UBT College
Faculty of Civil Engineering and Infrastructure

PROGRAMME: Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering and Infrastructure

TYPE OF EVALUATION: REACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

7/6/2024, Prishtinë

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: 16th May 2024

Expert Team (ET) members:

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- *Dr. Nadia Manzoni (Student Expert)*

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- *Shkelzen Gerxhaliu, Director of Department at KAA*

Sources of information for the Report:

- *KAA Accreditation Manual (2021)*
- *KAA Manual for External Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions (2021)*
- *KAA Manual Annex 4.3. Template of the External Review Report*
- *Self-Evaluation Report (SER) of the 'Bachelor in Civil Engineering and Infrastructure' programme submitted by the FCEI from the UBT College*
- *Module descriptors (course syllabi)*
- *CVs of the staff*
- *The UBT College website https://www.ubt-uni.net/ (accessed on 16th May 2024).*

Requested Documents or Information

1. Guide for Constructive Alignment of Learning Outcomes with the Teaching Activity and Assessment Methods of UBT.
2. Example of industry surveys on programme student quality
3. Example of teaching evaluation form and lecturer
4. Action Plan 2023-2024
5. Sample of the Annual Faculty Self-Evaluation Report
6. Module descriptor (syllabus) for the diploma thesis

Criteria used for programme evaluations:

The expert team followed the programme accreditation assessment areas, developed by Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) that are presented in the Accreditation Manual (2021).

1.2. Site visit schedule

Time	Meeting
09:00 – 09:50	Meeting with the management of the faculty where the programme is integrated
09.55 – 10.35	Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff
10:40 – 11:30	Meeting with the heads of the study programme
11:30 – 12:30	Lunch break (provided at the evaluation site)
12:30 – 13.10	Visiting tour of the facilities and infrastructure
13:20 – 14:05	Meeting with teaching staff
14:10 – 14:50	Meeting with students
14:55 – 15:35	Meeting with graduates
15:40 – 16:20	Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders
16:20 – 16:30	Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts
16:30 – 16:40	Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and programme

1.3. A brief overview of the institution under evaluation

UBT was established in Pristina, Kosovo in October 2004 and was built on the previous experience of the Institute of Enterprise Engineering and Management (IEME). The institution aims to offer internationally competitive programmes in higher education and lifelong learning and is delivering programmes in areas of law, political sciences, media and communication, mechatronics, energy efficiency, medical sciences, and integrated design.

UBT is composed of 19 Faculties and delivers 25 accredited study programmes, 3 MBAs, and 10 joint international study programmes. 25% of total courses are taught in English and other foreign languages. It is also active in lifelong learning with 200 Open University courses. It is located on 5 Campuses including 40 research labs, 20 support service offices, 20 research and education centres, and 4 libraries. 17,000 students are registered to UBT, 80% at Bachelor's level, and 20% at Master's level. In terms of staff, UBT employs 500 people and 300 visiting foreigners. In terms of research, UBT is organised in 7 institutes and employs 250 scholars.

The FCEI (hereafter, FCEI) started the organisation of teaching and education on the 1st October 2013. The Faculty initially organised the studies only at the Bachelor's level but is now delivering a Master's programme as well. The study programmes offer close professional specialisations. FCEI is also very active in the UBT Material Laboratory where they offer independent third-party testing facilities with accreditation for a wide range of national and international standards. The number of students enrolled in the Bachelor's programme has varied from 276 to 358 in recent years. The intake itself varies from 75 to

140. Most of the graduates pursue their studies with a master's degree. FCEI has various industrial and international partnerships, with 37 agreements signed.

The programme under evaluation is a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering and Infrastructure, NQF/EQF level 6, of a total duration of 3 years, with 60 ECTS credits per academic year and this is a reaccreditation.

2. PROGRAMME EVALUATION

2.1. Mission, Objectives and Administration

The study programme has a very broad and relevant mission to support equal participation of all participants in the process, teamwork, dedication to academic excellence, intellectual and professional creativity, scientific research, innovation and cultivation of a culture for an educated, skilled, knowledgeable community. It also aims to reflect and contribute to the general public development.

This programme mission is very well aligned and contributes to the institutional mission in several ways. It contributes among others to a Dynamic Academic Environment by consistent upgrading of academic expertise and continuous development of infrastructure capacities; to Supportive and Challenging Opportunities by providing equal opportunities and support to staff and students; to Teaching and Research Excellence with the development of scientific research in line with the country's requirements; to Community and Regional Engagement with strong links with the business sector; and Global Outlook and Leadership Preparation as leadership represents a crucial element in meeting all the needs of the construction and civil engineering field.

