Mission statement
The Faculty of Medicine of the University of Geneva meets societal needs by seeking excellence in teaching human and dental medicine at the undergraduate, postgraduate, and continuing education levels, as well as in basic biomedical, translational, and clinical research.
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1. **BACKGROUND**

The Faculty of Medicine of the University of Geneva (UNIGE) works within the general framework of the University’s missions, particularly in teaching and research. The Faculty also endorses the University’s mission, as defined by law, as a public service contributing to the community’s cultural, social, and economic development, and works according to the principles of objectivity, open discussion, and falsifiability, which serve as the basis for any intellectual and scientific approach.

These principles are also the foundation for the Faculty’s partnership with Geneva University Hospitals (HUG), thanks to an agreement to put our common strategic goals into practice. These same principles guide our interfaculty and interinstitutional approaches in the fields of teaching and research as well as in global health and international and humanitarian medicine. Furthermore, the Faculty keeps the public informed and contributes to the understanding of changes in knowledge and health-related issues and their impact on society and the environment.

The Faculty is also committed to gender equality, and encourages diversity in the representation and responsibility of its staff as well as throughout all stages of the academic career. We also share in the collaboration, coordination, and planning efforts for teaching and research, both in Switzerland and abroad. Respect for academic freedom, ethical principles, deontology, and scientific integrity are guaranteed, and the same is true for human dignity, transparency, fairness, and impartiality. The Faculty promotes sustainable development in its teaching and engages employees in a hands-on approach aimed at reducing its carbon footprint.

2. **OBJECTIVES**

This document presents the Faculty of Medicine’s strategic plan for 2019-2023 and is in line with UNIGE’s strategic goals and the collaboration agreement with HUG. This strategic plan may be adapted according to the circumstances and will be supplemented at regular intervals by more appropriate action plans.

3. **TEACHING EXCELLENCE**

The Faculty’s view on teaching relies on international recommendations, is based on research results published in medical education literature, and takes into account that, in 2019, its human medicine and dentistry study programmes were granted accreditation for a period of seven years.

The current reforms and innovations under consideration are linked to several pedagogical challenges. Medical training is a continuum that integrates undergraduate, postgraduate, and continuing education, and the same ideas should govern these different stages in the training
of physicians and dentists. In recent years, the needs of society and institutions have changed—shared decision making with patients, the aging population, multimorbidity, the classification of diseases, specialized medicine, precision medicine, primary care physician needs, working conditions, digitization and even generational changes have all influenced medical practice. As a result, physician training must take these changes into account in order to meet the medical needs of the population. Furthermore, institutions such as ours have an obligation to be socially accountable and, in particular, to guarantee quality education.

Our strategic focus thus aims to:

a) Ensure a curriculum that meets the requirements of the new Swiss medical training framework including the social accountability of medical education

b) Strengthen training in scientific research throughout the course of study

c) Focus on active learning and assessment methods consistent with the curriculum

d) Develop a student support and monitoring programme

e) Strengthen teacher training and teaching recognition in the evaluation of academic careers

f) Maintain training governance that includes teachers and students and is open to the community

g) Be mindful of the specialized nature of the dental medicine programme

h) Support the biomedical sciences curriculum and the development of master’s level training

a) Ensure a curriculum that meets the requirements of the new Swiss medical training framework including the social accountability of medical training

The new Swiss reference framework for medical training (PROFILES) confirms the need for major educational reforms by promoting a competency-based approach (knowledge, skills, attitudes) to ensure, in the long run, that students can autonomously perform specific tasks, known as EPAs (Entrustable Professional Activities). This approach also provides students with a solid background in basic medical science.

Many changes are needed to meet the requirements of this new reference framework. However, the Faculty of Medicine has a history of daring to change since its teaching reform in 1995 and has demonstrated its ability to adapt quickly to new developments. In addition, our integrated curriculum, which offers constant immersion in a clinical setting right from the beginning of study, and our governance structure, which favours change, allow the Faculty to be confident in its ability to meet these challenges.

