

## **Implementing the Higher Education and Science Act at the Medical University of Gdańsk – Challenges and Opportunities**

The first of the new regulations on how Polish universities will operate took effect in early October. Referred to as the Constitution for Science or Law 2.0, the Higher Education and Science Act of 20 July 2018 has now become law. With the new regulations in place, the academic year ahead will challenge the way our university is run and organised. Fundamental to the new Act is the transition from a quantitative assessment to a qualitative model of how science and education will be evaluated. The legislator's main aim is to diversify universities and divide them into leading research, research and didactic and vocational universities with research universities receiving the bulk of the funding for science. It is expected that as schools improve their effectiveness and research excellence over the coming years, some will emerge as strong leaders and move up in the international university league tables.

The Constitution for Science promotes university autonomy and leaves schools responsible for how they want to be organised and operated. Once adopted in the statutes, the rules of organisation will strongly determine the university's development, the funding it receives and, as a consequence, its position both at home and abroad. The new Act introduces fundamental changes. While faculties are no longer the basic units, the competence for running courses and powers for awarding the degree of doctor and habilitated doctor in the disciplines will now rest with the university as a whole. Minimum staffing limits will no longer apply and under Law 2.0 new courses will only be introduced if the scientific work has met research quality criteria. The reform allows for more flexible academic career paths with teachers working in didactic, research or research and didactic positions. Unlike the previous system of research assessment, the new model will evaluate the entire school's scientific achievement in a given field as opposed to evaluating individual faculties. Universities will have to appoint collegial bodies to bring together academic teachers from different faculties who study a selected field. Under the Act the senate may delegate doctor and habilitated doctor degree awarding powers to a collegial body relevant for the study area. In addition, Law 2.0 introduces a new body into university structures. A university board will be set up with some of its members coming from outside the academic community.

Because it represents the entire university community, the senate will select the board's members. The senate will consult the board and take the final decisions on the university's development strategy. In addition, as of next academic year, doctoral programmes will be run by interdisciplinary doctoral schools. This is why last April a team was set up with responsibility for establishing the Medical University of Gdańsk's Doctoral College. Its task is to ensure that the current third degree studies meet the new requirements as the new higher education and science law takes effect.



The university's funding system will also change as a result of the new legislation. What were previously didactic grants and earmarked statutory grants will now become a single subvention. It will be up to the university authorities how the funds will be allocated and spent. While the regulations allow universities a lot of freedom in how the school will be organised, the responsibility for the university's position and development now rests with its decision-making bodies, the rector and senate in particular. The tasks are demanding but it is our job to deal successfully with the challenges of the higher education reform. Let me assure you that transparency will be my top priority in implementing the new solutions which because they are so different from how the University has operated before, may be a concern to our community. It is our intention to keep the University's traditional division into faculties and collegial decisions. At the next meeting I am going to ask the Senate to set up a special committee inviting a broad range of members to work on the University's new statutes. The committee will be tasked with preparing a draft which I, in my legal capacity as rector, will ask the Senate to consider. Let us turn the Act's rules and objectives into opportunities for our University to help it position itself as a modern and dynamically advancing organisation.

We should work to use the new tools and opportunities optimally and improve the Medical University of Gdańsk's teaching and research effectiveness. I would like us to take advantage of the changes we have to make to achieve our main strategic goal which is to become a research university with a high international standing.

prof. Marcin Gruchała

Rector, Medical University of Gdańsk

## **The responsibilities of university authorities under the Higher Education and Science Act of 20 July 2018**

### **The university board will:**

- 1) evaluate the university's draft strategy
- 2) evaluate the draft statutes
- 3) monitor the university's finance and spending
- 4) monitor how the university is managed
- 5) nominate candidates for rector having previously consulted the senate
- 6) evaluate the university's strategy implementation report
- 7) carry out other tasks as set out in the statutes.

As part of its financial monitoring, the university board will:

- 1) evaluate the physical and financial plan
- 2) approve the physical and financial plan implementation report
- 3) approve the financial statements.

### **The rector will:**

- 1) represent the university
- 2) manage the university
- 3) prepare the university's draft statutes and draft strategy
- 4) report on the implementation of the university's strategy
- 5) carry out responsibilities under the labour law
- 6) appoint and dismiss university managers
- 7) run the university's human resources policy
- 8) create study programmes in specific fields, at a specific level and with a specific profile
- 9) open doctoral colleges 10) manage the university's finances and spending

11) ensure compliance.

The rector will introduce the rules of organisation which define:

- 1) the university's organisational structure and the division of tasks within it
- 2) the university's administration, how it is organised and how it operates.

**The senate will:**

- 1) adopt the statutes
- 2) adopt the study regulations
- 3) adopt the university's strategy and approve its implementation report
- 4) appoint and dismiss members of the university board
- 5) evaluate candidates for rector
- 6) evaluate the university's operations
- 7) formulate recommendations for the university board and rector
- 8) award academic degrees and art degrees
- 9) award the title of doctor *honoris causa*
- 10) determine the conditions, procedures and dates to start and finish enrolment for studies and specialist courses
- 11) determine programmes for studies, post-graduate studies and specialist courses
- 12) determine doctoral college study programmes
- 13) determine how learning outcomes will be recognised
- 14) nominate candidates for institutions representative of the higher education and science community
- 15) carry out tasks involved in:
  - a) assigning levels of the Polish Qualifications Framework to qualifications awarded after graduation from post-graduate studies
  - b) including qualifications awarded after graduation from post-graduate studies and other forms of education into the Integrated Qualifications System
- 16) carry out other tasks as set out in the statutes.

