers, dentists and pharmacy teaching staff are welcome and merge this UNFM research centre for practical and/or fundamental research.

Some medical clinical full professors informed the team about the serious weakness of clinical data and database essentials for clinical or applied research, especially harming young researchers for their clinical research activity and necessary publications.

6.2- Research, and especially issues of research, is crucial for national and international recognition of UNFM. Of course the team, during its visit of the research centre, has seen and heard very good things on this matter. During the very last years a real enhancement of the number and quality of the publications of academic staff in good and international journals with SCI has been obvious. The team could ascertain the Faculty is on the right way and applaud that the Faculty (even if it is not yet enough) is supporting research from its own resources. However, Faculty willing to reach international recognition, it is crucial to harden the criteria to become a full professor (at least 3 SCI papers should be a minimum)

Research is mainly funded by the State: UNFM receives in 2009 about 3 millions € for researchers' salaries and 1 million €for research material (current) expenses. In the 2009 budget,

UNFM receives 0, 22 million for equipment purchase and 0, 9 million for new building construction.

The Faculty finances research from its own income for 0.18 million.

Nevertheless, research being one of the highest priorities for all the Higher Education Institutions, UNFM should settle research at the top of its action plan. At the same time UNFM should focus more on young teachers – researchers (heads of research centers complain, as an average, on the very old and out dated equipments especially for electronic microscopy and claim as an undue weakness their failure to attract young research fellows).

UNFM has to set up, through a clear research policy, its own system, shared by everyone in the Faculty, to support strongly the research achieved by the younger academic staff. Special “young researchers” grant support system should be established all over UNFM financed from UNFM own extra budgetary incomes. UNFM should look carefully to the research criteria when hiring new academics or when discussing about promotions of teachers at all levels.

SER indicates (page 6) “*Researchers at the Faculty of Medicine participate in research work on Ministry of Science funded projects, in Faculty funded projects and through various forms of cooperation with other research institutions in the country or abroad*”. For the 2006 / 2010 period, only 73 researchers out of 319 academic staff (< 25% MD PhD) are appointed to work on the State funded research projects. This percentage is obviously not enough...

SCI articles raised from 20 in 2005 to probably 85 in 2009 which will be about one article for five academic staff this year. Even if the rise observed during the five last years is on the good way it is still far from enough for the national and international recognition of UNFM.

At the level of UNFM, within, for instance, the “Centre for international cooperation”, or in any other professional structure for teaching-educational and scientific-research units some administrative and/or academic staff, or better a permanent office, should have the responsibility to be continuously informed in Belgrade and in Brussels about national and international research projects and public financing in the fields of biology and medical topics.

This office could, as well, be shared at the level of University with other Faculties as to reduce the cost of this service.

This office should be for all the teachers-researchers of the Faculty a go-between with the national and international offices that deal with the public research projects. It should give help to deal with official forms and comply with deadlines for submission. UNFM academic staff and especially the juniors should be helped by senior researchers to submit in the right forms for their own research projects as to better be funded nationally or internationally.

6.3 Recommendations.

The team recommends UNFM to:

- set its own research policy on the top of its strategic plan priorities.
- define a research policy as to facilitate a strong support to young researchers.
- higher the research criteria for professional promotions.
- facilitate international mobility by a sabbatical policy for the “researching” academic staff. Enhance hospitality for foreign teachers and researchers academic staff.
- set up new structure to gather all needed information about national and international funded research projects.
- give help to junior researchers by an appropriate structure or by the seniors, to submission in the right forms of externally funded research projects.

- pay particular attention to the necessary conditions (patients data sharing) for the achievement of clinical research.

7. Human resources management

The team considers that UNFM should, by Law, have the possibility and right to set its own human resources policy in the frame of Quality Assurance. It suggests the Serbian authorities to amend the Law in that respect.

Human resources acute management needs to be overseen at the level of UNFM as a fundamental obligation as it is an autonomous Higher Education entity.

As a consequence of the scarcity of public and private financial resources and of the rather low Faculty income, wages and salaries of academic staff as well as of administrative staff created expenses have to be optimized.