The curriculum review must therefore be carried out in light of the new PROFILES reference system. In particular, we must introduce synthesis, integration, and therapeutics units to the master’s programme in accordance with the decisions recommended by the “State of Education
20 Years After the Reform” task force (see f. of this document) and strengthen patient care training to be able to ensure students’ autonomy according to the EPAs.

There are two key elements for these changes to take place. The first is the creation of a curriculum map to make sure our programme aligns with the PROFILES reference framework and to highlight the links between the different learning activities and their corresponding objectives in the framework. A computer-based tool for this mapping is currently being developed. The second is to offer students the chance to document and validate their experience throughout their course of study in relation to the PROFILES framework so that their competencies and autonomy can be recognized through a new tool: a recently introduced electronic portfolio that is under constant development.

Internships in a clinical setting are essential for acquiring and assessing competencies and for establishing students’ level of autonomy in specific tasks (EPAs), and thus require our collaboration with external clinical partners.

*Maintain and strengthen a longitudinal primary care medicine programme*

The primary care medicine programme is currently in place from the first to the last year of study and evaluating it will allow for any necessary fine-tuning and strengthening. We should, for example, boost training in ambulatory care. We need to improve our current internship programme by expanding the duration and number of internships offered, including those outside of the Canton of Geneva. We can strengthen training in primary care medicine by creating a university hospital centre for primary medical care that brings together the Faculty of Medicine’s current Unit of General Internists and Paediatricians (UIGP) and the HUG Primary Care Division.

*Interprofessional education*

We must continue to develop and intensify interprofessional education within our programme so that it becomes an integral part of the compulsory curriculum. To this end, the Faculty will increase its involvement in the Centre for Interprofessional Simulation (CIS) to improve research and development.

*b) Strengthen training in scientific research throughout the course of study*

We would like to strengthen students’ awareness of basic, translational, and clinical research, in all aspects, which will include highlighting the different experimental methods used within the Faculty. To this end, we will implement the following actions:

1. Identify and reinforce, throughout the entire undergraduate curriculum, all existing activities that can be linked more explicitly to research skills in order to improve visibility. Certain concepts in basic science and basic medical science will also be reinforced during clinical practice at the master’s level.

2. Set up a Research concentration for those who express interest. These students will carry out optional research activities (including the Research Programme for Medical Students (PREM) and elective courses) as well as laboratory internships in basic or clinical research.
Planning an increase in the number of clinical research internships for PREM is also needed.

In addition, we need to explore internship opportunities for physicians at EPFL, EPFZ or other Swiss universities, by using the same model as the gateway programme, for example, which allows the Faculty to welcome EPFL students who would like to become medical engineers. We also aim to promote these kinds of exchanges.

c) Focus on active learning and assessment methods consistent with the curriculum

There is no need to demonstrate that learning methods in which students actively participate lead to a better education than just passive listening. Problem-based activities in small groups should be maintained, however, change is needed in certain teaching methods, such as “reversed classes” (classes in which the students prepare lectures for specific topics) or team-based learning. Additionally, ex cathedra lectures should introduce moments of cognitive activation through questions or exercises. Distance learning and e-learning will also be examined and encouraged.

One known difficulty of educational systems is ensuring an adequate link between educational concepts and evaluation methods. Students tend to work according to their future assessment, so the format should be carefully considered. We kept this in mind when introducing continuous assessments in the 2nd and 3rd years of the bachelor’s programme but need to make sure that successive assessments are more cohesive. To this end, the coordination of all assessments will be carried out by an evaluation group, which will collaborate closely with education authorities.

Whether for teaching or assessment, the continuum between the bachelor’s and master’s programmes must be strengthened.

d) Develop a student support and monitoring programme

Around 10 to 15% of medical students experience learning difficulties, and the earlier they are addressed, the better the outcome. The portfolio and continuous assessments serve as a good means of detecting these difficulties in order to provide appropriate support to those who need it. To do so, we need to establish a monitoring and support group independent of the evaluation group that includes academic advisers.

