# Institutional Review of Higher Education Institutions in Albania

## Report of the Institutional Review of University of Elbasan (Aleksandër Xhuvani University)

### December 2016

# Contents

# About this review

The overall aim of Institutional Review is to assess the extent to which each HEI meets the Albanian State Quality Standards which came into force in 2011. Institutional Review is a peer-review process with each review team composed of a mix of UK reviewers appointed by QAA and Albanian reviewers appointed by the Albanian Public Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (APAAL). The review team is led by a QAA reviewer.

The resulting reports will serve not only for institutional accreditation based on the extent to which the HEI meets the standards, but will also inform the HEIs, Albanian government, the public and students of how each HEI meets the standards. This report also helps the HEI to identify priorities for enhancement (the process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported).
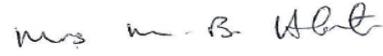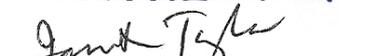
The Albanian State Quality Standards have been grouped under five headings, the Evaluation Areas: the Organisation and its Management; Resourcing; the Curriculum; Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research; and Students and their Support. This report identifies features of good practice, recommendations, affirmations of actions in progress and weaknesses for each Evaluation Area, together with a judgement as to how well the HEI meets the standards. The judgements that the reviewers may assign are: standards are fully met; standards are substantially met; standards are partly met; or standards are not met.

Finally, the reviewers conclude by recommending a summary judgement to APAAL's Accreditation Council. This overall judgement is one of four levels:

- **State Quality Standards are fully met**
- **State Quality Standards are substantially met**
- **State Quality Standards are partly met**
- **State Quality Standards are not met.**

As part of the report-writing process, QAA has provided expert support to the review team by ensuring that the team supports the findings made in the report with evidence, and also by proofreading and summarising the full report for the summary below.

## Review team

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| Dr Terence Clifford-Amos | Lead Reviewer | |
| Mrs Mandy Hobart | Reviewer | |
| Professor Mark Hunt | Reviewer | |
| DrJanthia Taylor | Reviewer | |
| Professor Juliana Latifi | Reviewer | |
| Dr.Gergj Thomai | Reviewer | |

# The context of this review

The University of Elbasan (AleksandërXhuvani University) was founded in 1991 and developed from the Normale School, established in 1909.This institution consisted of several teacher training departments (Albanian Language and Literature, Mathematics and Physics, History and Geography, Chemistry and Biology), as well as Engineering and Economics departments that were outposts of the University of Tirana. On November 12, 1991, the institutionbecame the Aleksandër Xhuvani University.

The University is named after Aleksandër Xhuvani, an Albanian philologist and educator.The University is well-known in the Republic of Albania, particularly in pre-service teacher training and for new specialisms and scholars in various study fields. There are now five faculties: Human Sciences;Natural Sciences;Education Sciences;Economics; and Technical Medical Sciences.Since its inception as a full University, the institution has been working towards the creation of auxiliary and supporting structures, which include laboratories and scientific research centres to improve teaching and scientific research. A wide-range of bachelor and master programmes are available –38Bachelor,29Professional Master, 17Master of Sciences. A single doctoral programme is offered in Albanology.Currently in final completion, there are 15part-time Bachelor programmes.

The University cooperates widely and in various ways, including with the US, German, French and Italian embassies in Tirana, the Public Affairs Office, the Peace Corps and with the Municipality of Elbasan. The Universityhas signed cooperation agreements withthe Regional Education Directorates across the country, with the XhaferrKongoli Hospital Centre, with the DrSadicDinci Psychiatric Hospital and with private institutions such as the KURUM Steel Company and with some second-level banks.Internationalisation is a highagenda activity and the University has signed numerous agreements, for example with the Technical University of Sofia and the University of Bari, Italy.

# Summary report

The AleksandërXhuvani University is a public institution with facilities located in and around the vicinity of Elbasan. The University offers firstcycle, secondcycle and thirdcycle programmes delivered in Albanian. The University has five faculties: Human Sciences;Natural Sciences;Education Sciences;Economics; and Technical Medical Sciences.

A self-evaluation report was established by the Rector of the University, developed by the internal evaluation group at the University and trained in the process by APAAL which included senior managers, academic and support staff and a student representative.

The visit took place over two days. The review team was made up of four senior higher education reviewers from the UK and two experienced highereducation members of staff from Albanian institutions. The review team was supported by the Review Manager and a note-taker provided by the Albanian Public Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (APAAL). The review team received a self-evaluation report and the portfolio of supporting evidence eight weeks in advance of the review visit, later supplemented by additional documentation requested. In all, some 86 documents were consulted. These enabled the review team to familiarise themselves with the structure, policies, management procedures and nature of teaching and research activity undertaken across the University. Evidence included the Statute of the University, Academic Regulations, Annual Reports, admission and orientation procedures, a list of external agreements and memoranda, examples of programme information and evidence from deliberative meetings.

During the review, theteam met with the Rector, senior managers, students, lecturers, administrative and support staff, as well as external partners and employers. Interviews and discussion supported the clarification of procedures, individual and collective responsibilities, and within the University's mission, a range of pertinent viewpoints. Notes were taken at all meetings. As part of a tour of the main campus the review team viewed the central library, two faculty libraries, teaching areas, laboratories and offices and were provided with a demonstration of the University's online and electronicinformation systems.

The University substantially meets the quality standards for management and its organisation. The faculty engagement in the economic life of Elbasan and the local area in developing academic curriculum opportunities with key employment industries, for example, in Health, Education and Finance, provides evidence of national engagement and proactive enterprise and is good practice. The review team found a weakness infailing to locate evidence that the University demonstrated the use of a systematic approach to market research in order to underpin its decision-making processes and support academic and research-based decisions.Similarly, the absence of full destination statistics was found to be a weakness in this area, in that such data would support academic developments, and embed, as routine, a process for undertaking market intelligence when developing new academic study programmes.The University should also develop action plans linked to key reports, including major institution reports which may enhance the evaluation of progress and future development. The review team recommendsthat these matters are addressed in the near future.

The responsibilities for management of resources substantially meets the quality standards. The policy of part-time employment of former students and current postgraduateswhich assists student employability, andthe alignment of the curriculum with the Bologna Process,and supports broader collaborative provision and staff engagement in international projects and broader collaborative work, are considered to be well developed.The review team noted that the University shouldformalise the use of annual staff reviews to inform an institutionaldevelopment programme toenhance pedagogy.Weaknesses in space and safety

requirements were identified and it is recommended that the University continueswith developments to ensure minimum space and fire safety requirements are met in all faculties.

The review team noted certain actions in process. These concerned the process of checks at department, faculty and institution level which serve to ensure the clarity and accuracy of information provided to students. Staff development, informed by annual staff evaluation, supports ongoing enhancement of the provision, and the continued development of the online student database will enable staff to monitor student performance at cohort and programme level.

The standards for the curriculum are fully met. Good practices were found in the University's EMS system which gives students and staff a singlepoint of access to student data (including examination results), the timetable, communications and learning resources. The EMS system also provides students with information about availableopportunities to engage in professional practice and internships which help to prepare students for future employment, and ensures the University contributes to the local economy.

The continuous updating of academic programmes in light of information derived from industry partners, leading to the enhancement of programmes and graduate employment opportunities, was viewed as well developed.The sole weakness in this area, again revolved around employment and destination statistics.In terms of the curriculum area, it wasconsidered that their absence could hinder the acquisition of market intelligence, curriculum review and future planning.

The review team recommends that the University should also consider making greater use of the recommendations provided in annual reports, by ensuring systematic and transparentmonitoring through appropriate committees whether at institutional, faculty or departmental levels.

The standards in teaching, learning, assessment and research are substantially met.The University's well-developed organisation and documentation in the programme designs for every study programme was noted, as wasthe University's considerable capacity to enable the completion of practical and professional training of the students. This includeslaboratory work, laboratory modules, practical activitiesin the field, supervised professional practicums within the premises of the Universityas well as in cooperation with some other local institutions, whether public or private.

Currently, the University provides no support structure towards the continuous improvement of teaching and the team regarded this as a weakness which needs to be addressed. However,the review team acknowledged that the University is working to increase its quality through continuous improvements made at department, faculty and rectorate levels.The review team affirmed the University's encouragement towards stronger attendance and participation at national and international conferences.

In the area of student support, standards are substantially met. The review team found the Bachelor Study Programme, the BA in Albanian and Roma Language in the Human Sciences Facultywhich facilitates the integration of the Roma community in higher education in Albania to be good practice.The University organisesparticularly effective professional practice, especially in Technical Medical Sciences Education. Professional practices in these two faculties are well organised and mature in their development. Less strong in the provision are the lack of a discrete structure for reception, information and admission of new students and a similar lack of structure for continuing students.Two further areas in need of development include a structure and regulation for the one-to-one student tutoring and mentoring and an established functioning Alumni Office.This latter issue was identified as weakness and also relates to the various points raisedin Evaluation Areas one and three of

this report in relation to an adequate employment and destination statistics database, and also the need for a full and adequate database for current students.

