



Faculty of Medicine
University of Prishtina

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2016-2024

Executive Summary



June, 2016

Vision

Following the recent change in management at the Faculty of Medicine, the new management team has been working intensively to set key priorities that will drive the strategic development of the Faculty of Medicine for the period 2016-2024. The Faculty of Medicine aims to achieve excellence in medical education by focusing on the following key priority areas:

- *quality of teaching and learning;*
- *development of research capabilities;*
- *teaching and research infrastructure and*
- *internationalization of the Faculty of Medicine*

The above key priority areas set the agenda of the Faculty of Medicine for a four-year period of time. By achieving measurable significant improvements in all four priority areas, the Faculty of Medicine will reaffirm its current position of:

- ***being the primary medical education provider in Kosovo***
 - over 90% of Kosovans employed in Western Europe and US using their University degrees earned in Kosovo come from the Faculty of Medicine
- ***being the best research performing institution in Kosovo***
 - over 80% of publications (registered in Scopus), from the University of Prishtina, come from the Faculty of Medicine

However, the above priorities are designed to not only reaffirm and maintain the Faculty's current position in Kosovo. In this regard, the Faculty of Medicine aims to become competitive in comparison to key regional medical education providers in the region and provide high quality and competent health science graduates who are ready to become world class health professionals. Therefore, the Faculty of Medicine is aiming to become a:

World-class medical education provider

The Faculty of Medicine has traditionally had a very high quality of students who are admitted on very competitive basis. This provides for a distinctive structure of talented and motivated students who are currently at the forefront of our vision to achieve excellence in medical education. Ultimately, by achieving the above priorities the Faculty of Medicine, within a four year period of time, aims to build on what has been achieved thus far, make the most out of Kosovo's cultural, social and religious diversity and become attractive for international students from the region as well as the rest of the world.

1) Quality of teaching and learning

Improving the quality of teaching and learning at the Faculty of Medicine, as the leading medical education provider in Kosovo, is an essential component towards the overall progress in Kosovo's health care. At the same time, improving this aspect is a top-priority of our Faculty over the next eight years. The Faculty of Medicine will be continuously seeking to improve the experience of its students whilst ensuring they are equipped with necessary skills to enable them to become world-class health professionals. In this regard, our 2016-2024 development strategy is focused on optimizing the use of innovative teaching and learning techniques (such as e-learning, problem based learning and simulated learning) as well as technologies to assist us in achieving excellence in the quality of teaching and learning. Furthermore, the Faculty of Medicine over the next eight years will be working intensively to modernize assessment techniques to bring them in line with modern best practices whilst ensuring a high degree of compliance with academic integrity. This will be achieved through ongoing training and monitoring of our academic staff.

The Faculty of Medicine is striving to bring its students and academic staff closer to best practices of modern Universities by advancing the teaching of clinical skills and starting the process of embracing creativity and use of technology to facilitate medical education. In this regard, the Faculty of Medicine has already initiated the establishment of an **E-lab, Clinical Skills Centre, Clinical Facilitator role and a Drug Information Centre**. *We consider these as essential components enabling us to make the big step towards modernisation and internationalisation of our Faculty which will ultimately result in more competent graduates and a very much needed improvement of Kosovo's health care.*

a) E-lab

E-lab will be designed to integrate modern technologies aimed at facilitating medical education. In this regard, use of education-based software, e-learning and distant education modules will be made possible.

- **Expected benefits:**
 - Opportunity to use various softwares which will ultimately assist students' teaching and hence academic performance
 - Ability to better measure learning activities
 - Use of plagiarism software to safeguard academic integrity
 - Enhance learner engagement as well as retention
 - Ability to deliver more interactive study materials
 - Effective and easy access to various databases
 - Ability to better integrate our international alumni
 - Facilitate the ongoing training of our academic staff in various teaching and assessment components
 - Initiation of building online components of our units in various study programs and hence facilitation of collaboration with other international Universities and academics

b) Clinical Skills Centre

The Clinical Skills Centre will be a multidisciplinary clinical setting which will facilitate the teaching and learning of a variety of clinical skills simulating realistic environment before students go to practice in real patients towards to end of their studies. This would be the first time that students at the Faculty of Medicine learn in simulated realistic environment. Therefore, the Clinical Skills Centre will be a setting which provides very valuable physical and educational resource that facilitate clinical skills learning.

