

1st Progress Review Conference of the Universities participating in the “Excellence Initiative – Research University” programme

PRE-EVENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Uniwersytet Medyczny w Łodzi / Medical University of Lodz

- 1) Which of your university’s original objectives (when applying for a 10% increase in funding) have been chosen to retain having received a lower funding level? How is progress being reviewed?**

The objectives presented in the application were prepared not exclusively for the application in the Initiative of Excellence - Research University competition. They result directly from the University's strategy implemented since 2010, which is currently updated for the period 2021-2025, taking into account the recommendations of experts.

As it was emphasized by the Rector of the Medical University of Lodz during the meeting with experts before the competition was concluded - the University has a strictly defined goal and direction of development, and obtaining the status of a Research University would significantly accelerate the process of changes and development of the University. As the presented detailed objectives and activities enabling their achievement are consistent with the University's strategy, we plan to implement them gradually in the coming years.

Among the objectives presented in the application, the University has in recent months focused on increasing the impact of the University's scientific activity on the development of research, especially in priority research areas, and on introducing solutions for the professional development of university employees, in particular young scientists. The changes are monitored by the progress in the implementation of activities. The selected goals that we primarily focused on are implemented through activities such as: International Doctoral School, Individual employee development or Research Grants Program

- 2) Which measures have been added, deleted or modified following the recommendation of the reviewers? What changes to university strategy and policy have been made in the light of evaluation and the outcome of the funding competition?**

At the outset we would like to point out that we consider this questionnaire as a voice in the discussion before the conference and not as a form of a detailed report on the activities undertaken by the University, remaining in conformity with the intention of Minister Budzanowska's letter.

Independent assessment of foreign experts and recommendations received were the basis for re-analysis of the presented assumptions, which will result in the introduction of changes and modifications. In the recommendations received, the reviewers emphasized that „this is a good quality application, with an Extensive and clear SWOT analysis, and a clear plan, with a close connection between objectives, actions and indicators. The plan builds on two strengths: the CKD campus with state-of-the-art infrastructure and the established close interaction with three clinics / hospitals”.

The scope of priority research areas, the system of internal grants and a possible model of cooperation with other entities belonging to the higher education and science sector, among others, are subject to re-analysis and possible modification.

3) Did the university change/reduce the Priority Research Areas (POBs)? What is the scope of such change?

As part of the project entitled "InterScienceCloud - Integrated platform for information on the scientific activities of the Medical University of Lodz", the University implemented the PublicUM system in January this year, which allows for ongoing monitoring of areas in which we obtain the best results in terms of publications, patents, implementations or applications for research projects. Detailed analyses of data on the fields and quality of conducted research allow for a better specification of the scope of priority research areas. As the experts indicated in their assessment that the priority research areas seem to be relevant („The two PRAs, healthy ageing and civilization diseases and biomedical sciences and public health seem well-chosen”), we do not plan to change them, but only to define them with more precision.

4) What concrete measures has the university taken to encourage cutting edge research? What evidence can you provide of continuing promotion of research excellence at the highest levels of the university? Has this been achieved using alternative sources of funding, apart from the 2% subvention increase?

The University, intending to support innovative projects and research teams, changed the way of allocating funds, awarding bonuses and rewarding research teams, and established the Science Support Center as a unit that comprehensively supports scientists, among other activities. In 2019/2020, we noted a record number of applications submitted to the National Science Center and Horizon 2020.

An essential element in conducting innovative research in the field of life science has an adequate research infrastructure. Thanks to the alternative sources of financing obtained by the University, the vision of building the CKD campus is successfully implemented. The emerging new laboratories, Clinical Trials Unit, clinical hospitals and MediHub create an ecosystem conducive to the emergence and implementation of innovations in the field of medicine and health care, provide the necessary base for new research teams and attract researchers from abroad.

5) What progress has been made regarding establishment of a federation or merging with other institutions from the region, particularly in case of universities which received relevant recommendations?

We carefully observe the progress in federalization declared by some universities that have received the status of a research university and draw conclusions from the implementation of this process.

At the same time, we are tightening cooperation with academic centres in Lodz, not only on the scientific level but also by undertaking joint initiatives with a profound impact on the social environment, an example of which is, among others, launching of a virology laboratory on the CKD campus, set up within a few days, which is the second facility after the Provincial Sanitary and Epidemiological Station to perform diagnostics towards SARS-CoV-2. This undertaking was possible thanks to the well-established cooperation, mutually complementary competences, and the trust bridge between the Medical University of Lodz, the University of Lodz and the Polish Academy of Sciences. The result of these activities is the next stage of strengthening cooperation in the form of establishing the Academic Center of Virology.

We successfully implement scientific projects in consortia with research units that obtain competition-based funding - among others with the University of Lodz, the Lodz University of Technology, the National Center for Nuclear Research (POLATOM) and creating new interdisciplinary teams to carry out further research tasks (e.g. with the Institute of Immunology and Experimental Therapy, the National Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Occupational Medicine).

6) What steps is your university taking in order to increase the likelihood of enhanced levels of funding being secured in future rounds of the IDUB programme?

The University consistently implements its strategy and activities from the catalogue presented in the application form in the Initiative of Excellence - Research University competition. We make every effort to ensure that the scope of our activities is adequately modified and adapted to the recommendations received from experts.

7) The worldwide impact of measures and limitations introduced as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic should be taken into account in the implementation planning, and institutions should be driven by the will to maintain strategic development as planned. The good use of digital means of communication has a crucial role to play. Thus, universities should see to it that they are up to this challenge. What actions have been taken by your university in order to reduce the negative impact of the pandemic on the implementation of the university development strategy?

The current situation related to the COVID19 pandemic was a factor that additionally motivated us to accelerate some of the planned changes and, to some extent, forced their immediate implementation. For implementing the University's strategy, it was crucial to maintain proper functioning, ensuring the continuation of research and education at the time of social lock-down

and sanitary regime. We managed to prepare a training program using the methods and techniques of distance learning, maintaining the rhythm and schedule of daytime classes in order to disrupt the learning process as little as possible, thus, most of the classes were carried out in real time.

The safety of employees and students is a priority, therefore, during the pandemic, the University strictly followed the recommendations of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and the Ministry of Health, regulating its functioning with internal regulations regarding staying on the premises of the University and conducting research.

At the Medical University of Lodz, similarly to other institutions in the country, crisis management forced the necessity to prioritize actions and activities.

The University, obviously, due to its profile, was also actively involved in the activities limiting the negative impact of the pandemic on our society by establishing, in cooperation with the University of Lodz and the National Academy of Sciences, dedicated diagnostic laboratories and transferring the University's employees to work there, establishing the Academic Center of Virology, volunteer work for medical students and appointment of military students to the nationwide support system.