Students are entitled to an effective and representativeStudent Council. The review team considered the current situation a weakness.Students in interview were found to be mostly unaware of the Student Council. It is suggested that a Student Council should also be established in each faculty and be fully supported by the University.The review team acknowledged the continued enrichment of the library, the central library's quest for funding towards digitisation and the University's endeavours in supporting the cultural lives of its students.

# Summary of findings

## Good practice

The review team identified the following features of good practice:

- faculty engagement in the economic life of Elbasan and the local area in developing academic curriculum opportunities with key employment industries, for example Health, Education and Finance(paragraph 1.14)
- the University's comprehensive EMS system which gives students and staff a single point of access to essential study information(paragraph 3.12)
- opportunities for students to engage in professional practice and internshipswhich help to prepare students for future employment and ensure the University contributes to the local economy(paragraph 3.13)
- Bachelor study programme in Albanian and Roma language in the Human Sciences Faculty (2012) whichfacilitates the integration of the Roma community in Albanian higher education(paragraph 5.10).

## Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weaknesses:

- the absence from key University reports of action plans which are measurable, achievable and time specific(paragraph 1.7)
- the lack of market intelligence reports and their use in developing the academic and research portfolio consistently across the University(paragraph1.11)
- the limited evidence available for the tracking and monitoring of graduate employability at University and Faculty levels(paragraph1.12)
- the University does not meet the usable space norms for students (minimum 3.8 to maximum 8.0m$^2$) and exit and stairs' criteria need to be improved in line with statutory guidelines(paragraph 2.11)
- the incompleteness of data on graduate employment which has the potential to hinder the acquisition of market intelligence, curriculum review and future planning(paragraph 3.20)
- the Universityhas no support structure that promotes the continuous improvement of teaching(paragraph 4. 6)
- the University lacks a datasystem containing full student-contact details (paragraph 5.6)
- the University does not have a fully effective, representative and well-publicised Student Council(paragraph 5.15)
- the University does not have an Alumni Office and Alumni database (paragraph 5.22).

## Recommendations

The review team made the following recommendations:

- development of action plans linked to all major University reports which may enhance evaluation of progress and future development(paragraph 1.7)
- embed as routine a process for undertaking market intelligence when developing new academic study programmes or undertaking research-based projects(paragraph 1.11)
- develop a systematic University strategy and operational plan for employability and data analysis monitoring at University and faculty levels to support academic developments(paragraph 1.12)
- continue developments to ensure minimum space and fire safety requirements are met in all faculties (paragraph 2.11)
- the University should work towards a more systematic approach to the collection of complete or nearcomplete graduate employment data in order to better understand market trends and to inform curriculum development(paragraph 3.20)
- the University should establish a formal support structure to promote the continuous improvement of teaching(paragraph 4.6)
- the University needs to create and hold a comprehensive data system containing full contact details for all students(paragraph 5.6)
- the University should establish a fully effective, representative and well-
- publicised Student Council(paragraph 5.1)
- the University should establish a structure to hold statistical data on employment of its graduates and establish a working Alumni Office(paragraph 5.22).

## Affirmations of action being taken

The review team affirms the following actions already in process:

- the University is encouraging engagement and participation in national and international conferences (paragraph 4.9).

## Summary of judgements for each Evaluation Area

1  The Standards for the Organisation and its Management are substantially met.
2  The Standards for Resourcing are substantially met.
3  The Standards for the Curriculum are fully met.
4  The Standards for Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research are substantially met.
5  The Standards for Students and their Support are substantially met.

## Summary judgement

The review teamrecommends to the Accreditation Council that at the University of Elbasanthe State Quality Standards are substantially met.

# Detailed report

# Evaluation Area 1: The Organisation and its Management

1.1       The University's Statute **[Evidence: 1.2 Statute of the UE]** outlines the mission and organisational principles for the internal organisation of the University. In addition, the statute outlines the key responsibilities for the roles of Rector, Deputy Rector and Chancellor. The University has an effective structure for its management responsibilities, with overarching responsibility for quality and standards lying with the Rector. The Chancellor has responsibility for the daily administrative and financial management of the Universityin line with statutory legal requirements. The University is governed by state law, **[Evidence 1.1 - Regulations of the Institution; Handbook Annex 1]** which informs itsorganisational structure of the University, including senior post-holders, key committees and administrative and faculty structures. **[Evidence: 1.17 Diagram 1 & 1.18 Diagram 2 - 2nd Batch;Meeting 9]** [*Chapter III Standard I.1*]

1.2       The University has a range of key decision-making bodies, including the Board of Ethics – an elected body, the composition of which is determined by the Senate. Its purpose is to discuss ethical issues across the University and make proposals to the Rector. The review team considered that the terms of reference were somewhat brief and would benefit from greater clarity both in terms of criteria and also the membership range which appeared limited. **[Ev: 1.8 The Ethical Council and its rules and regulations]** The main decision-making body at faculty level includes the Faculty Council,**[Ev: Law no 80, 2015]** which is composed of elected representatives from the academic staff. Its key purpose is to specify the use of human and physical resources. A Council of Professors is responsible for doctoral degrees and the training arrangements of staff. **[Ev: 24 - Council of Professors - 2ⁿᵈ Batch]** The University has five faculties and each drafts its own regulations in accordance with the University statute and regulation.**[Ev: 1.2, Statute of the EU, Article 7] [Ev: Meeting 3, 4 and 5]** The senior management structure at both University and faculty levels, including the roles and responsibilities of key post-holders and decision-making bodies, was felt to be clearly articulated.**[*Chapter III Standard I.2*]**

1.3       The management of academic standards and quality lies with Faculties, each of which has its own regulations.**[Ev: 1.1 Regulation of UE, 1.2 Statute of the UE]** The Dean of Faculty is the leading management authority and the legal representative responsible for the management of the faculties' provision. The Dean is elected by academic staff and students and approved by the Rector in line with legal education statutes. **[Ev: 1.2: Statute 18 of UE; Handbook Annex 1]**The Dean works closely with the Faculty Council and Administration Board to review strategies and ongoing developments as part of the University's deliberative meetings' structure. **[Ev: 1.9 Rules &Regs of Faculty of Economics]** For doctoral studies, the Council of Professors operates to ensure effective peer review and deliberation in respect to the PhD in Albanology, the sole doctorate currently offered by the University. **[Ev: 1.10 Senate Decision for Council of Profs]** [*Chapter III Standard I.2*] **[ESG 1.1 Policy for Quality Assurance]**

1.4       Papers for the key committees of the University including Senate, the Administration Board and the Faculty Councils are circulated to members in advance of meetings in order to improve debate and decision-making. Committees meet monthly and monitor meeting outcomes. **[Ev: 1.11 - Regulation of Senate]** The principle of open debate is set out in the Statute's Organising Principles. **[Ev: 1.2 Statute, article 3.3]** In meetings with staff, and with students of all cycles, confirmation was given that the University operates in an open and transparent manner and was responsive to feedback. **[Ev: - Meetings 4 and 5]** [*Chapter III Standard I.3&Chapter III Standard II.3*]

1.5     In 2014 the University created the Quality Assurance (QA) Unit in order to support the accreditation processes and quality assurance at the University. Each faculty has a nominated representative in order to share and exchange practice and to take part in workshops and meetings. The unit has not yet engaged with any form of external consultation. **[Ev: SER pg. 12]**The review team considered that the QA unit would benefit from the involvement of external expertise in order to provide appropriate externality and experience of other systems of quality assurance to help further improve the University's approach in the support of staff and the enhancement of study programmes. **[*Chapter III Standard I.4*]**

1.6     The University has a 'Development Strategy for the academic year 2015-16',**[Ev: 1.14 - Development Strategy 3.2]** which outlines objectives.The objectives set are appropriate and include means to achieve the expected outcomes; however, the objectives could be enhanced by the inclusion of key performance indicators to aid measurement of the outcomes. **[Ev: - Meeting 2 & E1.14**] **[*Chapter III Standard I.5*]**

1.7     The Rectorate submits an annual report to the Senate, which includes an analysis of indicators of the research and learning process. The annual report is based upon Faculty and Department reports. **[Ev: 1.15 - Annual Report of UE]** The report is made available to University Councils and Boards and submitted to the Ministry of Education and Sport in line with government requirements, and also made available to staff and students via the website. The report provides an overview of developments and external activities along with areas for development based on Faculty reports and the analysis of data. **[Ev: 1.16 Annual Report - Human Sciences Faculty Report; 1.15 Annual Report UE; Meeting 3]** The review team advises that report outcomes could be tracked more efficiently if they were included in an action plan which was measurable, achievable and time specific; the absence of these aspects wasconsidered a **weakness** by the review team. **[Ev: 1.16 - Annual report on academic and scientific activities of Human Sciences]** The review team **recommends** that all major University reports include an action plan which demonstrates how the measurement (internal andexternal) of performance would be undertaken to ensure the University is on track with its key priorities. **[*Chapter III Standard I.6*] [ESG 1.8 Public Information]**