- ***Expected benefits:***
 - Improvement of student performance and reduction of student anxiety before practicing in real patients
 - Students reach a satisfactory level of confidence and basic proficiency before attempting various procedures in real patients
 - Improved patient safety and welfare
 - Fills the gap between theoretical learning and clinical practice

c) Clinical facilitation

Improvement of our students' clinical experience is a cornerstone of our strategic development. The Faculty of Medicine is strategically placed very well by being located at country's main University Clinical Centre. In this regard, we are strategically focusing on establishing the 'Clinical Teaching Facilitator' role which will re-integrate the experienced clinicians working at Kosovo's University Clinical Centre into our education system. The key role of Clinical Teaching Facilitators will be to assist our students and junior teaching staff around clinical activities with the view of advancing the clinical experience of our final year students. Within eight years, we will be working on achieving 100% liaison between clinical simulation practices that students get in the Clinical Skills Centre with real-life experience of final year students, also facilitated by senior clinicians (i.e. the Clinical Teaching Facilitators).

- ***Expected benefits:***
 - Advancement of students real-life clinical experience
 - Better utilization of clinical experience available at the University Clinical Centre
 - Improved collaboration and communication between the Faculty and various Clinical centres in the campus
 - Improved patient safety and welfare

d) Drug Information Centre

The Faculty has recently started the initiative of establishing a Drug Information Centre (DIC), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, University Clinical Centre and Kosovo's Agency for Medicinal Products. This is the first DIC in Kosovo and its primary mission will be to ensure rational use of medicines, minimize drug related problems and reduce hospital drug-related admissions in Kosovo. The DIC is being established whilst considering the World Health Organization (WHO) 1985 official recommendation for countries establishing DIC and FIP requirements for establishing DIC. Whilst the DIC's primary role will be for Kosovo's clinicians and patients to obtain un-biased information regarding drugs, it is expected that it will also have a number of positive effects in improving the teaching and learning experience of our students as well.

- ***Expected benefits:***
 - Advancement of students drug-related teaching activities
 - Better utilization of expertise currently available at our Pharmacy program and Clinical Pharmacology department
 - Improved collaboration and communication between the Faculty and various Clinical centres in the campus
 - Improved patient safety and welfare

In addition to the above initiatives aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning at the Faculty of Medicine, we are strongly committed to ensuring equal assessment opportunities, integration of patient-centred care and interprofessional education in our curricula, strengthen our current programs with high quality academic staff and utilize international and key local alumni in transferring best international practices. Within an eight-year period of time, this is expected to contribute significantly to closing the gap between industry and the Faculty as an education provider with the view of better meeting industry's needs and the Faculty yielding better equipped graduates. Ongoing training and support for academic staff is planned with the view of meeting this strategic development plan.

2) Development of research capabilities

The Faculty of Medicine currently produces over 80% of the entire research publication output of the University of Prishtina. We believe the Faculty is now ready to make the next step in relation to research capacity. This will be achieved by ensuring that within an eight years' period of time, the research output of our Faculty becomes comparable to our regional partners and also becomes competitive internationally.

Our vision is to double the Faculty's research output within an eight-year period of time by ensuring an approximately 25% annual increase in publication output of our academic staff. In this regard our strategic development commitments over the next eight years are to ensure:

- Training of our academic staff in relation to grant-application writing, project writing and research-paper writing
- Training of our academic staff in relation to academic and research integrity best practices
- Increased engagement of our academic staff in funding opportunities available from our EU and US partners
- Increased engagement of our academic staff with clinical research opportunities currently available (but not utilized sufficiently) at the University Clinical Centre
- Improvement of research infrastructure

With the view of achieving a significant improvement in our research capacity, the Faculty aims to have at least 50% of our non-Professorial academic staff (i.e. tutors) have a PhD degree and therefore have a competent capacity in relation to development, monitoring and assistance with various research projects at the Faculty. In relation to our Professorial staff, our vision is that at least 70% of our academic staff become research active by 2024. During this time, our vision is achieve a level which will enable us to set specific annual key performance index (KPI) parameters for *ongoing* research activity and output of our Professorial staff.

