



## 3. lékařská fakulta

### Univerzita Karlova

# Theses for the candidacy for the Dean of the Third Faculty of Medicine, Charles University

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**The most important part of the faculty are its people:** students, teachers, clinical staff, administrative staff, secretaries, laboratory assistants and other technical staff - **without them the faculty would not exist.** Everything else is there to help the people of the faculty to work together toward common goals.

Our faculty has many strengths: it is part of the oldest and largest university in our country, it is linked by cooperation with other European educational and research institutions, and at the same time, thanks to its manageable size, it allows us to respond flexibly to new challenges, to develop and support the initiatives of its members in the teaching, scientific, clinical, and social fields. The tight interconnection with clinical medicine within the network of hospitals and primary care, but also with the field of public health, with an emphasis on the preventive aspects of health care and interprofessional collaboration with other scientific and medical disciplines, offers many possibilities and directions in which the faculty can develop its considerable potential, and to profile itself also in areas that are currently underrepresented in the spectrum of medical faculties - public and global health, environmental medicine, the study of social and economic determinants of health or a comprehensive view of the interaction of the human organism with its environment in health and disease.

My vision for the future faculty is an institution attractive and inspiring to all its members, an institution able and willing to provide support wherever it is needed, an institution confidently building on its foundations but also looking to the future, an institution open to new ideas, approaches and challenges and committed to fulfilling its social role in an increasingly fast-changing world.

To achieve this vision in the next four years, the faculty will need to do more in the following areas: support teaching and scholarship, increase the attractiveness of study and academic work, improve the facilities and learning spaces, and strengthen the atmosphere of cooperation.



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## I. Support for learners and teachers

The study of medicine and healthcare disciplines, as well as teaching and scientific work are not easy and can be significantly improved and made more enjoyable by targeted support from the faculty management and non-academic staff. We are undoubtedly the best among medical schools in supporting students, thanks to the work of past and current faculty leaders, the study department and other internal and external staff; support for teachers and researchers is only gradually developing.

## 1. Support for teaching

The Centre for pedagogical support should be an independent professional department to provide methodological guidance and infrastructural support for testing and examination in addition to faculty development courses for teachers. The existing psychological support for students should be complemented by similar support for teachers by offering supervision meetings where teachers can share their positive and negative experiences and learn from each other. The development of simulation and skills-based learning brings with it new pedagogical approaches, which the Centre's support will also help to expand. Thanks to well-run student evaluation we have detailed feedback from students, but we map the views and needs of teachers only informally. Regular (voluntary and anonymous) satisfaction surveys targeting the academic staff should fill this gap and provide better context for the support provided.

## 2. Support for research

Support for scientific and research activities at the faculty needs to be broadened, especially in searching for new sources of funding and identifying key research topics linking individual disciplines, which will enable better research profiling of the faculty and will target and intensify international cooperation. The expected phase-out of EU structural funds will make it necessary to learn how to take advantage of other EU programmes, which will require active programme scouting and building a broad expertise within the administrative staff to help academics to apply for and succeed in these programmes. Both the search for and the administration of these projects will undoubtedly require staff increases in the research and development administrations. Improving the flow of information between laboratories and clinical departments would also serve to improve scientific activity at the faculty - partners for research projects should not only be sought outside our faculty, but also within it. The existing LabNet database already improves the internal sharing of research instruments, and seminars or conferences organised in collaboration with Cooperatio research areas can help to spread



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information about active research fields and successes to the academic community.

### 3. Support for student research

For many years, student scientific activity has been an elective part of the study programmes to support the research activities of students. Many students express an interest in research each year but both they and their preferred departments often face barriers in terms of time constraints, funding for student research, and the amount of work that goes into training new scientists. At least some of these barriers could be removed by internal mini-grants for student researchers to help fund this activity, thereby increasing the attractiveness of research in general and nurturing a new generation of medical and healthcare researchers.

#### 4. Support for women and caregivers

Since in our society a greater part of the burden of caring for the family and household still falls on women, the faculty must prepare such conditions that allow women and caregivers in general to work flexible hours and part-time without financial or other penalties (benefits) and to return after a career break caused by the need to care for a child, aging or sick family members. To facilitate their return to work, the faculty must also provide good childcare or breastfeeding facilities.

## 5. Support for student activities and societies

Student association in societies and their activities are an essential part of faculty life. The voluntary activities of student societies increase the visibility of the faculty, create opportunities for meeting students in other study programmes or language parallels, and allow students to develop their interests and talents within the faculty but outside of their study obligations. There is no doubt that the faculty must continue to support such activities.