1.8     The University operates with autonomy and academic freedom underpinned by its mission and purpose. The rights include the design of study programmes and development of research projects; the selection and appointment of academic and administrative staff; the development of criteria for admissions; the ability to sign agreements with home and overseas institutions and the right to administer public funds. **[*Chapter III Standard I.4*&*Chapter III Standard II.1*]**

1.9     The University offers study programmes in three cycles: Bachelor, Master, and Doctorate levels. It has five faculties: Human Sciences;Natural Sciences;Educational Sciences;Technical Medical Sciences; and Economics. The University conducts basic and applied scientific research. **[Ev: 1.17- Organisational Structure of UE]** Faculties operate as the principal unit of the University; each faculty is composed of at least three basic units (departments and research centres), two of which are departments. Departments consist of at least seven full-time academic staff members in order to meet state standards. **[Ev: 1.18- Structure of academic staff of UE] [*Chapter III Standard II.1*]**

1.10    The University has approval from the Ministry to offer one PhD programme in Albanology. The University has applied to the Ministry to offer two further PhD programmes; however, to date these have yet to be approved by the Ministry of Education and Sport. **[Ev: - Meeting 3] [*Chapter III Standard II.1*]**

1.11    The University is engaged in scientific, social and economic activities through taking part in national and international conferences and symposiums. However, the review team was not able to see or hear any evidence that demonstrated that the University was using a systematic approach to market research in order to underpin its decision-making processes and support academic and research-based project decisions. **[Ev: No evidence or document was provided in the SER or document base, Meeting 2 with the Rector - question 5 - no evidence provided, Meeting 3 - Question 15 - no substantial evidence provided]** The review team considered this a **weakness** and **recommends** that the University embed as routine a process for undertaking market intelligence when developing new academic study programmes or embarking on major research projects. **[*Chapter III Standard III.1*]**

1.12    The University indicated that it has in place a process for monitoring the employment of graduates via a database; however, the University reported in the self-assessment report, and in meetings, that this is not yet complete systematically across the University. **[Ev: SER pg. 16, Ev:Meeting 7, 8 and 9]** The review team considered the limited evidence available for the tracking and monitoring of graduate employability to be a **weakness** and **recommends** that the University develops a systematic approach to the collection and analysis of employability data in order to inform future academic portfolio developments. **[*Chapter III Standard III.1*]**

1.13    The University has an extensive range of collaborative partners for the exchange of students and staff. **[Ev: 1.13 - List of International projects, where UE is a partner]** Two departments support this work: International Relations Directorate and the Foreign, Relations Department. The University is also an important professional centre; so some programmes have been developed in the Faculties of Technical Medical Sciences and Educational Sciences to support local need. A range of regional cooperation agreements are in place, for example with the Chambers of Commerce and Departments of Education and Industry. **[Ev: 1.20 - List of cooperation agreements] [Meeting 3, 6, 7 and 8]** The University is seeking to build new partnerships with other highereducation providers regionally, nationally and internationally to enhance research opportunities and support student exchange. The development of partnerships is effective in enhancing student learning opportunities and supporting the development of programmes. **[Ev: 1.14 Development Strategy of UE; 1.20 List of Cooperative Agreements]** The University also collaborates with a range of related Albanian institutions, including Public Affairs, the Peace Corps and Embassies in Tirana and through a range of sport and cultural activities. **[Ev: Meetings 3 and 7] [*Chapter III Standard III.2*]**

1.14    The Development Strategy includes strategic statements for collaboration with national and international institutions. The International Relations Directorate is responsible for administering cooperation agreements. **[Ev: 1.14 & 1.20;1.19; Meetings 3 and 5]** The University's work with local employers, in particular the tax office, local banks, the customs service, local hospitals and high schools, isparticularly valuable in providing real-life training activities for students. Local employers were appreciative of the University's efforts in developing local links and of the quality of students who came to work with them. The review team considers that the faculty engagement in the economic life of Elbasan and the local area in developing academic curriculum opportunities with key employment industries is a feature of**good practice.[*Chapter III Standard III.3*]**

1.15    The University has an international approach to its work. It has in place sabbaticals for academic staff and finance is also available for short-term projects. Student mobility into and out of the University takes place, although the University does not offer courses in foreign languages. Incoming students are often taught on a one-to-one basis. Scholarships are offered to students from Albanian-speaking territories. There is an integration policy for guest academic staff and foreign scholars using the Erasmus framework to support mobility.

Staff are also engaged in national and international conferences and conventions. **[Ev: 1.13 - List of International Projects / 1.20 List of cooperation agreements] [*Chapter III Standard III.4*]**

1.16    The review team identified good practice in the University's engagement in the economic life of Elbasan and in the development of the academic curriculum linked to employment opportunities for students. Weaknesses identified included the absence from key university reports of action plans which are measurable, achievable and time specific,**[*Chapter III Standard I.6*]** the limited evidence available for the tracking and monitoring of graduate employability at University level,**[*Chapter III Standard III.1*]** and the lack of market intelligence reports to support the development of the University's academic portfolio and research projects.**[*Chapter III Standard III.1*]** The review team recommends that the University develops a systematic approach to the collection and analysis of employability data to support academic programme developments, that market intelligence reports are embedded as routine into the future development of the academic and research portfolio, and that key University reports include clear action plans to enhance evaluation and the implementation of recommendations.

## Findings

### Good practice

The review team identified the following features of good practice:

- faculty engagement in the economic life of Elbasan and the local area in developing academic curriculum opportunities with key employment industries, for example Health, Education and Finance (paragraph 1.14).

### Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weaknesses:

- the absence from key University reports of action plans which are measurable, achievable and time specific(paragraph 1.7)
- the lack of market intelligence reports and their use in developing the academic and research portfolio consistently across the University(paragraph1.11)
- the limited evidence available for the tracking and monitoring of graduate employability at University and Faculty levels (paragraph1.12).

### Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendations:

- development of action plans linked to all major University reports which may enhance evaluation of progress and future development (paragraph 1.7)
- embed as routine a process for undertaking market intelligence when developing new academic study programmes or undertaking research based projects(paragraph 1.11)
- develop a systematic University strategy and operational plan for employability and data analysis monitoring at University and faculty levels to support academic developments(paragraph 1.12).

### Affirmation of action being taken

The review team did not affirm any actions already in progress in relation to this Evaluation Area.

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## Judgement

**The Standards for the Organisation and its Management are substantially met.**

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# Evaluation Area 2: Resourcing

2.1      The University has a clear structure which sets out the responsibilities for management of Resourcing to meet Standards' requirements. **[Ev: 2.1 Organisation Chart; a2 Diagram of decision making; a3 diagram]** The University's employment of staff is governed by both external statutes and its own regulations for fairness and consistency. The Human Directory Department ensures that vacant posts are advertised in the University's weekly bulletin and in the local media. Employment criteria are made available to interested parties through the University website.**[Ev:17 Modalities for recruitment, 1.3 Modalities and standards for hiring academic staff; 1 employment contract; 2.5 A sample table of all indicators for recruiting lecturers]** Procedures effectively support the recruitment of appropriately qualified full and part-time staff through use of clear specifications and selection criteria. **[Ev: 2.3 Sample vacancy advertisement; 2.2 List of part-time academic staff]** The University also supports the recruitment of practitioners, former students and current postgraduates into part-time teaching roles to support practice-related teaching. **[Ev: M7 Meeting with External Representatives; 2.2 List of Part-time academic staff 2.7 Sample annual analysis;*Chapter III Standard IV.1*; ESG Standard 1.5 Teaching Staff]**The part-time employment of former students and current postgraduates supports student employability.