A significant part of the remunerations and extra salaries of all the Faculty staff should be modulated on performance based incentives.

7.1. Administrative staff.

The total number of non-academic staff for the Faculty (130) looks very high for the 2557 enrolled students and 374 (out of which 279 are teachers) active academic staff.

The team heard from the secretary general (whom the team thanks for her very precise and concise responses to the questions asked) that job descriptions did exist as well as annual evaluations of administrative staff. Nevertheless, SER page 29 states *“insufficient professionalism of the non teaching staff work (amateurism, imprecision and errors making) is noticed. One of the possible reasons for this phenomenon is that the system of salary allocation is based on already established coefficients and not on personal commitment and contribution”*. The team could not obtain any comment on this statement during the interview and was unable to understand what the consequences of the evaluations were.

For the team, each administrative post workload should be measured, or at least realistically estimated. A full task description for all these posts should be established. Each year a fair and well hearing evaluation of each administrative staff member should be realized as to verify the quality and achievement of the foreseen tasks of the post he or she occupies. Such an evaluation aims to identify if the right person is in the right place (employees working in the students' affairs office for instance) and if some adequate continuous learning and training should be proposed to the employee. It may also aim to justify not only a necessary mobility but also the modulation of the remuneration on a performance based incentives: mobility and/or promotion could be a by-product of these evaluations. Revising the total jobs descriptions could eventually show that some posts are not absolutely necessary and, as a consequence, that the salaries mass could be reduced and the money saved brought, for instance, in research budget according to the prioritized action plan.

7.2 Academic staff.

UNFM actual full-time researchers and teachers-researchers may, in the same normal day, have to suffer a very time consuming teaching, administrative and clinical duties. For them, time dedicated to research depends on the clinical and teaching as well as the administrative workload. The team constantly heard during the interviews many assistant professors or associate professors state that they had too little time for research and that it was difficult to get funds for applied research as they had not enough time to prepare research projects applications. The SER page 12

states as a threat for the curriculum (not mentioned in the SER research chapter): “*teachers and associates (have) simultaneous parallel work in private health care institutions and (commit) further personal outflow*”.

That probably means that the interpretation of “full time” is not the same for every academic staff member within the Faculty, which should be corrected!

7.2.1 – The SER page 29 states as a weakness for academic staff: “*fear of changes that reforms bring*”. More time could be given to research by modifying some obsolete teaching habits.

An even more learning oriented pedagogy, as well as new teaching methods, could save many teaching contact hours for the teachers at all level. University could concentrate on transmitting knowledge about positive aspects of the reforms: preparing formal lectures *ex cathedra* is very time consuming for teachers and these lectures are rather useless for students! Students coaching could be less time consuming than lectures... Continuous training of the trainers on new methods of teaching and learning should be a major incentive in this Faculty as to lower teaching workload for teachers. Coaching student’s theoretical learning, by themselves, should be a priority. Theoretical knowledge prerequisite for practical teaching and learning should be assessed before practical education courses as to avoid theoretical lectures during practical education.

A collegial management, including heads and staff members, should be settled within departments. A fair rotation and repartition of clinic, teaching and research tasks should be discussed at the level of each department. The department should be collectively responsible for all the tasks its members should assume.

UNFM needs to appoint younger academic staff, highly motivated for research activity. These younger academic should obtain, during short periods of active research, less teaching workload.

As far as the achievement of the different tasks linked to the department is concerned, seniors and younger academic staff should accept a dissociation of titles and functions.

Such a management of the departments could help to give more time for research, during a predefined period, to the younger (and frequently best) researchers within the department.

Other members of the department would have to partially become in charge of the clinical and teaching duties of their colleagues involved for a while essentially in research.

Later on, a new rotation should allow a new repartition of the teaching and researching tasks, giving more time for research to the members who had to previously assume more teaching duties.

7.2.2 - All the components of academic staff performances (clinical, administrative, teaching and research) should be individually evaluated and measured at least once a year. Performance based remuneration should be a noticeable part of the salaries and of extra remunerations.

The system of evaluation and performance based incentives for everyone should be broadly opened, well known by all the academic staff and published each year through an Assembly for Education and Science notice on the website.