With the view of increasing the funding and improving conditions which will help us with improve our research performance, the new management has recently established a Working Group for Projects and Donations. This group which is comprised of our academic staff, will be supported in gradually strengthening its capacities and will lead the innovation and training of the rest of our staff in relation to various research and project-based activities.

3) Teaching and research infrastructure

The Faculty of Medicine is currently located at the University Clinical Centre campus. Our vision is to ensure that our students and academic staff have the necessary infrastructural basis and equipment which will enable them to have an excellent teaching and research experience. It is acknowledged that this is an area which requires significant investments in order to reach a world-class capacity and level.

In this regard, the new management has already identified a number of acute areas requiring improvement in existing infrastructure. Our strategy is to seek funding from various international donors in order to improve our teaching and research infrastructure. Within the next eight years, we expect that through various projects and donations (facilitated by the abovementioned working

group) this will be achieved. Additionally, our strategy is that for the first time, the Faculty of Medicine actively engages with industry partners (pharmaceutical and other medical partners), with the view of obtaining required support that will enable us to make the necessary infrastructural improvements.

Within the next eight years, our vision is to have the:

- new building of Deanery completed (currently under construction and expected to be completed by 2024),
- complete the building of the new School of Pharmacy building
- complete the building of laboratory animal facility

The above infrastructural projects are expected to significantly improve the teaching and research infrastructure at the Faculty of Medicine. Furthermore, the Faculty of Medicine will be focusing on also improving the administrative infrastructure by optimizing the use of technology in daily administrative activities, improve communication between staff and students as well as ongoing updating of our website. This is expected to result in better staff, student and third party satisfaction rates.

4) Internationalization of the Faculty of Medicine

One of our key priorities is the internationalization of the Faculty of Medicine. In this regard, we are strategically focused on improving and developing international partnerships with four main stakeholders:

- World-class Universities
- International alumni
- Albanian diaspora working in international Universities and health sector
- International donors focused on educational programs (EU, USAID etc.)

Within the next eight years, we aim to significantly improve the international outlook of the Faculty of Medicine by closely collaborating with world class Universities. IN this regard, the new management has already established communications and collaboration with a number of international institutions including: Geisel School of Medicine (Dartmouth, US), St Vincent University Hospital, University of Derby (UK), Linköping University (Sweden), Curtin University (Australia). These collaborations are expected to result in projects which will advance our teaching and learning as well as research capacity over the next eight years. We aim to expand the list of international Universities that we collaborate with.

To achieve internationalization of the Faculty of Medicine, the new management has planned active engagement of Kosovo's international alumni and Albanian diaspora working in international Universities and health sector. The plan is to

establish Visiting Professor and Adjunct Professor roles within the Faculty that will see an active engagement of international experts at the Faculty of Medicine. In this regard, the Faculty has planned monthly visits, lectures and workshops by international alumni and diaspora health and academic experts. These visits are expected to result in significant increase in engagement of teaching and research related activities of our academic staff and students with best international opportunities and practices.

To further achieve and facilitate internationalization, the Faculty of Medicine has recently established an International Experts Honorary Board, comprising of leading Professors from Western Europe, US and Australia. This board is expected to provide advice and facilitate the internationalization of the Faculty of Medicine.

Functional Independence

In order to fulfill the key priorities of the above vision of the Faculty of Medicine, a functional independence of the Faculty of Medicine from the University of Prishtina is required. This necessity stems from a number of reasons and activities which the Faculty of Medicine cannot currently perform as a result of centralization of these competencies at central levels of the University. The key reasons for which functional independence of the Faculty of Medicine needed are listed below:

- Ability to reach international agreements which will facilitate internationalization of the Faculty of Medicine
- Ability to independently apply and manage EU available funding which will stimulate and better manage EU based projects
- Introduce rules and regulations which pertain specifically to medical fields, that are not recognised in the current legislation of the University
- Increase the quality threshold and requirements in relation to staff's key performance index given that the Faculty of Medicine currently has the academic staff capacity for such an important step

The above functional independence is required in order to achieve a much needed improvement in Faculty's international outlook, Kosovo's Health care, becoming regionally and internationally competitive in medical education as well as with the view of our Faculty producing world-class health professionals.

It is worth emphasizing that a functional independence of the Faculty of Medicine was also recommended by international accreditation experts during the most recent audit of our undergraduate and post-graduate experts.