2.2      The University adheres to the principle of internationalisation by seeking to recruit staff with experience of working in universities abroad, as well promoting staff engagement with international projects and establishing collaborative agreements. **[Ev: 1.13 List of International Projects; 1.16 Annual report of academic scientific activities; 2.5 Indicators for recruitment of lecturers; 3.8 List of agreements on the professional practicum; *Chapter III Standard IV.3*]** Faculty staff are encouraged to engage with externally-funded projects to enhance their knowledge. Such external activities promote opportunities for staff and students to engage in visits and student/staff exchanges. **[Ev: M8 Meeting with HoDs; 2.9 List of lecturers who have gone abroad; M4 & M5 Meetings with Students; *Chapter III Standard IV.3*]**

2.3      Economic drivers are important elements in informing curriculum development. **[M3 Meeting with Senior Staff; 1.14 Development Strategy]** The alignment of the curriculum with the Bologna Process supports broader collaborative provision and engagement in international projects, exchange activities and resource development. Such activities support the development of knowledge and resources for the University. The Council of Professors reviews research being undertaken and endorses the promotion of staff in recognition of their work. **[Ev: M3 Meeting with Staff; 6a Council of Professors]** To date, 51 lecturers have been promoted to Associate Professor or Docent roles. **[Ev: 2.4 Academic Titles Prof Associate & Docent by Council of Professor; 2.10 List of foreign professors engaged in providing titles; *Chapter III Standard IV.3*]** The Council of Professors cannot award the title of Professor, but can put forward endorsements to other universities able to award the title, in line with current legislation and regulations. **[Ev: 2.11 Written request of a lecturer to receive tile of Professor in another university; M3 Meeting with Senior Staff]**

2.4      The production of information is effectively managed. Both academic and support staff are actively involved in the production of information for open days, including brochures and information materials, in accordance with the University's integration policy. **[Ev: 2.6 The report of open days; M3 Meeting with Senior Staff; M6 Meeting with Academic Tutors; M9 Meeting with Support Staff; *Chapter III Standard IV.2*]** Information is checked at programme, department and faculty level and by the office of the Rector before being passed to the Students Counselling Centre. **[Ev:1.2 Statute; M3 Senior Staff]** Materials produced by lecturers are checked by Heads of Department and made available to students online. **[Ev: 1.2 Statute; M11 IT Demonstration]** The review team confirmed that checks introduced at department, faculty and institution level effectively serve to ensure the clarity

and accuracy of information provided to students and other stakeholders. **[Ev: M4 Meeting with Students; Student Survey; *Chapter III Standard VII.1*; ESG Standard 1.8 Public Information]**

2.5      The University has effective mechanisms for communicating with its staff and students and for supporting the sharing of information on activities and projects. Staff and students are made aware of extracurricular events through notice boards and email messages, including links to sporting and social activities. **[Ev: M11 IT systems demonstration; M4 & M5 Meeting with Students; *Chapter III Standard IV.2*]** Information shared among academic staff serves to encourage engagement with research and collaborative projects including staff and student exchanges and visits. **[Ev: 14 Development Strategy; 2.7 Analysis by Department; M3 Meeting with Senior Staff; M5 Meeting with Academic Staff; *Chapter III Standard IV.3*]**

2.6      Clear procedures are in place for the annual monitoring of staff performance with outcomes informing the Universitytraining plan. Academic staff complete assessment cards which reflect teaching and research activity and identified good practice. **[Ev: M3 Meeting with Senior Staff; 2.8 Evaluation of lecturers' work load and achievement; M6 Meeting with Academic Staff]** The review team confirmed that staff development is informed by annual staff evaluations and identified good practices that supports the ongoing enhancement of provision. However, it is not clear how this consistently supports the development of pedagogy across the whole institution. **[Ev: 2.8 Evaluation of a lecturer's work & academic achievement; 2.7 Analysis of provided by departments; 1.16 Annual Report - Faculty of Human Sciences]**The continued formalising and evaluation ofannual staff reviews should help to inform an institutional development programme to enhance pedagogical practices, including practice research from the Faculty of Education.**[Ev: M7 Meeting with External Partners; 1.15 Annual Report on academic and scientific activities; *Chapter III Standard IV.3*]**

2.7      The University has transparent procedures for the management of financial resources.Financial management complies with the requirements of public financial management, with accounts going to the Ministry of Education and Sport annually for scrutiny. **[Ev: 1.5 Senate's & Admin Council Decisions or Budget 2016; 1.6 Budget 2015; 1.1 Regulation of the Institute]** Budgets are centralised and requests from departments and faculties are scrutinised by the Rectorate. **[Ev: SED p.21; M3 Meeting with Senior Staff; Chapter III Standard VI.1]** Proposed budgets based on received requests are reviewed and final approval given by the Senate and the Administration Board. **[Ev: 2.12 Budget Report 2015 & decision of Admin Board; 1.6 Budget 2015; M3 Meeting with Senior Staff]** The responsibility for the management and administration of the budget management lies with the Rector and the Chancellor, supported by the Economics' Directorate. **[Ev: 2.12 Budget Report 2015 and decision of Admin Board; 2.14 Organisation chart of the economic directorate]** Financial reports are made public to interested stakeholders via the University's website. **[Ev: Website link; M11 IT Demonstration; *Chapter III Standard VI.3*]**

2.8      The University budget is delegated and managed by each faculty to support the delivery of key priorities. **[Ev: M3 Meeting with Senior Staff; 1.5 Senate and Administrative Council's decision for Budget 2016; 2.13 Project budgeting proposal made by a faculty or department; a7 Terms of reference of Faculty Council; 1.16 Annual Report on academic and scientific activities - Faculty Report; *Chapter III Standard VI.2*]**Whilefaculties may bid for additional budget, additional monies come mainly from successful bids for external project funding. **[Ev: 2.13 Project budgeting proposal; M3 Meeting with Senior Staff; 1.13 List of International Projects]** The University has successfully engaged in a number of externallyfunded projects which have enhanced access

to resources for staff and students. **[Ev:1.16 Annual Report on scientific activities; 1.13 List of international projects]**

2.9       An information management system is operated by the University and coordinated by the Deputy Rector. This effectively supports both communication and the accessibility of programme information. **[Ev: 1.1 Regulation of the Institution; 1.2 Statute of the Institution; 1.17 Organisational Structure; M11 IT Demonstration]** The electronic information system (EMS) provides students with online lesson plans, course information, examination schedules, and course materials. **[Ev: M11 IT Demonstration; M6 Meeting with Academic Staff; M4 & 5 Meetings with Students; 2.18 List of Environments for academic staff; *Chapter III Standard V.2*]** A new database and management system is being introduced to provide access to programme data as well as regulations governing University functions, much of which has previously only been available in hard copy. **[Ev: M11 IT Demonstration; M3 Meeting with Senior Staff]** A database of student registration and results is held in accordance with regulatory requirements and available through secretaries in each faculty. **[Ev: 31 Order concerning the approval of the transparency of programme' M11 IT Demonstration; *Chapter III Standard V.2*]** The review team confirmed that the development of the online student database should enable staff to monitor student performance at cohort and programme level more closely, and support the ongoing management of quality and standards.

2.10      The University owns its own campus and buildings which are located in sites across Elbasan, and is responsible for keeping the nine areas in good order. **[Ev: 2.16 List of institution's real estate; M2 Meeting with Rector]** Seven sites provide teaching environments for the five faculties including access to laboratories and computer science rooms. **[Ev: 2.16 List of institution's real estate; Site visit; 2.18 List of environments for Academic Staff; *Chapter III Standard V.1* and *Standard VII.3*]** Students report that they are broadly satisfied with the facilities and resources. **[Ev: M4 & M5 Meeting with Students; StudentSurvey]** To improve facilities and support new provision, plans for the building of a new campus in the Krasta Hills, a suburb of Elbasan, have been developed. **[Ev:2.20 Project of the Krasta University Campus; a9, a10 & a11Master plan of the University Campus in Krasta Hills; M 1 Meeting with Rector; *Chapter III Standard VII.3*]** A policy for preserving the academic, cultural and scientific heritage is also part of the development strategy. **[Ev:1.14 Development Strategy; *Chapter III Standard VII.4*]**

2.11      At present the University does not meet the minimum statutory usable surface norm requirements(minimum 3.8 to maximum 8.0m$^2$), but rather the actual square metres per student is 2.1. **[SER p. 24; M3 Meeting with Senior Staff; 2.16 List of institution's real estate]**In addition, the health and safety standards for emergency exits for faculties with more than 200 students are not met in full. **[SER p.24; M3 Meeting Senior Staff]** The review team identified both surface norms and emergency exit provision as **weaknesses**. To ensure the safety of staff and students, fire safety checks are carried out annually along with other environmental hygiene and health and safety inspections. **[Ev: a12 Fire Certificate; a13 Certificate of Hygiene & Sanitation; a14 Certificate of Disinfection 2015; a16 Certificate of Disinfection 2016]** Use is also made of external facilities to offer students access to specialist resources, including hospital-based facilities. **[Ev: 2.20 List of institutional agreements; 1.19 List of inter-institutional agreements for practical activities; 2.16 List of Institution Real Estate]** The University is very clear about the resource requirements set out in statutory guidance, and plans are in place to improve the infrastructure and ensure that all facilities meet minimum standards. **[Ev: 1.14 Development Strategy; 1.6 Budget 2015; 1.5 Senate & Admin Council's decisions for Budget 2016; *Chapter III Standard V.1*]** The review team **recommends** that the University continue its work to ensure minimum space and fire safety requirements are met in all faculties.

2.12     The responsibilities for the management of Resources are clearly set out in the University Statute and Regulations and substantially meet the standards. Weaknesses were identified in the space allocation per student, and provision of emergency exit and stairs which do not meet the statutory criteria, though annual checks are in place to ensure safety.The review team recommended that accommodation and fire safety arrangements be addressed. The team confirmed a number of ongoing developments which support Resourcing including: the process of checks at department, faculty and institution level support for the clarity and accuracy of information provided to students; the development of the online student database to enable staff to monitor student performance; and the use of annual staff performance evaluation to support the sharing of good practices as part of the staff development programme.