7.3 - The team asked, but unfortunately could not obtain, for the age profile of academic staff.

Nevertheless, the whole academic staff is composed by 229 permanent Assistants, Associates and Full Professors (approximately 1/3 of each), 90 assistants, 12 lecturers and associates. These numbers probably indicate a large number of academic staff of an age close to retirement (at best, with a perfect age profile, 50 professors or more, many of them being full professors, would have to retire during the next five years).

Anyway, many promotions and recruitments, within the very next years, will be on process. UNFM should set up a human resources policy with an appropriate balance between the necessary internal promotion (based on research activity) and the new recruitments. The majority of recruitments favorable to young academic staff should be set as a priority. The academic staff resource policy should be re equilibrated in order to recruit more assistants and fewer professors. UNFM should avoid an excessive inbreeding but should rather get advantage of “fresh blood” that could enhance research units’ performances. Recruiting new young teachers could promote an age profile with a wider base and narrower top in order to enhance the number of active researchers.

Many clinician recruitments’ depend on the Clinic’s human resource management taking preferentially into account the clinical ability and expertise abilities of the sub specialist doctors; previous research activity during sub specialization does not seem to be taken into account for such recruitments.

Faculty has nothing to say about the experts sub specialized clinicians that the Clinics recruit. Faculty assistants are recruited among the clinicians hired by the clinics, at the end of their sub specialization, on the basis on an average of 8 grade (B and more) for the exams and ECTS obtained during the undergraduate studies; here again, previous research activity during sub specialization does not seem to be taken into account enough.

It would seem more sensible to the team to harmonize the Clinic’s and the Faculty’s recruitments as to set the same basis of recruitment for the future academic staff taking into account their future essential and obligatory research ability.

7.3 Recommendations.

The team recommends UNFM to:

- suggest that the Serbian Higher Education Law should give the Faculties in Medicine, according to their autonomy, the possibility, and the right, to set their own financial human resources management policy in the frame of Quality Assurance.
- obtain that remuneration, extra salaries and promotion of all the academic and administrative permanent staff could be modulated on performance based incentives. Both components of research and teaching performances (and, maybe, administrative concerns) should be evaluated each year for all the academic staff and mainly taken into account for promotion and remuneration.
- obtain that fulltime clinician-teachers-researchers do not have simultaneous parallel work in private health care institutions.
- take real care about the age profile of its academic staff in order to enhance the proportion of younger permanent researchers-teachers, to avoid a high trend of inbreeding.
- try to share with the heads of the Clinics administration a recruitment policy for the young clinicians MD PhD teaching staff.

8. Students Concerns

8.1 Students Status

Each year, incoming new students (1st year) are enrolled through an open competition. A *numerus clausus* of “State funded” students is established by the Ministry in charge of Higher Education for each undergraduate programme, taking into account, through a procedure of national accreditation, the number of square meters in the Faculty buildings, the number of appointed teachers, the quality of equipments, etc..., . In accordance with the accreditation, the Ministry in charge of Higher Education provides the Faculty with an amount of money depending on this entrance *numerus clausus*. At the end of the first year these “State funded” students must have acquired their 60 ECTS to enter the second year as still “State funded” students. “State funded” students having failed to acquire 60 ECTS during the year of study are not “State founded” anymore but could become “fee paying” according to a Faculty Council decision, within the frame of accreditation according to the estate, equipments and number of teachers. Under the same conditions, some of the students ranking immediately below the *numerus clausus* in the entrance competition can be enrolled as permanent “fee paying” students. Nevertheless, if “fee paying” students become good enough, with high grading in ECTS and without any failure during the last year they may eventually be placed in the “State funded” group of students. These two categories of “fee paying” students may represent 30 to 40% of the total number of UNFM students, depending of the rate of failure and of the rate of drop out. Tuition fees represent a yearly average income of more than 20% of the total income of the Faculty.

According to the SER, each ECTS point represents 27 hours of average teaching and learning time; 30 ECTS per semester of an average duration of 15 weeks means 54 hours of workload per week or an average of 9 to 10 hours working on current days! Students cannot have much time left for sports, for cultural activities, for rest or social meetings.