**The disciplines within medical sciences and health sciences under Ordinance of the Minister of Science and Higher Education on fields of science and academic disciplines and artistic disciplines of 20 July 2018:**

- 1) pharmaceutical sciences
- 2) medical sciences
- 3) physical culture sciences
- 4) health sciences.

**Selected elements of the schedule for implementing changes required by the Higher Education and Science Act (the HES) of 20 July 2018**

**1 October 2018**

C category or no category organisational units will lose their powers to award degrees of habilitated doctor.

The powers to award degrees of doctor or habilitated doctor will be granted in fields and disciplines specified in Article 5.3 regulations, under the current law subject to new evaluation requirements:

- 1) the powers to award the degree of doctor shall be granted to an organisation with at least 12 employees holding the degree of doctor at the least, with that organisation being their primary place of work, who represent the academic or artistic discipline relevant for the awarding powers the organisation is seeking;
- 2) the powers to award the degree of habilitated doctor shall be granted to an organisation with at least 12 employees holding the title of professor or the degree of habilitated doctor or having powers equivalent to those of habilitated doctor under Article 21a of the Act repealed in Article 169.2 or Article 226 of the Act specified in Article 1, with that organisation being their primary place of work, who represent the academic or artistic discipline relevant for the awarding powers the organisation is seeking.

Where procedures were initiated and not finished before 1 October 2018, the university becomes party to the procedure if the procedure was carried out at the request of the organisational unit.

The position of full professor within the meaning of the HES becomes the position of professor within the meaning of Law 2.0. The position of assistant professor and visiting professor within the meaning of the HES becomes the position of university professor within the meaning of Law 2.0.

### **30 November 2018**

The deadline for submitting the first field and discipline statement by people who conduct a scientific activity, participate in the conduct of a scientific activity within the meaning of Law 2.0 (Article 343.7)

### **31 December 2018**

The deadline for submitting the first employee statement for evaluation purposes by people who conduct a scientific activity (discipline statement).

The deadline for the university's senate to amend the resolution specifying the conditions, procedures and dates to start and finish enrolment for studies in academic year 2019/2020.

The deadline for the senates of public universities to define and announce university admission rules for laureates and finalists of central level olympiads.

### **1 January 2019**

The deadline for universities to amend employment contracts to take account of minimum wages.

### **31 January 2019**

The deadline for universities, research institutes, Polish Academy of Sciences research institutes, international research institutes to submit a statement that their powers to award the degree of doctor or habilitated doctor have been assigned to the appropriate discipline as set out in regulations issued under Article 5.3 of Law 2.0. to the Central Commission for Academic Degrees and Titles.

### **30 April 2019**

The deadline for the Central Commission for Academic Degrees and Titles to announce that powers to award the degree of doctor or habilitated doctor have been assigned to the appropriate discipline in one of the fields. The Commission also defines the powers assigned to fields and disciplines under which the degree of doctor or habilitated doctor may be awarded until 31 December 2023.

From that day the degree of doctor, habilitated doctor or the title of professor in new fields and disciplines, including procedures initiated before the effective date of Law 2.0., will be awarded by the organisational unit's board until 30 September 2019 and from 1 October 2019 by the body designated in the statutes.



The deadline for initiating a doctoral programme, habilitation and professorship procedure under the old rules (degrees and title awarded in new fields and disciplines).

The Ministry of Science and Higher Education announces the “Initiative of Excellence: Research University”.

**1 May 2019**

From 1 May to 30 September 2019 no procedures to award the degree of doctor, degree of habilitated doctor and title of professor will be initiated.

**31 May 2019**

The deadline for making a public announcement of the senate’s decision regarding recruitment to doctoral colleges and doctoral college training programmes.

**30 June 2019**

The deadline for the senate to appoint the first university board (before statutes deadline, the senate determines how the appointment will be done; the university board operates until 31 December 2020).

**30 September 2019**

Boards of basic organisational units and heads of basic organisational units are no longer the university’s bodies and lose their powers. Deputy rectors stay in their positions until 30 September 2019. From 1 October 2019 rectors assume the rights and responsibilities of the heads of basic organisational units.

**1 October 2019**

Start date for procedures to award the degree of doctor, degree of habilitated doctor and title of professor.

The degree of doctor or the degree of habilitated doctor is awarded by the senate or a body designated in the statutes. The senate is in charge of the procedure to award the title of professor.

The new statutes implemented under Law 2.0 take effect.

The deadline for amending study programmes due to start in academic year 2019/2020 to meet the requirements of Law 2.0.

The deadline for assigning study courses to academic and artistic disciplines specified in regulations issued under Article 5 and to merge several courses that have the same level, profile and name.

The deadline for new employee policies to take effect.

The deadline for the new study regulations adopted by senates to take effect.

The deadline for adopting doctoral college regulations under Law 2.0. Doctoral college regulations to take effect.

### **1 January 2020**

The deadline for adopting students' union regulations.

### **31 March 2020**

The deadline for rectors to input employee data into the Integrated System of Higher Education and Science Information (POL-on) (update from the effective date of Law 2.0).

Input of academic and artistic achievements data – from 1 January 2017 until the effective date of Law 2.0.

### **1 January 2021**

The Central Commission for Academic Degrees and Titles which is party in court cases is replaced by the Council of Scientific Excellence.

The start of the first evaluation of the quality of scientific activities for the years 2017-2020.

### **31 December 2021**

Habilitation procedures, procedures to award the title of professor and doctoral programmes that have not been finished before 31 December 2021 shall be annulled or closed respectively.

### **31 December 2023**

The deadline for doctoral studies initiated before academic year 2019/2020 under old rules. Doctoral studies oversight until 30 September 2019 is provided by unit board and from 1 October 2019 to 31 December 2023 by bodies designated in the statutes.