# Findings

## Good practice

The review team did not identifyany features of good practice relating to this Evaluation Area.

## Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weaknesses:

- the University does not meet the usable space norms for students (minimum 3.8 to maximum 8.0m$^2$)(paragraph 2.11)
- the University's exit and stairs criteria need to be improved in line with statutory guidelines (paragraph 2.11).

## Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendation:

- continue developments to ensure minimum space and fire safety requirements are met in all faculties (paragraph 2.11).

## Affirmation of action being taken

The review team did not affirm any actions already in progress in relation to this Evaluation Area.

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## Judgement

**The Standards for Resourcing are substantially met.**

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# Evaluation Area 3: The Curriculum

3.1 Reflecting its origins as a teacher training college, the University prioritises teacher training and Albanology, the subject area of its only PhD, and is increasingly focusing on disciplines related to regional labour market needs, for example, information technology, economics, medical and technical sciences. **[Ev: SER, p.8, p.27, Evidence 1.14, Development Strategy UE, p.2, p.4; Evidence 1.2, Statute, Article 2.11; Meeting 7]**

3.2 The University publishes details of its study programmes on its website, in local media and through open days.**[Ev: SER, p.27]**The website includes all programme information together with application forms, open day details and local high school visits. **[Ev: SER, p.27; Evidence 2.6, Report of the Open Days]**Although the University does not have a dedicated outreach office, departments maintain close contact with feeder school principals.**[Ev: SER, pp.19-20; Meeting 7][ESG 1.8 Public Information]**

3.3 As set out by law, the Ministry of Education and Sport coordinates undergraduate admissions. There is a general University postgraduate admissions policy with **[Ev: 1.1: Regulation, Article 56.2]**detailed admissions requirements which are set out in programme documentation and published on faculty webpages and on wall posters. **[Ev: SER, pp.30-31; 39, The Regulation of the Study Programme, MSc Literary Studies, Article 7; 3.4, Modalities for Opening and Establishing a New Study Programme; http://uniel.edu.al/index.php/al/njoftime-shkencat-humane: Faculty of Humanities: checked: 9/10/16][ESG 1.4, Student Admission]**

3.4 Programme content and assessment are reviewed and updated annually in order to meet job market demands. **[Ev: 1.15 Analysis of Indicators of the Research and Teaching Activities 2014-15]** There is a clear process of committee approval starting at departmental level and progressing to Faculty Councils and theSenate.The review team viewed the continuous updating of academic programmes in light of information derived from industry partners, leading to the enhancement of programmes and graduate employment opportunities, as well developed.**Ev: SER, p.15, p.28; Ev: 1.1, Regulation, Articles 37.1 & 38.3; Ev: 2.7, Sample Annual Analysis Provided by Departments (in Albanian); Ev: 7, Term of reference Faculty Council; Meetings 3 and 6][ESG 1.2, Design and Approval of Programmes]**

3.5 However, although issues highlighted in annual review are systematically listed, often with detailed commentaries, focused actions with specific deliverables are not provided, meaning that it remains unclear exactly what improvements will be implemented and how this process will be monitored.The review team therefore suggests that the University enhances annual review by adopting action plans with clear deliverables and ensuring their implementation is systematically and transparently monitored through appropriate committees.

3.6 The University sets out clear assessment regulations and procedures. Programme outcomes are evaluated through continuous assessment, final module examinations, and a concluding thesis.**[Ev: 100, Regulation, Articles 45.4 & 46-55; 1.1.3, The Assessing of Students' Knowledge Quality, Appendix 1 of Regulation]**Faculties have their own assessment regulations. **[Ev: 39, Regulation of the Study Programme, MSc Literary Studies, Articles 21-44][*Chapter IStandard I.1*]**

3.7 The University does not currently offer continuing professional development and short-term training though this is gradually being developed. **[Ev: SER, p.38]** Educational partners confirmed plans to offer pedagogical professional development to Elbasan school teachers.**[Ev: SER, p.28; Meeting 7][*Chapter IStandard I.2*]**

3.8    Owing to a Ministry decision, the University closed part-time programmes to new students from 2014, thus reducing University funding. The only remaining firstcycle part-time programmes relate to year three provisionand these are currently being taught out. **[Ev: SER, p.28; Meeting 2]**

3.9    The University's Development Strategy describes short, medium and long-term objectives for academic programmes and qualifications are described in the University's Development Strategy. Final diploma requirements are clearly set out in the University Regulations**[Ev: 1.1: Regulation, Articles 60-65]** and made available to students through programme documentation **[Ev: 39, The Regulation of the Study Programme, MSc Literary Studies, Articles 32-44]** or through dedicated diploma guides. **[Ev: 4.3, Manual for the Diploma Preparation; 41, Preparing the Diploma in MSc (Faculty of Human Sciences)]**[*Chapter IStandard I.3]* **[ESG 1.4, Student Progression, Recognition and Certification]**

3.10    University strategy and policies respond to national and international trends. This includes monitoring market demands, promoting foreign culture and foreign language learning, and developing interdisciplinary programmes. Each study programme includes one or two foreign languages.**[SER, p.29]** The University has also established interdisciplinary joint-degree programmes, for example, History and Geography,**[Ev: 3.1, List of Study Programmes]** and more recently, new integrated programmes have been developed combining language study with a discipline, for example, History and German language. **[Ev: SER, p.29]**[*Chapter IStandard I.4]*

3.11    Each academic discusses and agrees workload with the Head of Department, complying with Government bylaws. The aim is to achieve a balanced distribution of teaching, research and administration. **[Ev: SER, p.30; 3.3 Agreement for the organisation of annual workload; Evidence 3.4 Modalities for opening new study programme]** Additional teaching hours are financed by the University's own resources. **[Ev: SER, p.30]**[*Chapter IStandard I.5]*

3.12    Study requirements are clearly set out – programme documentation includes learning objectives, competencies, delivery methods, teaching hours and ECTS credits by term, staffing, and diploma preparation.**[Ev: 31*, Modalities for Opening a New Second Cycle Study Programme; 30]** Students confirmed that study programme information is easily accessible and made understandable to them through formal documentation, wallcharts and EMS, the University's well-developed Learning Management System, which gives students and staff direct access to a comprehensive range of student data (including examination results), the timetable, communications and learning resources.**[Ev: Meetings 4 & 5; Note 10, Tour/IT Demonstration; 1.4, Regulation of Functioning of the EMS System]** The review team considered as **good practice** the University's comprehensive EMS system which gives students and staff a single point of access to essential study information.**[*Chapter IStandard I.6]*

3.13    Study programme design facilitates progression year to year. Prerequisites for masters' study are clearly set out. **[Ev: 40, First-Cycle Study Programmes that qualify students to study Second-Cycle Programmes]** All programmes require successful stage completion before progression to the next level.Firstcycle programmes provide students with basic knowledge of scientific methods and principles and specialist vocational skills.**[Ev: 1.1: Regulation, Article 24]** There is also a four to five week professional practicum which enables students to put theoretical learning into practice, preparing them for future careers.**[Ev: SER, p.33, p.36, p.38; 4.2 Students Practice Procedures (AL); Meeting 4]** In support of this, firstcycle study programme documentation also defines employment competences. **[Ev: 31, Modalities for Opening a New Second-Cycle Study Programme, p.5]** The review team regards as **good practice** the opportunities for students

to engage in professional practice and internships which help to prepare students for future employment and ensures the University contributes to the local economy.**[***Chapter IStandard I.7***]**

3.14     The University operates a system of scholarships, in accordance with Government Bylaw No. 911 to facilitate social inclusion. **[Ev: SER, 32; 1.14, Development Strategy UE, p.3; Meeting 4]**Scholarships are awarded on the basis of social deprivation, for example, Roma or Balkan-Egyptians do not pay fees;**[Meeting 4]** there are also scholarships for academic merit. **[Ev: SER, p.32][***Chapter IStandard I.8***]**

3.15     Student support is provided through an initial orientation week and weekly opportunities for tutorials from academic staff. **[Ev: SER, pp.48-9; 1.1: Regulation, Article 58.9; Meetings 4, 6 and 9]** A Students' Counselling Centre offers advice on career choice **[Ev: SER, p.32, Meeting 9]** and a Students' Advocate ensures that student concerns are heard in appropriate meetings.**[Ev: SER, p.32; Meetings 4 and 8]**Firstcycle students described a welcoming culture on arrival which included a Dean-led induction,**[Meeting 9]** and informal opportunities to ask questions of faculty secretaries or student representatives.**[Meeting 4]** Postgraduate students also described a welcoming culture but were more reliant on individual tutor interactions for induction and guidance.**[Meeting 5]** As an enhancement, the review team therefore suggests that the University makes its approach to student orientation more systematic in order to ensure parity of experience for all students.