## 6. Improving information flow and communication

Support also includes good flow of information. The faculty has a wide range of databases that contain a great deal of important and useful information but not everyone knows where to look. Revising the faculty website, its structure and content rather than just the graphic template, is undoubtedly a necessary step towards better communication. New employees should be given basic information about the functioning of the faculty, important contacts and instructions on how to deal with common situations as soon as they start. Specialised newsletters of some faculty departments, such as the IT, the research support or the Centre for pedagogical support, can be efficient information channels in specific



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areas, such as research projects or didactics, to which people can subscribe based on their interests.

## II. Attractiveness of study and academic work

1. PR

If we want our faculty to improve in the future, better to educate, research and provide healthcare, we must be able to attract the best. One of the tools we are currently using only partially is active promotion of the faculty in traditional and new media. Much less is heard about the successes, advances, and qualities of our work than is the case with other medical and non-medical faculties. The personnel and professional strengthening of the PR department is a necessary step to improve this situation. Improving the clarity and ease of information retrieval on the faculty website, better handling of social media and use of new media formats can also help us to increase the attractiveness of the faculty. Talent attraction also applies to undergraduate and postgraduate students, in both Czech and English curricula. The quality and quantity of our "competition" is increasing and although our faculty has a good reputation in Czechia, our reputation abroad is spreading only slowly and patchily. Active outreach to selected secondary schools in near and distant foreign countries should complement the current work of student recruitment agencies and enable more applicants to start studying here. Broadening and deepening the geographical scope will provide greater stability against geopolitical shocks, increase diversity in the English-speaking parallel, and allow a wider range of applicants to enter.

## 2. Medical and non-medical curricula

Our curriculum of general medicine, which is unique in Czechia, has brought many innovations that have been copied by other medical faculties. Yet a significant part of the modernisation plans has remained at the level of the timetables and module names, without being fully implemented into the actual teaching everywhere. The next phase of curriculum development, not only for general medicine but for all disciplines, must be through the support and training of teachers. General and specialised didactic courses provided by the Centre for pedagogical support can help develop modern didactic practices in individual teachers, to whom are the original intentions of curriculum reform often somewhat distant. Undoubtedly, education at our faculty must continue to shift from the earlier emphasis on memorisation of facts to skill development, making the greatest possible use of simulation-based learning, and expanding the development of cognitive skills such as working with information, evaluating its quality and reliability, and being able to apply knowledge to real-world situations. The entry of artificial intelligence into



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the medical fields is already underway, and we need to adapt to a world where knowledge of facts will be less necessary than the ability to detect errors and correctly weigh the relevance of data provided by a machine. The high importance of public health highlighted by the covid-19 pandemic, the emerging risks associated with climate change, and the unfolding global security crisis call for strengthening these areas in our teaching and research.

Six years of studying medicine represents a huge chunk of time for many students, which can give rise to anxiety and fear of failure. There have been repeated suggestions as to whether, in line with the Bologna Process, the study of general medicine could be divided into undergraduate (Bachelors) and postgraduate degrees, as is the case for virtually all other fields of higher education. This change in the organisation of studies could give learners greater flexibility and facilitate career decisions before and during their studies by allowing them to achieve a formal university qualification earlier. This would be a fairly fundamental change, the feasibility of which is not clear at the moment, but I support a discussion from which a plan for the implementation of a two-degree study programme could emerge.

The size of the general medicine programme may sometimes threaten to overshadow our non-medical study programmes. All disciplines taught in our faculty deserve equal care, support, attention and development, the formal manifestation of which should be the representation of non-medical disciplines in the Dean's Council. The coexistence of different healthcare programmes at our faculty opens opportunities for interprofessional education, i.e. finding common themes and linking disciplines during studies as a precursor to future teamwork in practice.

### 3. Doctoral studies

Our PhD students are a key part of the faculty. Although there has been an increase in stipends and the introduction of a doctoral student income is imminent, the guaranteed income alone is not enough to live with dignity in Prague. Therefore, the faculty, together with the doctoral supervisors, must look for other sources of financial support. The quality of doctoral studies fundamentally depends on a well-functioning supervisor-supervisee relationship, which the faculty must not only support methodologically but also find out and intervene in time where there is a risk of failure of studies. The greatest predictive value for the successful completion of doctoral studies is the first year, and that is where we must focus support.