Students are not spared from mental exhaustion and burnout, as there are pivotal moments in the medical curriculum that prove to be particularly difficult. The exam in the first year of the bachelor’s programme causes significant stress and incites intense competition, and the years of clinical training, during which students face the sometimes very harsh reality of the medical profession, represent periods of greater fragility.

The Faculty undertakes to strengthen its support beyond having the teaching staff, supervisors, programme advisors, or support and monitoring programme committees detect possible attacks on mental or physical health and will take more preventative action. The mindfulness programme launched in 2019 may be expanded, as well the specialized consultation to which students now have access. We will also develop other preventative actions, particularly for the
first year of the bachelor’s degree, whether for somatic (e.g., vaccination) or psychological matters. Many of these actions will take place in collaboration and coordination with student initiatives.

e) Strengthen teacher training and teaching recognition in the evaluation of academic careers

For several years, the Faculty’s Unit of Development and Research in Medical Education (UDREM) has offered basic training workshops for new teachers and professional development workshops for teachers and researchers. Basic workshops are compulsory while advanced workshops are optional. At the request of our teachers, who all have varying needs, this training has recently been reorganized into individualized courses, the outcome of which will be analysed to make any necessary adjustments.

The Faculty has also offered the opportunity for promotion to those who have a strong teaching record. We will strengthen the information available and offer candidates and promotion boards tools for easier advancement and analysis of these dossiers, as well as promote transparency and meet the requirements of the Rectorate. Greater visibility should be given to the work of our various units, particularly through internal communication tools.

f) Maintain training governance that includes teachers and students and is open to the community

Due to the work of the “State of Education 20 Years After the Reform” task force, the Education Committee (EC) has been suspended. Now that their work has finished, it is time to restore the EC, which will allow for the discussion of strategies or important projects with members who equally represent the Faculty’s sections and the student body, as well as partner institutions, the community, and, above all, patients. The EC supervises all of the Faculty’s teaching activities in human medicine, dentistry, and biomedical sciences, as well as the teaching activities of other faculties or partner institutions. The EC examines and suggests the main strategies concerning pedagogical developments, including learning and assessment methods, and ensures that the academic level is maintained and the content is constantly evolving. The EC safeguards the exchange of information between different faculties and HUG and maintains a link between the Faculty and the university community. The EC promotes the future of education, fosters active participation in training, and provides teacher training in medical education and health sciences, while supporting them as scientific disciplines and encouraging research in these fields.

In addition, the governance organization chart needs to include the student body’s monitoring and evaluation groups and the teaching staff’s training quality support group.

To avoid perpetuating inadequate representations or stereotypes of any kind, including gender, we will review all teaching material, including clinical vignettes. The professions used to represent both health professionals and patients must avoid stereotypes. We will also address any need to apply different clinical reasoning according to sex or gender.
g) Be mindful of the specialized nature of the dental medicine programme

Many of the areas of focus we have mentioned already apply to all sections of our Faculty, but we still need to consider the unique nature of the dental medicine programme and what that means for certain aspects of its curriculum, for student assessment, and for teacher training. In 2019, the University Dental Medicine Clinic (Dental Medicine Section) went through an accreditation process, the recommendations of which still need to be analysed and the necessary changes evaluated.

h) Support the biomedical sciences curriculum and the development of master's level training

The biomedical sciences programme was established with the support of the Rectorate in 2017, and combines basic sciences, human biology, social issues, scientific communication, and biotechnology. This new degree is intended to be open to the business world, the pharmaceutical industry, and start-ups, as well as to international organizations. The programme’s first group of students will finish their bachelor’s degree under the aegis of the Faculty of Medicine in 2020 and will then be able to start a master’s degree at the Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences of Western Switzerland of the Faculty of Sciences. We need to make an initial assessment of this experience and implement any necessary adjustments in collaboration with the Faculty of Science.