3.16     Although traditional instructional teaching methods still prevail, staff are increasingly implementing more student-centred approaches, for example interactive approaches.Apart from advancing its own teacher training offer and sharing this with academic staff, the University has also committed itself to a series of short, medium and longerterm teaching development initiatives.**[Ev: 1.14, Development Strategy UE, p.1, p.3]**

3.17     Regarding firstand second-cycle teaching delivery, 68 per centof academic staff are employed full-time. [**Ev: 3.5, Statistics on the Accomplishment of the Teaching Workload (in Albanian)]**Most secondand third-cycle lecturers are engaged in research activities and participate in study programme drafting and implementation.**[Ev: SER, p.33]**The Development Strategy seeks to raise the level of new and existing academic staff qualifications.**[Ev: 1.14, Development Strategy UE, p.1, pps.1, 2 & 4]** Accordingly, the staff recruitment policy's scoring system favours those with the highest-level of qualifications.**[Ev: 1.3, Modalities and Standards of Recruitment of Academic Staff, p.3][***Chapter IStandard I.9***]**

3.18     All proposals for new scientific Master's provision must demonstrate strategic fit with University scientific research policies and be informed by specific staff research activity which offers opportunities for sustained research.**[Ev: SER, p.32; 3.4, Modalities for Opening and Establishing a New Study Programme][ESG 1.2, Design and Approval of Programmes]**

3.19     Employment opportunities are set out in programme documentation.**[Ev: 31, Modalities for Opening a New Second Cycle Study Programme]** Professional practice, including internships, is conducted in collaboration with local employer organisations, for example banks andtax offices.**[Ev: 3.8, A List of Agreements on the Professional Practicum (AL)]**Following the end of a placement the employer completes a student performance evaluation.**[Ev: SER, p.33; Meetings 4 and 7][***Chapter IStandard I.12***]**

3.20     The University aims to track alumni employment outcomes.**[1.14, Development Strategy of UE, p.1; 1.15, Analysis of Indicators of R&T activities, 2014-15, p.3; Meeting 2, Rector]**However, there is no responsible department and the data is incomplete. The University states openly that it is seeking ways to improve the process **[Ev: SER, pp.**

**16, 34 & 41** and this was corroborated by staff. **[Meeting 9, Support Staff]**The review team regards as a **weakness** the incompleteness of data on graduate employment which has the potential to hinder the acquisition of market intelligence, curriculum review and future planning.It therefore **recommends** that the University work towards a more systematic approach to the collection of complete or nearcomplete graduate employment data in order to better understand market trends and to inform curriculum development.**[*Chapter IStandard I.9*]**

3.21    In respect to Professional Master programmes, the University employs practitioners to provide expert vocational teaching, for example, medical doctors teach on Faculty of Medical Technical Sciences Professional Master programmes. **[Ev: SER, p.34; Meetings 7 and 8]**

3.22    Programmes are aligned with the Bologna Process at all levels. Graduates of first and second-cycle programmes receive a Diploma with Diploma Supplement in English and Albanian.**[Ev: SER, p.25]** The University provides students with information about credit and programme transfer options through an online link**[Ev: SER, p.31, Meeting 4]** and permits students coming from other home or foreign universities to transfer credits.The latter is also feasible because of equivalence in curriculum:in the case of the Faculty of Medical Technical Sciences, 70percent of course content has been designed to match that of similar courses from other universities.**[Ev: SER, p35]**Where partnership agreements exist, credits can be transferred automatically without review. **[Ev: SER, p.35][*Chapter IStandard I.10*]**

3.23    As part of this internationalisation policy, students in second and third-cycle study programmes undergo a foreign language examination in accordance with the Law for Higher Education.**[Ev: SER, p.35]**

3.24    Study programmes are structured to enable theoretical precepts to be applied through professional practice. Students and employers each confirmed that this process works effectively, for example in teacher training.**[Ev: Meetings 4 and 7]** Students also have the opportunity to participate in staff-driven research projects and conferences.**[Ev: SER, p. 32; 1.14, Development Strategy UE, p.4; Meeting 6][*Chapter IStandard I.11*]**

3.25    The University's Mission is focused on a curriculum which supports regional and national labourmarket priorities. The review team identified good practices in the University's comprehensive EMS system which gives students and staff a single point of access to essential study information, and the opportunities for students to engage in professional practice and internships which help to prepare students for future employment and ensure the University contributes to the local economy.A weakness was identified in the incompleteness of data on graduate employment which has the potential to hinder the acquisition of market intelligence, curriculum review and future planning.The review team recommends that the University works towards a more systematic approach to the collection of complete or near-complete graduate employment data in order to understand market trends more precisely and to inform curriculum development. The review team concludesthat the standards for the Curriculum are fully met.

# Findings

## Good practice

The review team identified the following features of good practice:

- the University's comprehensive EMS system which gives students and staff a single point of access to essential study information(paragraph 3.12)
- opportunities for students to engage in professional practice and internships which help to prepare themfor future employment and ensures the University contributes to the local economy(paragraph 3.13).

## Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weakness:

- the incompleteness of data on graduate employment which has the potential to hinder the acquisition of market intelligence, curriculum review and future planning (paragraph 3.20).

## Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendation:

- that the University works towards a more systematic approach to the collection of complete or nearcomplete graduate employment data in order to understand market trends more precisely and to inform curriculum development (paragraph 3.20).

## Affirmation of action being taken

The review team did not affirm any actions already in progress in relation to this Evaluation Area.

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## Judgement

**The Standards for the Curriculum are fully met.**

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# Evaluation Area 4: Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research

4.1      At the end of each academic year, departments review their programmes and identify areas for further improvements, including the reading lists for each course module.**[Ev: 1.1, M3 senior staff, added evidence 1.15 report analysis for the year 2014-2015]** The process of department reviews of study programmes is assessed by academic staff. **[Ev: 2.20, M3 senior staff, M8 with Head of Departments, M3 senior staff]**One beneficial result is that the University ensures there is well-developed organisation and clear documentation in the programme design for every study programme.**[*Chapter I Standard II.1*]**

4.2      The University is able to carry out the teaching process largely on its own premises, though some laboratories are in other areas and used on the basis of collaborative agreements with local employers. **[Ev: 3.8, M3 senior staff, M8 with Head of Departments, M7 external representatives]**This cooperation with other local institutions, whether public or private is well developed. Agreements with partners have also been established for practicums based on the employer-network development by faculties and by the University as a whole. **[Ev: 4.2, M7 external representatives, M8 with Head of Departments, M5 students][*Chapter I Standard II.2*]**

4.3      In addition to the central University library at the main campus, there are library facilitiesin each faculty. Respective departments assure access and accuracy of the information provided for students. **[Ev: 2.16 List of real estate of EU; 4,6 budget proposal; 5.3-List of latest literature enrichment]**

4.4      The review team acknowledged that the University of Elbasan is working to increase its quality through the continuous improvement made at department, faculty and rectorate levels.**[Ev: M2 Rector; M8 heads of Department]** This process is also supported through the information gained by different surveys and annual programme monitoring, which include student assessment, teaching appraisal, the results of questionnaires and analysis of student performance.**[Ev: 2.7, M5 students, M9 Admission and support staff][*Chapter I Standard II.3*]**

4.5      The improvement of teaching quality is also maintained through staff mobility, academic staff recruitment, staff promotion, sabbaticals and engaging academic staff in research projects. This is illustrated in the statute of the University, department regulations and the annual evaluative processes of departments.**[Ev: 1.1, M2 Rector, M3 Senior staff, M8 heads of departments][*Chapter I Standard II.4*]**

4.6      The University operates a process of staff evaluation. The Deputy Rector evaluates the performance of lecturers on an annual basis, while lecturers assess themselves, completing a personal card of self-evaluation. **[Ev: SER pg 41; 2.7, 2.8; M2 rector; M3 Senior staff; M8 heads of departments**] The University currently has no support structure that promotes the continuous improvement of teaching. The review team has identified this as a **weakness**. [**Ev: SER 41; M5 Academic staff, M3 Senior staff]** Although the review team found that there were opportunities available for other forms of staff training and development, including regular staff training sessions, run by experienced lecturers of the University, or by guest lecturers invited from domestic or foreign universities,**[M5 Academic staff, M3 Senior staff]** they nevertheless considered it a weakness that staff are not trained in 'continuous teaching improvement'. **[*Standard II.4*]** The review team **recommends** that a staff development programme in pedagogy is established. Without this there is a risk to Standard 2.4.Each employee is entitled to take up to seven days of paid leave per academic year, for attendance at conferences, seminars and training sessions. Departments

encourage and support their staff to develop their teaching skills. **[Ev: M5 Academic staff, M3 Senior staff, 1.1 Statute]**

4.7     Students evaluate the performance of their lecturers and study programmes through annual questionnaires organised by the Rectorate and the Quality Assurance Unit.**[Ev: M3 senior staff; M8 Heads of Department; M5 students]** The student questionnaire data contributes to the 360-degree evaluation of members of the teaching staff and is used to tailor training and development activities for teaching staff. **[Ev: M8 Academic Staff, M3 Senior staff]**The review team suggests as a means of enhancementthat the University should include the student questionnaire feedback toinformimprovementsin the quality of teaching and research.