ECTS are obtained through a complex procedure, mixing:

- a value for factual attendance in theoretical or practical contact (face to face) teaching hours of the courses,
- a continual assessment of student’s achievements (20 to 50% of the final grade),
- a final exam achievement (at least 50% of the final score).

The Faculty is using the outdated ECTS grading scheme, which provides students theoretically with a relative grading. However, the Faculty uses a conversion from their own absolute grading to the ECTS grading scale. For each ECTS the student’s grading is:

A+ = 10 “extraordinary”, A = 9 “excellent”, B = 8 “very good”, C = 7 “fair”, D = 6 “sufficient”, E or F = 5 or less equivalent of Failure.

It should be noted that the use of the ECTS grading scale does not provide any added value. In fact, using a relative grading scale could be considered as jeopardising the use of learning outcomes as a criterion referenced system.

The failure rate, altogether, is on an average of 30 to 40%. Such a high rate of failure could indicate an under estimation of the actual workload of the students. This hypothesis should be factually measured and taken into account to eventually modify the imposed learning time per ECTS.

Nevertheless the team could look at the data provided, during the visit by the Centre for Quality Assessment, which shows a slow decrease of the failure rate during the last two years: may be

this data indicates a statistical reversible fluctuation; if that trend is confirmed it could mean that UNFM is on the good way.

A student can enroll for the following year if he/she has acquired a minimum of 37 ECTS. In case of failure (less than 37 ECTS) 2 years are allowed to get the necessary 60 ECTS and pass on to the second year; 4 years to pass to the in third year and so on, until graduation given after the student acquired the necessary 360 ECTS. Graduation may be obtained within the double number of officially needed years to complete the cycle of studies. The team could neither obtain data about the rate of dropout year by year, nor data about “State funded” becoming “fee paying” and *vice versa* students who could not (or would not) pay the tuition fees in case of failure. Nor could the team obtain data about other reasons for dropping out, nor could it get a precise answer on the average time to graduation programme by programme (which actually looks to be highly questionable).

8.2 Student’s representation in decision making bodies.

According to many final declarations of European Ministers for Higher Education meetings, the involvement of students and other stakeholders are key elements university governance and especially in the Quality Assurance process. Students, administrative staff and other stakeholders have to be significantly more involved in the management processes, significantly better represented with a right to vote in governing bodies. According to the SER and the Statutes of University, UNFM seems to be above average compared to a great number of European universities with regard to student participation in quality assurance.

The Students’ parliament is elected by all the students for one year with a representation of students from all the courses and programs (vocational, bachelors, masters...). Student’s parliament elects each year it’s President or chairman, its three representatives to the Faculty Council and the student Vice Dean. The team reminds that the Student Vice-Dean is not a permanent member of Dean’s council but seat in the board “if needed” and also the student influence in other decision making bodies and processes should be improved.

8.3 Student’s interview

The Students representatives, the team met, stated they had not read the SER and that they were not aware neither of the internal process of self evaluation nor of the external peer audit of the Faculty. Student Vice-Dean and President of student’s parliament attended the meeting and did not contradict their colleagues about this statement!

The team heard, from all the students it met, that university they were proud of their Faculty, that they would choose it again, that it is an actually “open doors” faculty with very easy contacts with teachers and academic staff. Exams are fair. Rules for obtaining ECTS and passage from one year to the next are clear. They had no problems with the internet connection, had enough computers available and had no problems using the library facilities. Some of the students at the meeting stated that the failure rate of individual students was due to an insufficient personal commitment and an insufficient personal learning time.

Nevertheless students complained about the overall weakness of practical education. They complained about the excessive workload in many courses especially in Pharmacy and Dentistry. They also complained about the complexity and overload of inappropriate or useless information

of many textbooks recommended for the preclinical studies which does not help student's learning process. In general, textbooks were often a matter of complaint; it does not necessarily seem to be the right way for the future to actually demand that all textbooks used must come from teaching staff of the faculty.

The team did not have the opportunity to deeply check the satisfactory about the quality of dormitories, cultural activities and sports facilities. But students did not seem to be worried about these items.

