

## Poznan University of Medical Sciences

### Assessment report in the first competition under the “Excellence Initiative – Research University” programme

#### 1<sup>st</sup> criterion - substantive quality of an application:

- a) the quality of a SWOT analysis with respect to the objectives referred to in paragraph 4 of Communication from the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 26 March 2019 on the first competition under the “Excellence Initiative – Research University” programme, including the quality of the analysis used to identify priority research areas;
- b) conciseness and concreteness of the SWOT analysis and the plan;
- c) relevance of the identification of the specific objectives referred to in paragraph 6(2)(a) and paragraph 8 of Communication from the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 26 March 2019 on the first competition under the “Excellence Initiative – Research University” programme in relation to the SWOT analysis results;
- d) appropriateness of the indicators chosen to describe the university’s potential and to measure the extent of the objectives’ attainment;

#### Substantiation

The quality of the application is low. The SWOT analysis is weak in the context of the research excellence initiative. The strengths referred to are general items (IT system, communication system, accounting system, ...). The introduction to the SWOT analysis does refer to three PRAs but justification for their selection is given in only the most general terms; at interview, the University did not take the opportunity to elaborate when this topic was raised. The honest assessment of weaknesses (in, for example, the lack of a central hospital facility) and threats (losing category A status in medical sciences) was appreciated. Selection of PRAs is based on (a) social need and (b) feasibility of researchers in these areas being able to devote sufficient time, with relatively modest clinical burdens. No mention is made in the application of current research strengths, nor is it argued why the Poznan University of Medical Sciences would be the place to outperform in these priority research areas (let alone as world leaders). However, during the interview some justification was provided. There is a lack of vision and substance. The plan is not a plan but a long wish list of items, not necessarily interconnected, nor connected to the objectives of the research excellence initiative. Specific objectives are too general and too broad.

**2<sup>nd</sup> criterion - relevance of assumed objectives to enhancing the international significance of the university's activity:**

- a) the extent to which specific objectives contribute to attaining the objectives referred to in paragraph 4 of Communication from the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 26 March 2019 on the first competition under the “Excellence Initiative – Research University” programme;**
- b) sustainability of specific objectives after the plan implementation period, taking into account, in particular, actions to be carried out in 2026.**

#### Substantiation

The most important section of this chapter (scientific goals) is neither developed nor articulated. It is unclear how the research excellence initiative objectives (world science, scientific cooperation, quality of education, ...) will be reached. During the interview, little further clarification was obtained. It is not clear, nor argued how the other 30 (or so) objectives will contribute to reaching to objective of becoming world leading in the priority research areas identified. The strong focus on improvement of the quality of individual researchers, and their support, is a notable feature of this proposal. The visiting academics programme to be introduced for foreign scientists is laudable. Also, an introduction of mandatory foreign internships for PhD students (3 months) and post-docs (6 months) in priority research areas will raise the quality. The use of PUMS international alumni to find new global collaborators is a good idea. Sustainability is not directly addressed.

**3<sup>rd</sup> criterion - adequacy of described actions to the assumed objectives:**

- a) appropriateness of the actions selected, including actions of ground-breaking and innovative nature, in the context of the specific objectives' implementation;**
- b) feasibility of the activities given the university's potential and budget;**

#### Substantiation

It looks like a real vision/plan is missing. The investment plan states that 90% of the grant will be invested in the research excellence plan, which - as such - is a good policy. However, at interview no clear plans were presented on how to invest, what to select, how to set priorities, how to select based on quality etc. The focus on the quality and support of individual researchers is a strength of this proposal, but little attention is paid to how this relates to the specific support of PRAs. Overall the ambition is modest, e.g. the target for the increase in percentage of international students is only from 15.47 to 18.00.

**4<sup>th</sup> criterion - potential of the university in terms of:**

- a) the impact of the university's research activity on the development of world science, especially in priority research areas;**
- b) research collaboration with research institutions of high international reputation, especially in priority research areas;**
- c) the quality of education provision for students and doctoral training, especially in fields of study and disciplines of science related to priority research areas;**
- d) the solutions deployed for the professional development of the university's staff, especially young scientists;**
- e) the quality of university governance and management;**
- f) other specific objectives to raise the international significance of the university's activities if these objectives have been determined in the plan.**

Substantiation

The university has only low potential to realize worldwide impact in research excellence in the priority research fields. There is insufficient foundation to build on: the impact of the university overall is world mean (normalized citation impact = 1.0) and not significantly higher in the 3 priority research domains (1.1 – 1.3). In the list of 15 prominent scientists, only 3 of them can be considered as thoroughly prominent (very good-top), with worldwide impact. There is potential in the list of prominent young scientists. However, taken together this basis is too small, and a critical mass of existing excellence is not achieved to carry the potential to develop this university into a world leader in the PRAs selected. The short lists of the most important research grants in 2014-18 for each of the priority areas – many fewer than the maximum ten allowed to be listed – is a concern. It is very encouraging that there are ongoing talks between four public Universities in Poznan aimed to establish the first broad federation in Poland, with one of the priorities to conduct research in the field of life sciences; this was considered by the review panel as a top priority for the region.

**Summary of assessment**

There are some commendable aspects of this proposal. For example, the focus on the quality of individuals – and providing the necessary support – is well-considered. The focus on early-career researchers, and mechanisms for their development of foreign connections, is a positive. These positives, however, are outweighed by serious weaknesses such as the lack of in-depth review of current strengths. The panel would encourage the university to continue its internal development towards improving quality and ultimately becoming a research university, in this process it may become beneficial to form partnerships or strategic alliances with other universities. In conclusion: we do not recommend the funding of this application in the excellence initiative, but we endorse this university in their commitment to federate with the other local universities to engage into a larger, more impactful initiative.

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**Total score**

20.5 / 40

**Recommendation**

Negative