4.8     The University organises scientific research groups to increase its efforts to establish criteria for academic staff recruitment with academic titles through research activities. Monitoring research activities alsotake place annually at department level to highlight the strengths and weaknesses in the field of scientific endeavour. **[Ev: 1.14 Development Strategy, M5 Academic staff, M3 senior staff, M8 Heads of Departments]** Departments have limited budgets,**[Evidence M3 senior staff, M8 Heads of Department]** though they are preparing their strategies based on new bylaws to strengthen their autonomy and improve their research activities.**[Ev: M3 Senior staff, Report of research activity]** [*Chapter II Standard I.1*]

4.9     Departments are the fundamental units of the University and, as such, play an important role in promoting the research activity of their staff. [**Ev: 1.1 Regulation of Faculty, Internal Regulation of the Department - Regulation of function, organisation and administration of University of Elbasan)** They set their research priorities in consultationwith the newly-established research institutes. **[Ev: SER p43, Regulation of Faculty, Internal Regulation of the Department]**To further support this area of development, the University is encouraging engagement and participation in national and international conferences.The review team **affirms** this development, which otherwise could be a risk to Standard 1.3.**[Ev: 4.6, M3 Senior staff, Report of research activity][***Chapter II Standard I.2; I.3***]

4.10    The University facilitatesits scientific research internationalisation through agreements and project participation with different partners. [**Ev: 1.13, M2 Rector; M3 Senior staff; M6 academic staff; M8 heads of departments]** There has been considerable success in attracting external funds, including awards from the Tempusand Erasmus+ programmes.Through the Erasmus framework, the University cooperates with public and private universities in Albania and in Europe, and has established networks of partners on issues related to central and local government, business and law and the national economy.**[SER pg 43; M5 students][*Chapter II Standard I.3*]

4.11    Research priorities and the financing are discussed at the department and research centre level. The proposals are put together for consideration and approval by the Rectorate. The University is endeavouring to recruit academic staff with appropriate qualifications and experience and to support and promote student participation in research. To further support the research base and internationalisation policy, the University is seeking to integrate scientific research internationalisation through different agreements with different partners [**Ev: 4.7- Information on scientific conferences organized by UE**] to integrate foreign researchers and promote the mobility of its academic staff. **[Ev: M2 Rector, M3 Senior staff; M6 academic staff; M8 heads of departments][*Chapter II Standard I.4*]

4.12    Departments and research centres lead the research priorities of the University. Staff and students are supported to participate in scientific conferences. Individual staff members are allocated research time in their annual workload.**[Ev: M8 heads of**

**department; M6 academic staff]**Staff are required each year to present their work to at least one internal scientific conference, or to publish a scientific article in a journal. **[Ev: 1.15 - Analysis of the indicators of the Research and Teaching activities for 2014-2015]** **[***Chapter II Standard I.5***]**

4.13     The University has a system of online information on staff research activities and staff publications, and every year departments compile a list of their scientific activities and publications. [**Ev: Annual report, Publications; M3 Senior staff; M6 academic staff; M8 heads of departments**][***Chapter II Standard I.6***]

4.14     The University publishes its Scientific Bulletin which has an international standards serial number, and supports the publication of research outcomes which it publishes through magazines and its website. **[Ev: SER pg 46][***Chapter II Standard I.7***]**

4.15     The review team acknowledged the development of a strategic plan, [**Evidence 1.14; M2 Rector; M3 Senior staff; M6 academic staff; M8 heads of departments**]which shows future aspirations for research and development of the individual work of academic staff, in both the short and longer terms. **[***Chapter II Standard I.8***]**

4.16     The review team found well-developed documentation for every study programme, along with a clear process for practical and professional training including through cooperation with other local institutions. In terms of weakness, although there are opportunities for staff to engage in various types of training there is as yet no formal structure designed for the continuous improvement of teaching. The review team recommended that this area is addressed. The review team suggested that there could be greater use of student questionnaires and feedback to inform improvement in teaching and research, a matter also recognised by the University. The continuous improvement of quality, through action taken at several levels and the well-purposed strategic plan, the review team noted as current initiatives and developments. International initiatives, eclectic and creative approaches to research and staff publications are developmental priorities identified in this area of the evaluation.

# Findings

## Good practice

The review team did not identifyany features of good practice in this Evaluation area.

## Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weakness:

- the University has no support structure that promotes the continuous improvement of teaching(paragraph 4.6).

## Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendation:

- the University should establish a formal structure to promote the continuous improvement of teaching (pedagogy)(paragraph 4.6).

## Affirmation of action being taken

The review team affirms the following action already in progress:

- the University is encouraging engagement and participation in national and international conferences(paragraph 4.9).

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## Judgement

**The Standards for Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research are substantially met.**

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# Evaluation Area 5: Students and their Support

5.1      The University has established a Career Counselling Office (CCO). This Office is the main office for the support and admission of new students. In practice, however, the CCO offers academic support, and informs students about study opportunities abroad through the connections of the University, including links through embassies in the Republic of Albania, summer courses and studysupport resources. English language testing is also managed by this office. The Centre also has a close relationship with business communities. **[Ev: Meeting 9]** Currently, the CCO is not functioning as a structure for reception, information and admission of new and continuing students in the bachelor programme. Equally, for secondand thirdcycle study programmes, the University does not operate a dedicated structure to inform and orientate new students. For these advanced levels and cycles, students are informed and assisted by supervising lecturers. **[Ev: SER, pg.47; Meeting 5]** The review team suggests as a means towards enhancement that this structure should be reviewed towards a facility which offers reception, information and the orientation of all students.**[*Chapter I Standard III.1*]**

5.2      The Teaching Secretaries of each faculty and their departments also play an important role in student orientation and provide information about different issues relating to students.**[Ev 1.1: Art. 58, item 9 Regulation of function, organisation and administration of University of Elbasan.pdf; SER pg.48; Meeting 4, 5] [*Chapter I Standard III.1*]**

5.3      For the welcoming of new students, the University has organised open days for each academic year. These activities are published on the University website. **[Evidence 2.6: Activities plan for the Faculty of Education Sciences Open Days (April May 2015)]**On the first day, the Dean of each faculty and lecturers introduce themselves, explain the provision,and the Teaching Secretary directs the students to the appropriate sources and locations.**[Ev: Meeting 4] [*Chapter I Standard III.1*]**

5.4      The University publishes a schedule for meetings with new students which is implemented by the Teaching Secretary in each faculty. **[SER, pg.48] - [Meeting 4, 5, 9]** The Head of Department, Vice-Dean and Dean also assist students as and when required. **[Ev: Meetings 3, 8] [*Chapter I Standard III.1*]**

5.5      The Universityhas developed its internal communication through the EMS database system which enables communication between the students and academic and administrative staff, where they can share coursematerials in groups and as individuals. [Ev: 1.4: Regulation of function of the EMS system; Meeting 11] The Faculty of Economics publishes an informative newsletter **[SER, pg.48]** and there are social networksitesavailable. Academic and administrative staff have an internal electronic address: name.surname.uniel.edu.al.**[Ev: SER, pg.48][*Chapter I Standard III.2*]**

5.6      The personal file for each student is stored in the Teaching Secretary's office. This file is updated over the study period, including, for example, detail on professional practice and the diploma thesis. The University should hold full contact details of all students.**[Ev: SER, pg.49; Meeting 4, 5, 11]**As a consequence, in relation to the students' survey, there has been low engagement of students in the survey because the University could not provide full contact details to APAAL. The review team considers this as a **weakness**and **recommends** it should create and hold a comprehensive data system including full contact details for all students.**[*Chapter I Standard III.2*]**

5.7      Departments, through their academic staff, inform and orientate students in relation to various internal practices, such as the nature of assessment, continuous assessments in the specific subject and course module, the location of additional material, or how they can

prepare to meet the different requirements and obligations of the subject and course modules. **[Ev: Meetings 6, 8] [**_Chapter I Standard III.3_**]**

5.8      Although departments, as primary basic units in the University, carry information and look after the orientation of students in conjunction with the teaching process, there is currently no regulation for one-to-one tutoring and mentoring for each department in the University.An appropriate institutional structure would encourage and enable the fuller support of students, including, for example, the one-to-one work required for thesis supervision. **[Ev: Meetings 4, 5, 6]**The review team suggests as a means towards enhancementthat the University should draft and approve an institutional regulation in the context of the tutorial and mentoring processes for all students.**[**_Chapter I Standard III.3_**]**