4. **Research Excellence**

The Faculty has chosen to divide its research into three main sections: fundamental medicine (basic medical science), clinical medicine, and dental medicine.

The over 250 research groups that make up these three sections contribute to the Faculty’s reputation, both nationally and internationally, through high-quality publications, obtaining competitive research funding, national and international collaborations, promoting research through patents, organizing and participating in conferences, and collaborating with private companies.

Faculty members are encouraged to obtain competitive funding such as project grants, Sinergia grants, NCCRs through the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), and European grants from the ERC or Horizon 2020.

We will support and strengthen research excellence through the following measures:

a) Supporting training and career development for young researchers

b) Strengthening translational research and interactions between different sections within the Faculty

c) Upholding fundraising policies and research

d) Supporting faculty succession and recruitment
e) Improving academic promotion
f) Promoting women’s careers
g) Organizing research seminars
h) Improving interfaculty, regional, and international collaborations
i) Defining research focus areas

a) Supporting training and career development for young researchers

Attracting and identifying candidates for an academic career must be done as quickly as possible during their medical studies so that young graduates can prepare for a career in research (basic or clinical) and apply for MD-PhD scholarships. The Faculty will thus create a Research concentration including the PREM, elective courses, and a master’s internship in basic or clinical research groups. In addition to laboratory internships, the PREM will also be expanded to internships in clinical research.

The Faculty of Medicine aims to continue promoting the MD-PhD programme by allowing students to write theses in clinical research. We also intend to set up a programme of modules that includes topics in clinical research.

The Faculty values its scientific collaboration with HUG and continues its efforts to give protected time to physicians who work both in clinics and in research, thanks to grants for residents and clinical research directors. The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) awards mobility fellowships and HUG gives advanced research grants, in particular for clinical training. The most talented candidates will be encouraged to apply for grants from the SNSF (Ambizione, Eccellenza, PRIMA) or other foundations, that allow them protected time to establish independent research.

We will continue to support and work to strengthen our PhD Programme in Biomedical Sciences to ensure the quality, competitiveness, and visibility of young researcher training.

The Faculty also aims to boost its mentoring activities to prioritize Senior Clinical Associate, scholarship holders of the SNSF or other foundations, research and teaching fellows, and assistant professors.

b) Strengthening translational research and interactions between different sections within the Faculty

The Faculty hopes to offer all necessary logistical services to its research groups at the University Medical Centre, and to strengthen the thematic interactions between its three sections. In some cases, these interactions may take the form of faculty centres organised around a common theme important to our research groups and invited members from other UNIGE faculties.

Small groups will be encouraged in order to increase critical mass, collaboration, and productivity.
c) Upholding fundraising policies and research

We will continue our policy of fundraising from foundations and other private donors. Translational research projects are supported by the Private Foundation of the HUG thanks to the support of the Louis-Jeantet Foundation. The Faculty supports research promotion thanks to the Translational Accelerator of the Faculty of Medicine (ATFM) and encourages our researchers to develop public-private partnerships, especially within the framework of InnoSuisse grants.

d) Supporting faculty succession and recruitment

HUG’s clinical department chairs are of major importance to the institution given their role in research, teaching, and succession, as well as their visibility at the local, national, and international levels. Upon retirement, these chairs are generally filled with someone from the same field. However, in collaboration with HUG and under the aegis of the Joint Commission for Prospective and University Hospital Planning (CPPHU), we will reassess this structure, when necessary, to identify whether departments should be merged or redefined to reflect expected changes in certain medical fields, hospital needs, and training.

In principle, university hospital chair positions are announced during successions to guarantee that we recruit the best candidates. For high-visibility fields or for those relating to the Faculty’s and HUG’s areas of strategic focus, an identification and recruitment policy for external candidates may be implemented in order to maintain or strengthen our institution’s reputation of excellence.

For the Section of Fundamental Medicine, professorships will be allocated upon retirements based on the Faculty’s strategic areas of focus as well as on scientific developments.