Students also complained about difficulties they often have with administrative staff at the Students Affairs Office. It seems, according to their statement, difficult to obtain the "diploma supplement" they have to pay for, which is in formal contradiction with Bologna process rules. Many of them also did not know about its existence, which certainly also is due to the fact that students will only receive a Diploma Supplement on request. Again, this is in violation of Bologna agreements, which state that students should receive it automatically.

UNFM does not publish results of student's questionnaires, although students recognize that they are taken in good consideration in decision-making bodies. Not publishing these results of evaluation is not in accordance with Bologna process principles. The Evaluation and ranking of all the courses and programmes should be widely published and advertised.

Nevertheless, UNFM should take care of the use of the students' questionnaires issues for the staff promotion and/or salaries: the system is meant to improve the quality of teachers and the students learning but a tension could adversely affect the grading in ECTS and the delivery of the credit. It could contribute to an artificial decrease of failure rate by a "grade inflation" offered by teachers who would appreciate getting good marks from students in order to be better promoted.

Nevertheless, at the end of the day, student's representatives conclude that they belong to an excellent Faculty and that they trust their teachers to reform the subject of their complaints.

8.4 Recommendations.

The team recommends UNFM to:

- actually switch from a still teaching oriented mentality of many of the academic staff to an actual student learning oriented thinking of all the members of the Faculty.
- set up an actual measurement, and not estimation, of the student's and teacher's workload for the achievement of each ECTS unit, in order to lower the failure rate of the students and lower the face to face teaching hours of the academic staff and enhance teachers' free time for research.
- set up a continuous training of the trainers as to clearly help students to learn by themselves the major part of the theoretical and practical knowledge they need for their future professional practice and lifelong continuous learning.
- enhance academic staff's involvement and quality assessment of educational practices in all courses and especially in first years of medical clinics and dentistry.
- enrich library and syllabus with reference to modern books that are better adapted to skills and learning outcomes for each course.
- collect and centralize all the failure rate data, the dropout rate data, the time to graduation data in order to monitor these topics in the Centre of Quality Assurance.
- take care of these data in order to improve the definitions of programmes and courses in order to ask the students a tolerable and adequate average workload.

- facilitate students' mobility within the University of Niš for elective courses and recognize the ECTS obtained in other Faculties for the grading in Faculty of Medicine.
- give the students more information about mobility abroad through a permanent office for international mobility of students and teaching staff.
- facilitate international mobility of students by the actual recognition of the ECTS obtained in other Universities of Serbia or abroad according to the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.
- erase the present gap between the learning outcomes of practical approaches and the teaching and coaching of students in the clinics.
- assess students' learning achievements before contact teaching and assess students' knowledge after lectures, seminars or practical education, including the data of these two type of assessment in the "continual assessment of students' achievements".
- collect all the data of these assessments at the level of the Centre for quality Assurance as to monitor centrally the quality of teaching and learning ; as to set adequate strategy to reduce the average students' failure.

9. Quality Assessment and Quality Assurance

According to the UNFM SER first statement:

"Having recognized the importance, as well as the necessity of continuous institutional self-evaluation in its strategic development, the University of Niš Faculty of Medicine performed the self-evaluation process. The principal intention of the University of Niš Faculty of Medicine is to make a critical analysis of its work in order to improve its current situation and define its strategic goals in the process of higher education reform, which has been underway in Serbia. Advices of the European experts would be of great benefit in the implementation of changes in line with the Bologna Declaration and adaptation to current European trends in higher education development".

According to the Power Point presentations by Assistant Professor Ivana STOVANOVIC and Professor Dusica PAVLOVIC Power Point Presentations, the team could attentively look at, as well as according to the SER precise content of many chapters or conclusions on QA, that:

- Heads of UNFM are perfectly aware and informed about the entire Bologna process requirements and Quality Assurance achievement necessities.
- The Dean and the Dean's council members, in duty since 2000 for three full mandates, did firmly and constantly direct UNFM on the way of reforms and positive changes.
- The Dean and Dean's council members are perfectly aware about SWOT analysis and Strategic planning.
- There is within the decision-making bodies of UNFM a real commitment for to improvement, Quality enhancement and change of Faculty Missions, Visions and management towards the future involvement the Country constraints.
- There is no doubt that the Dean and the Dean's council has a perfect willingness in these matters and are very active to *"propose developments and future options"*.