5.9      In the Study Programme for the Professional Master's in teaching, the Faculty of Education Sciences has made available a manual for the diploma thesis. The manual has set up the requirements under the title 'The responsibilities of mentor professor'; however, the requirements are of a general nature and not supported by definitive steps or actions. This manual is valid exclusively for the Faculty of Education Sciences. **[Ev: 4.3: Manual for the diploma preparation (AL)] [**_Chapter I Standard III.3_**]**

5.10     In the wider curricular scheme, the University collaborates with human rights organisations to support Roma students and Balkan-Egyptians. **[Ev: SER, pg.50]** To support this work, a Bachelor study programme in the Albanian and Roma language has been established in the Faculty of Human Science. **[Ev: 5.2: Modalities of the opening of the study program BA in Albanian and Roma Language (AL)]** This study programme, which facilitates the integration of the Roma community in higher education in Albania, is an example of good practice.**[**_Chapter I Standard III.4_**]**

5.11     The University supplies required reading materials as textbooks which are approved by each department, according to the Law of Higher Education. The University library operates a helpful specialist division called University Textbook.**[Ev: Meeting 10: Faculty of Technical Medical Sciences] [**_Chapter IStandard III.5_**&**_Chapter I Standard III.6_**]**

5.12     The University has a central library, which is contemporary and responsive tostudent needs. [Ev: Meeting 10]Based on the records of the latest literature list of acquisitions, the library fund has enriched its resources. **[Ev: 5.3]** However, the overwhelming majority are literary books and not textbooks.In the latest literature enrichment, no data evidence was found for new textbooks for the academic year 2015-16 for the Faculty of Economy, the Faculty of Natural Sciences, or the Technical Medical Sciences Faculty.**[Ev:5.3]** However, the library fund does have the facility to enrich the library with new textbook editions in order to respond to the needs of study programmes. The review team acknowledges the existing enrichment efforts made by the University generally and its endeavours to ensure that textbook acquisition receives due parity. **[**_Chapter I Standard III.5_**]**

5.13     The library has a working routine based on the requests of the academic staff and the students. The students have a card for hardcopy books and have yet to be allocated electronic cards for the electronic library. **[Ev: SER, pg.51]** In addition to hardcopy books, the University also has an online bookstore which is available on: www.uniel.edu.al/index.php/al/biblioteka-online. The review team acknowledgesthe steps that the central library is taking to seek funding towards digitisation. **[Ev: SER, pg.51; Meeting 10][**_Chapter IStandard III.5_**]**

5.14     Based on the legal framework for Albanian higher education, the University has made it possible for students to be represented in the University structures. Thus, students are represented in Senate meetings.**[Evidence 1.1 - Regulation of function, organisation and administration of University of Elbasan.pdf, Art.58, item 2; 5.4: Decision of**

**Institutional Election Commission for the members of the Senate of UE (AL)] - [Meeting 4]**Students have the right to express their opinions and concerns on issues related to the progress of the learning process, includingtheir opinion on examination schedules. **[Meetings 4, 5]** [*Chapter I Standard III.7*]

5.15    As required by the Law of Higher Education, students should have the benefit ofa Student Council[1];**[Ev: Law no. 9741/2007 as amended of HE, Art. 55; Meeting 4]** however, the review team during the meeting with the students at Bachelor and Master degree level, ascertained that the students did not have any awareness ofthe existence of a Student Council. The review team regarded this as a **weakness**. **[Ev: Meetings 4, 5][***Chapter I Standard III.7***]

5.16    The senior management of the University should inform the students as to their rights to Student Councils (Student Government)as the structure that promotes student participation and coordinates their representation in the governing bodies of institutions in teaching structures, research and services. The review team also suggests as a means of enhancement that a Student Council should be established in each faculty. The University should support the Student Council and finance its activities. The review team **recommends** that a Student Council should be fully effective and representative and should be empowered to express opinions and present proposals. **[Ev: SER, pg.51]** [*Chapter I Standard III.7*]

5.17    The University endeavours to pursue a policy to facilitate student cultural life according to budget limitations. **[Ev: SER, pg.52]**To the present day, the University has financially supported student cultural life. **[Ev: Meeting 4, 6]** andthereview team acknowledges the efforts being made according to the University's financial means.**[***Chapter I Standard III.8***]

5.18    In order to meet the policy to facilitate the cultural life of students, the University endeavours to support sports' activities. This has been made possible due to an agreement with the Municipality of Elbasani which has offered its sports facilities for the use of students.**[Ev: 4.5: Agreement with Municipality of Elbasan about sports areas (AL)5.18]**To facilitate time for sport, the University has offered students who engage in sporting activities special consulting classes.**[Ev: Meeting 4, 6]** [*Chapter I Standard III.4*&*Chapter I Standard III.8*]

5.19    The University has organised professional practice in accordance with the legal framework of the Law of Higher Education, where professional practice is part of the study programmes in bachelor and master programmes.**[Ev: 1.1 - Regulation of function, organisation and administration of University of Elbasan.pdf, Art. 44]**Concerning two faculties in particular, the Technical Medical Sciences Faculty and Education Sciences Faculty,professional practices are wellorganised and mature, relying on a mutual collaboration between faculty and institution where students perform their professional practice.**[Ev: 3.8: A list of agreements on the professional practicum (AL); 4.2: Student's practice procedures (AL)] - [Meeting 7]** [*Chapter I Standard III. 3*&*Chapter I Standard III.9*]

5.20    The University has organised different workshops and job fairs to introduce the students to thejob market. **[Ev: 2.6: Report of the open days - sample.pdf ; Meeting 5. 7; 3.1 Activities plan for the Faculty of Education Sciences Open Days]**During the

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[1]Student councils are independent organisations of students in institutions of higher education which do not carry out political and economic activities. These councils promote student participation and coordinate their representation in the governing bodies of institutions of higher education in teachingstructures, research and services (legal definition according to Albanian HE Law, Art.55).

academic year there are also internship opportunities, for example, teachers in training go out on teaching practice to schools. **[Ev: Meeting 4]**[*Chapter I Standard III.9*]

5.21     The University endeavours to follow a policy in terms of the employment of strongly performing students in the respective faculties. Thus, the University has employed some of its former students in part-time roles. **[Ev: Meeting 9]** [*Chapter I Standard III.9*]

5.22     The University does not have any institutional structure to date that holds statistical data on employment of its graduatesbut some departmentshold such data.**[Ev: SER, pg.52]** Currently, the University does not have an Alumni Office orAlumni database. **[Ev: Meeting 9]** The review team considers this as a **weakness**of the institution, and **recommends** the establishment of this structure as soon as possible.**[*Chapter I Standard III.9*]**

5.23     The University is able to demonstrate one good practice in student support. This includes a study programme, the BA in Albanian and Roma Language. The University has a broad and helpful student welcoming programme, a developing EMS database system and helpful, facilitative academic and administrative staff. Student representation takes place in Senate meetings, where they have an open agenda for discussion. Sporting activities are supported and there are workshops and job fairs to introduce students to the jobmarket.The University employs some of its students in part-time roles.Less strong areas include the Career Counselling Office which does not function in terms of reception information and admission and the wider support of new students. The review team suggests that this structure should be one of orientation while also informing future students on study programmes offered by the University.The review team also suggests that the University should draft and approve an institutional regulation in the context of the tutorial and mentoring processes for all students.The review team recommends that the senior management of the University should inform students on the rights that they have to a fully functional Student Council, and that the University should support it generally and financially. The team also suggeststhat a Faculty Council should be established in each faculty.

5.24     Student Councils should be fully effective and representative and should be empowered to express opinions and present proposals.The review team found that the University lacks a data system with full contact details for studentswhich is a weakness. The University also does not have an Alumni Office and Alumni database that holds statistical data on the employment of its graduates.The review team acknowledges the need for continued enrichment of the library, especially efforts with further textbook acquisitions. They also acknowledge the central library's quest for funding towards digitisation and the University's endeavours in supporting the cultural lives of its students.

## Findings

### Good practice

The review team identified the following feature of good practice:

- the Bachelor study programme for Roma students in the Human Sciences Faculty was established in 2012.This study programme facilitates the integration of the Roma community in Albanian higher education (paragraph 5.10).

### Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weaknesses:

- the University lacks a datasystem containing full student contact details (paragraph 5.6)
- the University does not have a fully effective, representative and well-publicised Student Council(paragraph 5.15)
- the University does not have an Alumni Office orAlumni database that holdsstatistical data on employment of its graduates(paragraph 5.22).

### Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendations:

- the University should create and hold a comprehensive data system containing full contact details for all students(paragraph 5.6)
- the University should inform the students on the rights that they have to a fully effective and representative Student Council(paragraph 5.16)
- the University should improve its statistical data on graduate destination statistics and establish a functional Alumni Office (paragraph 5.22).

### Affirmation of action being taken

The review team did not affirm any actions already in progress in relation to this Evaluation Area.

## Judgement

**The Standards for Students and their Support are substantially met.**