We want to maintain a balance between external recruitment and internal promotions. This balance differs between the Clinical Medicine Section, which has a greater tendency towards internal promotions due to the unique nature of their training and the need for integration into the hospital system, and the Section of Fundamental Medicine, which generally prefers external recruitment in order to maintain research excellence by stimulating the flow of ideas and competencies.

The internal promotion process is supported by various competitive internal career tools, like the director of clinical research positions, as well as by various external fellowship positions from the SNSF (Ambizione, Eccellenza) or other foundations, such as the Professor Dr Max Cloëtta Foundation, the Gabriella Giorgi-Cavagner Foundation, or the ISREC Foundation. Regular monitoring of young researchers is essential for identifying the most promising among them and helping them plan their careers, as well as, if necessary, redirecting them towards other career paths.

e) Improving academic promotion

The Faculty would like to establish an academic promotion policy that is transparent and easily understood. Research, teaching, and clinical competency assessments will be carried out by specific committees. Opportunities for promotion will be defined according to quality standards.
set by these committees. We will take an individual approach to promotions that will give equal weight to research, teaching, and clinical competencies to ensure the best visibility of our institution and its various undertakings. In response to the recommendations of DORA (the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment) signed by the University of Geneva, the Faculty no longer intends to rely on the impact factor of scientific journals as a metric to assess research performance. We hope to foster the creation of a more relevant assessment system that allows us to have a broader vision of scientific contributions in academic promotion applications or when recruiting externally.

f) Promoting women’s careers

Despite the rising number of woman students in medicine and life sciences over the several decades, it is clear that women are a minority in academia. The Faculty is aware of the need to be proactive and is committed to supporting women in the key stages of their careers. We hope to establish equality as a continuous thread that runs from director of clinical research positions to the review of candidates who apply for open professorship positions, with particular importance given to career tools available within the Faculty. The impact of these measures may be assessed by the number of women promoted, the representation of women researchers in publication lists, the number of competitive grants awarded or even the amount of financial support for their research.

g) Organizing research seminars

In addition to the many research seminars organized by the different departments, the Faculty also organizes the Frontiers in Biomedicine seminars, which welcome speakers of international reputation to present topics important to our institution, and whose aim is to establish the translational link between research fields in order to promote meetings, scientific exchanges, and new collaborations. Particular care is given to publicizing the information in order to attract all UNIGE-HUG members.

h) Improving interfaculty, regional, and international collaborations

We collaborate with other faculties within UNIGE, including the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, and intend to strengthen our relationship with the Faculty of Science through our joint PhD School in Life Sciences and, in particular, through the concentrations in Biomedical Sciences and Genomics and Digital Health. We also aim to strengthen our ties to the Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences of Western Switzerland at the Faculty of Science through the biomedical sciences programme.

At the regional level, the Faculty collaborates with the Faculty of Biology and Medicine at the University of Lausanne (UNIL) and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL), by welcoming students from the EPFL’s gateway programme for engineering and medicine. Our Faculty also collaborates with UNIL through the PhD in Neuroscience at The Lemanic Neuroscience Doctoral School, and is a major partner of HUG, UNIL, CHUV, EPFL, and the Swiss Cancer Centre Léman. Our collaboration will further improve through the transfer of research
groups from our Faculty to the Agora (the Translational Cancer Research Centre in Lausanne), as well as new clinical collaborations.