UNFM seems to be a leader on that way at least within the University of Niš and within many other Higher Education Institutions in Serbia.

Nevertheless, one the one hand, Quality Assessment is often considered within many faculty academic or non-academic staff as a "control", "inspection", "police", which does not contribute to establish a QA permanent widely spread culture; it is making people hesitant to properly use QA as a process for open, frank and constructive self-criticism as to be able to change positively.

On the other hand, action points for improvement listed in the SER page 46 are very credible parts of what could be a strategic plan. The team is on perfect agreement with the last sentence of SER: “*we can conclude that, despite difficulties and shortcomings which the Faculty has been faced with, the proposed developments and future options suggest that the Faculty has a good potential for further developments*”. Indeed UNFM is on the right path and could claim “Yes we can”!...

9.1. Intentions and reality. Strategic planning

Nevertheless, many discrepancies exist within the SER between enthusiastic declarations and an apparent different reality. During the interviews, the team could unfortunately acknowledge many of these discrepancies...

On the one hand, according to the SER assessments, UNFM is perfectly following Bologna process requirements, on the other hand “*fear of changes that reforms bring*”; “*all the curricula have to be updated and made outcomes based*” (SER p 12); “*still too many old fashion cathedra lectures*” show that the way will still be long to obtain a consensus within the whole (and older) academic staff for a real Quality culture within the Faculty.

To counteract this reality, the team suggests that the Dean’s Council could initiate again, after the re-election of Dean and Vice-Deans, from the bottom to the top, through a peripheral frank SWOT analysis, a new strategic reflection within the next few months. Such a joint proceeding involving the whole Faculty staff could be a good way to fight this “*fear of changes that reforms bring*”.

As a first step, on the level of each cathedra, department, laboratory, centre, administrative office, students’ parliament, performing a local and frank SWOT analysis and strategic planning could enhance the cohesion of the members. All these strategic elements should be collected, according to a clear deadline of very few months into the Assembly for Education and Science.

The Assembly could set up a task force including students and administrative staff representatives to compile and synthesize all these reflections.

As a second step a comprehensive, summarized and simplified SWOT analysis should be produced in order to be adopted by the Assembly for Education and Science. It should, then, be widely spread all over the Faculty as to be accepted by consensus by everyone in the Faculty.

The strategic plan, aimed to take advantage of opportunities and to correct weaknesses, that was issued from that second step should be clearly prioritized. The Assembly for Education and Science should clearly set its priorities and prefigure the prioritized action plan.

Then the Dean’s council could summarize even more the strategic plan into a two or three pages document widely spread all over the Faculty, using the website and other advertising actions, in order to obtain a new consensus. Time for critics and discussion at this step should again have a clear deadline of a few days.

On a third step the head of Faculty and Faculty Council should finalize and adopt a definitive plan of action, written with a precise deadline agenda as to be taken in account in the budget as a financed action plan.

Financial plan clearly supporting the plan of action agenda should be widely distributed and become a common rule for everyone in the Faculty staff.

The Dean could ask the «Centre for monitoring, assurance, improvement and development of Quality» to follow precisely the agenda achievements. The Centre would have to report, for instance every semester, to the Dean and to the Faculty Council. The staff members surpassing the action plan agenda and not achieving precisely their duty should be firmly called to order by

the secretary general.

9.2. Quality Management

Three levels of “Quality Control” are ruled in the «Centre for monitoring, assurance, improvement and development of Quality» established and in activity since 2002:

- survey and updating study programme,
- evaluation and modernization of teaching processes,
- evaluation of testing students learning and acquired knowledge.

48 out of 319 (some 15%) academic staff are involved part time in the subgroups of the center.

Many data and documents are collected from the students’ affairs office.

The center has the advantage of the full time devotion of an engineer and a secretary. The Center possesses computers with full intranet and internet connections and has a permanent and exclusive use of a large meeting room. Many of the members show an evident concern and a strong willingness to QA and faculty’ improvement.