### III. Buildings, spaces and environment

## 1. New Teaching Centre





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We all know that the existing faculty buildings are bursting at the seams, scheduling lectures and seminars is complicated by the limited teaching capacity, laboratories are insufficient for expanding research activities, much less student research, and spaces for quiet study or just hanging out at the faculty are inadequate and often unpleasant despite ongoing efforts. A key project for the future functioning of the faculty is the construction of the New Teaching Centre, the design of which emerged from a very strongly represented open architectural competition. A major task for the future leadership of the faculty will be to finalise the design and obtain building permits and secure funding for the construction. Both of these prerequisites are already being worked on but the next few years will be crucial.

The new building is designed as a predominantly teaching building with modern classrooms and an expanded simulation centre in the basement, a study department on the 1st floor and a generous library with an open study room on the top floor with views of the surrounding area. The existing concept of the new building includes a student club and well-designed common areas for student gatherings, group work or larger group events. The construction of the new faculty building will also allow for a teachers' meeting room with refreshment facilities.

The next faculty leadership will also need to address the relocation of the current use of Building B for the duration of the construction of the New Teaching Centre. We are already looking for additional space in the broader area surrounding the faculty to avoid disruption of its operations by construction activity.

The construction of the New Teaching Centre is also associated with the redevelopment of the faculty's surroundings and the relocation of all surface parking to the underground stories of the new building. This will bring about a major improvement of the quality of faculty's surroundings and expand the opportunities for students and staff to be outdoors surrounded by greenery. Small interventions improving the usability of the faculty's surroundings are already being implemented and soon more people will find the outside of the faculty more pleasant.

Informal gatherings with barbecues and similar events also contribute to a good environment and getting to know people from other fields of study or work. It is great that there are more of them every year, and the faculty should not only provide them with infrastructure but more, e.g. in the form of informal meetings at the beginning and end of the academic year.

#### **2. Sustainability of faculty operations and environmental impact**

Building A does not have ideal energy parameters due to the time of its construction. In previous years we have investigated the possibility of equipping Building A with photovoltaic panels to reduce the need for



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externally supplied electricity. However, due to the design of the 6th floor, a larger installation of PV panels would be very costly and with a very long return on investment.

The design of the New Teaching Centre already follows modern sustainability requirements, which include a green roof, PV panels and rainwater management solutions. In addition to energy use, the faculty can contribute to sustainable operations by monitoring waste production, waste separation and disposal, as well as promoting sustainable transport. The design of the new Building B envisages the expansion of covered bicycle parking spaces, including the possibility of bike share facilities.

#### **3. Cooperation with clinical departments and other institutions**

The majority of our graduates work in the healthcare sector and clinical skills teaching takes place primarily in collaborating healthcare providers. The key to the functioning of our faculty is the cooperation with our partner medical institutions, headed by FNKV, our clinics in ÚVN, ÚPMD, NÚDZ, Faculty Thomayer Hospital, FN Bulovka, but also with cooperating hospitals across the Czech Republic (Liberec, Ústí nad Labem, Kolín and others). For the quality of clinical teaching it is necessary not only to deepen the existing cooperation and gradually introduce modern methods of clinical teaching and assessment of practical skills through cooperation with the Centre for Support of teaching, but also to expand further the network of teaching health care facilities so that the total capacity for clinical teaching is sufficient for the current and future numbers of students. Cooperation with the FNKV and other health care facilities is a crucial area and deserves a dedicated position in the Dean's Council. Scientific cooperation is equally important, and the faculty must continue to support close scientific cooperation within the so-called Vinohrady Campus, i.e. with FNKV, SZÚ and SÚKL, but also in a broader geographical relationship with NÚDZ, institutes of the Academy of Sciences and other institutions. The opening of the instrument and laboratory capacities of the 3rd Faculty of Medicine to cooperating institutions should contribute to this, so that our considerable investment in research instrumentation can be better utilised.

In the preceding three sections I have tried to present the main directions in which the faculty should change for the better in the coming period. What these brief theses do not highlight is the multitude of day-to-day activities that are functioning well in the faculty, thanks to the work of academic and non-academic staff and the input of the students. The big



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unknown that will influence the implementation of the plans described will be the future of university funding and the distribution of financial contributions within Charles University. However, I am sure that in the next four years it is possible not only to maintain our Third Faculty of Medicine as a good and friendly institution, but also to improve it in many respects and to bring it back to the leading position among Czech medical faculties.

In Prague on 23.4.2025



Jan Trnka