In addition, the Faculty is a major partner in the collaboration between the Canton of Geneva, UNIGE, EPFL, and the Wyss Centre, at the heart of Campus Biotech, which welcomes research clusters in biotechnology and life sciences focused on three areas: neuroscience and neurotechnology, digital health, and global health. World renowned research teams come together in this collaborative environment. Campus Biotech is also home to the Health 2030 Genome Centre, an innovative interinstitutional initiative co-directed by our Faculty and EPFL, which aims to advance genomic medicine and personalized medicine, from basic research to daily medical applications. Currently, EPFL, UNIGE, CHUV, HUG, UNIL, Inselspital (the university hospital in Bern), and UNIBE are all partners in this endeavour. At the international level, the Faculty belongs to the League of European Research Universities (LERU) and also has a teaching agreement with Mauritius supporting eLearning prepared by its teachers in collaboration with the HSeT Foundation. Partnerships with other universities may be considered in order to share our teaching expertise. In the humanitarian field, the Faculty jointly manages the Geneva Centre for Humanitarian Studies (CERAH) with the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID). The Institute of Global Health of the Faculty of Medicine also actively participates in international collaboration through its connections with various Geneva-based academic institutions, international and non-governmental organizations (including the WHO), and through organizing the Geneva Health Forum — a forum for innovative practices in global health that brings together key players in the field every two years.

i) Defining research focus areas

The Faculty has defined certain areas to which particular attention will be given, including the recruitment policy for professorships in teaching hospitals and the Section of Fundamental Medicine, as well as fundraising and communication. These areas of focus are as follows:

- Metabolic disorders and diabetes
- Genetic medicine
- Humanitarian medicine and global health
- Digital health and precision medicine
- Neuroscience
- Immunology and host-pathogen interactions
- Oncology (in relation with the Swiss Cancer Centre Léman, a UNILE, CHUV, EPFL, UNIGE, and HUG initiative)

5. OPERATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

More than 25% of Faculty employees are part of the Administrative and Technical Staff (PAT). These employees may carry out very diverse activities, but all of them have one thing in common:
supporting teaching and research. The technical and administrative staff is essential for the proper functioning of the Faculty and must have access to a professional environment that meets their expectations of well-being and career development. The Faculty thus undertakes to promote teleworking, which will be expanded within the limits of practical feasibility, as well as continuing education, to maintain a high technical level, particularly among IT staff members. Managers will encourage and support members of their teams to prepare appropriate training plans.

6. **COMMUNITY SERVICE**

The Faculty plays an important role in the community through the clinical and didactic endeavours of our members and through our training, advice, and expertise. We also provide services to public and private companies through sponsored studies and research.

Humanitarian and global medicine represents one of our research focus areas, but we also focus on service to the university community, and, presently, on service to the human community in general. The Faculty of Medicine holds an exceptional position within the humanitarian field, owing to our location in Geneva and our tradition and expertise in the field of medicine. We also want to foster and promote implementation research (as defined by UN organizations), a field of study essential to ensuring the success of public health interventions — the importance of which is given little recognition in academia and is too often ignored. This field of research concerns various aspects of implementing interventions that make it possible to improve clinical practices, policies on access to health care or even prevention programmes. To do this, preliminary studies must be carried out during and after the intervention to measure the effects, constraints, and successes. The results of these studies will make it possible to optimize the implementation of interventions in the population and to identify any necessary areas of improvement, such as in the training of health professionals.

The University Clinic for Dental Medicine (CUMD) provides the population of Geneva with excellent dental care, while guaranteeing reasonable costs. The only faculty structure providing care, the CUMD offers various dental treatments:

- By students supervised by qualified dentists
- By qualified dentists within the framework of specialist training (MAS)
- In the Social Action Unit, for patients receiving cantonal social insurance

In addition, the Faculty contributes to the dissemination of scientific and medical thought to the population and schools by organizing events for the general public throughout the academic year, such as conferences and debates welcoming internationally renowned speakers, an open day focused on “Diabetes and obesity: at the heart of research,” “Microbiology days,” inaugural lessons from new teachers, farewell lessons, educational workshops within the framework of Bioscope, and “Journées Boussole.” The dissemination of scientific thought is also encouraged through the media visibility of research results and Faculty members. Certain research groups
also offer high school students from Geneva (or elsewhere) the chance to work on their graduation requirements within their group.

The Faculty is aware of its environmental impact and also promotes sustainable development in its purchasing policy, soft mobility, and the fight against waste. We also recognize the importance of UNIGE’s commitments to limit carbon emissions linked, in particular (but not only), to the travel of its members, without prejudice to their academic careers.