However, the head of the QA department, who’s «part time» to the centre is rather like a «full time», did a very conservative impression to the team, with lack of drive for any positive change and had some problems with the interpretation of the data collected in the Center. The leadership of the faculty is recommended to rethink the conception of the QA Center and its top personal positions. The team considers that all the data concerning students testing and grading should be more widely compiled at the level of Centre. As to enhance (not to “control”!) quality in different fields, the «Centre for monitoring, assurance, improvement and development of Quality» should:

1) Through his evaluation of testing students learning and acquired knowledge group:

- Set up a new testing and grading data treatment methodology as to rapidly and precisely give the chiefs of cathedra, heads of departments, heads of clinics or laboratories an immediate and clear information and feedback on the matters of failing, dropout, duration of studies to get graduated, as to give them tools to lower failure rate, diminish dropouts and shorten duration to graduation.
- Re check and re design frequently each type of questionnaires used by the Center for QA as to optimize the information collected
- Give a permanent feedback to the students’ affairs office as to help its employees to get more information asked for by students, especially on the ECTS they cumulated at the end of each semester (which could, by the way, improve the relationship between students and the office employees). The latter should also result in students receiving automatically a Transcript of Records, following the European model used by ECTS.

2) Through its survey and updating study programmes the group:

- Take a peculiar care for each course (SER mention it frequently is not the case) verifying the fair congruence between study (learning) prerequisites, study programme skills and objectives, available documentation, learning outcomes and formulations of questions used for students testing.
- Get in frequent acquaintance with the local representatives of the Medical Chamber as to give a good congruence between Faculties graduates learning outcomes and the chamber’ criteria for licensing the medical doctors, specialists and experts.
- Get in frequent acquaintance (but not interfere) with the Center for Continuous Medical Education as to make in good congruence the market necessities and the courses offered by this Centre.
- Taking care of the specificity of the Serbian Law on continuous medical education and

synthesize the proposals of the different departments as to set priorities according to the market.

- Help the centre to have a real congruence between study (learning) prerequisites, courses skills and objectives, available documentation, learning outcomes and formulations of questions used for medical doctors testing.

3) Through its evaluation and modernization teaching processes group:

- Set up a continuous training of trainers and employees to the methods and methodology of quality assurance at all the levels of departments, laboratories or administrative offices as to develop a Faculty quality culture among all of its permanent staff members.

- Such a continuous training could be offered to the University of Niš other Faculties staff of in order to enhance the quality in this institution the Faculty belongs to!

9.3 Recommendations.

The team recommends UNFM to:

- have a “bottom up” strategic planning followed by a prioritized and financed plan of action with clear deadlines as to insure further developments of the Faculty.

- shift practically the usually used words in the «Centre for monitoring, assurance, improvement and development of Quality» from “control” which sounds the more harmful compared to such a gracious word like “enhancement”!

- centralize and make advantage of students testing data to give precise information on failure rate, drop out and graduating duration.

- make in every courses a fair congruence between courses prerequisites, study programme skills and objectives, available documentation, learning outcomes and the formulation of questions used for students testing.

- enhance perfect acquaintance with the representative of the Medical Chamber to help students licensing.

- get closely linked with continuous medical education to study the market needs.

- set up a continuous training for trainers and employees to methods and methodology of Quality Assurance.

10. Envoi

The team wishes to thank again all the staff and students of the University of Niš Faculty of Medicine for the excellent cooperation they offered during the external peer evaluation of their institution. It has been a pleasure for the team to be in Niš to discuss the future directions of the Faculty. At this time of profound and far-reaching changes in Higher Education in Europe and neighbor countries, the Faculty of medicine, and especially its Dean and Dean's council, is to be congratulated for its frank and open observation of its ability to meet the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. The team hopes that the Faculty will find its comments, recommendations and suggestions helpful.

The team is confident that the faculty will achieve its future development and will soon safely say that they were right to state "Yes we can".

RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

The team recommends UNFM to:

- enhance wide information sharing of the governing bodies' decisions all over the departments and laboratories and within the Students' Parliament.
- put on the website all the minutes of the meetings of the decision-making bodies.
- recommend and ask elected representatives at the Council and at the Assembly to report to their constituencies, as soon as possible after the meetings, information about their minutes.
- enhance the number of students and administrative staff sitting in higher decisions making bodies with rights to vote.

- set its own research policy on the top of its strategic plan priorities.
- define a research policy as to facilitate a strong support to young researchers.
- higher the research criteria for professional promotions.
- set up new structure to reach all needed information about nationally and internationally funded research projects.
- facilitate international mobility by a sabbatical policy for the "researching" academic staff. Enhance hospitality for foreign teachers and researchers academic staff.
- give help to junior researchers by an appropriate structure or by the seniors, to submitting their project proposals in the right form for externally funded research projects.
- pay particular attention to the conditions (patients' data sharing) for the achievement of clinical research.

- suggest that the Serbian Higher Education Law should give the Faculties, according to their autonomy, the possibility, and the right, to set their own financial human management resources policy in the frame of Quality Assurance.
- obtain that remuneration, extra salaries and promotion of all the academic and administrative permanent staff could be modulated on performance based incentives. Both components of research and teaching performances (and, maybe, administrative concerns) should be evaluated each year for all the academic staff and mainly taken into account for promotion and remuneration.
- obtain that fulltime clinician-teachers-researchers do not have simultaneous parallel work in private health care institutions.
- take real care about the age profile of its academic staff in order to enhance the proportion of younger permanent researchers-teachers, to avoid a high trend of inbreeding.
- try to share with the heads of the Clinics' administration a recruitment policy for the young clinicians MD PhD teaching staff.

- actually switch from a still teaching oriented mentality of many of the academic staff to an actual student learning oriented thinking of all the members of the Faculty.
- set up an actual measurement, and not estimation, of the students' and teacher's workload for the achievement of each ECTS unit, in order to lower the failure rate of the students and lower the face to face teaching hours of the academic staff and enhance teacher's free time for research.
- set up a continuous training of the trainers as to clearly help students to learn by

themselves the major part of the theoretical and practical knowledge they need for their future professional practice and long life continuous learning.

- enhance academic staff's involvement and quality assessment of educational practices in all courses and especially in the first years of medical clinics and dentistry.
 - enrich library and syllabus with reference to modern books that are better adapted to skills and learning outcomes for each course.
 - collect, centralize and analyze all the failure rate data, the dropout rate data, the time to graduation data in order to monitor these topics in the Centre of Quality Assurance.
 - take care of these data in order to improve the definitions of programmes and courses in order to ask the students a tolerable and adequate average workload.
 - facilitate students' mobility within the University of Niš for elective courses and recognize the ECTS obtained in other Faculties for the grading at the Faculty of Medicine.
 - give the students more information about mobility abroad through a permanent office for international mobility of students and teaching staff.
 - facilitate international mobility of students by the actual recognition of the ECTS obtained in other Universities of Serbia or abroad.
 - erase the present gap between the learning outcomes of practical approaches and the teaching and coaching of students in the clinics.
 - assess students' learning achievements before contact teaching and assess students' knowledge after lectures, seminars or practical education, including the data of these two types of assessment in the "continual assessment of student's achievements".
 - collect all the data of these assessments at the level of the Centre for quality Assurance as to monitor centrally the quality of teaching and learning ; as to set an adequate strategy to reduce the average students' failure.
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- have a "bottom up" strategic planning followed by a prioritized and financed plan of action with clear deadlines as to insure further developments of the Faculty.
 - shift practically the usually used words in the «Centre for monitoring, assurance, improvement and development of Quality» from "control" which sounds the more harmful compared to such a gracious word like "enhancement"!
 - centralize and make advantage of students testing data to give precise information on failure rate, dropout and graduating duration.
 - make in every course a fair congruence between course prerequisites, study programme skills and objectives, available documentation, learning outcomes and the formulation of questions used for students testing.
 - enhance perfect acquaintance with the Medical Chamber representatives to help students' licensing.
 - get closely linked with continuous medical education to study the market needs.
 - set up a continuous training for trainers and employees to methods and methodology of Quality Assurance.