A harmonisation is, however, required in the English translation as the SER states 'Civil Engineering and Infrastructure' whereas the institutional website talks about 'Building and Infrastructure Engineering'.

The programme is defined by 10 learning outcomes that are very well articulated, complying with the ECTS Users' Guide. They have been designed by a Working Group adequately involving external stakeholders. The development of the learning outcomes has benefitted from the TEMPUS project 'Encouraging the process of curriculum development based on learning outcomes and research guided teaching in the private higher education institutions of Kosovo' and is based on Declan Kennedy's book 'Writing and Using Learning Outcomes: A Practical Guide' (2015), which is very positive and very well reflected in the quality of the learning outcomes. Good attention has been paid to using a taxonomy which makes the learning outcomes very accurate and progressive. The programme learning outcomes enable students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding, apply their knowledge and understanding, communicate information, and ideas, identify problems and find solutions, which are all required under the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area and Kosovo Qualifications Framework.

The programme is benchmarked in terms of the number of ECTS per discipline with TUDelft, ETH, GF Osijek, TU Graz, GF Spliti, FG Maribori, and EUCEET in terms of number of credits. Although this is very positive and demonstrates that the programme is at an international level, it is recommended to benchmark the learning outcomes as well.

The constructive alignment of learning outcomes with teaching activity and assessment methods has been done in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the Guide for Constructive Alignment of Learning Outcomes with the Teaching Activity and Assessment Methods of UBT, which is very positive. The study programme has a ratio of 60 % to 40 % between theory and practice which is relevant for a bachelor's degree in engineering. The study. The programme has further implemented several relevant pedagogical options related to the academic calendar, the student workload, the teaching methods, and initial training in research.

Formal policies, guidelines and regulations regarding academic issues are all publicly available on the website. The ET has reviewed the Statute of College UBT, the highest regulatory document which regulates the issue of autonomy of the institution, the organisation of the college, and the college units such as faculties, departments, institutes, branches, and units. It also regulates college bodies such as the Board; Academic Council; Steering Committee, and Rector. Additionally, the Statute regulates the structure of studies and research including the development and organisation of study programmes, academic degrees awarded, and admission.

The bachelor studies are organised and regulated by the Study Regulation of College UBT on bachelor's studies. In this regard, student assessment is regulated by the Regulation on Student Assessment. Student evaluation is continuous, and the evaluation method is clearly defined by each professor in the module descriptors (course syllabi). All these documents, and others not cited, are relevant academic policies.

All students and staff must observe and respect the Code of Ethics of College UBT. The Code of Ethics, publicly available regulates the integrity of the academic community related to teaching and research, the responsibility of academic community members; the promotion of knowledge; and academic freedom. It also defines the role and responsibilities of the Ethics Committee and the Faculty Ethics Sub-Committee. Although the Code of Ethics does adequately cover all research, teaching and administrative activities, it overlooks the ethical aspects related to assessment and this should be recommended for improvement in the future (see also Standard 5).

Although slightly misrepresented in the SER, the ET has been confirmed during the site visit that all policies and regulations are regularly reviewed. As good evidence, the ET appreciates the fact that the corresponding documentation is dated less than two years, making this statement credible. However, the ET could not find a clear policy on how and when to review policies and recommends that UBT develop such a policy to be fully aligned with KAA Standards.

ET recommendations:

1. *The ET recommends harmonising the English translation as the SER states 'Civil Engineering and Infrastructure' whereas the institutional website talks about 'Building and Infrastructure Engineering'.*
2. *The ET recommends extending the international benchmark at the programme learning outcome level.*
3. *The ET recommends enhancing the Code of Ethics by covering the issues related to assessment.*
4. *The ET recommends developing a policy to regulate the policy review (procedure and frequency).*

2.2. Quality Management

The roles and responsibilities of the different bodies are very clear and coherent. At the College level, the Academic Council assumes the primary responsibility to defend the academic standards and make recommendations about academic matters. At the Faculty level, it is the Faculty Council which has established a Faculty Sub-Committee composed of 7 members including one student, which is positive.

The Quality Sub-Committee's primary role is to regulate and oversee the academic and administrative service evaluation, quality improvement, preparation and supervision of the self-evaluation process, and preparation for the external evaluation of the Faculty. In addition, the role of the Quality Sub-Committee is to compare the actual situation against performance indicators and draw and implement quality improvement action plans for all programmes of the Faculty. Finally, the Quality Sub-Committee's responsibility is to ensure the periodic monitoring and evaluation of the academic programme, student services, resources and stakeholder engagement policies at the Faculty level. These roles are very clear and instrumental.

Every member of UBT's academic community is actively engaged in self-evaluation processes, including alumni and external stakeholders. They are regularly surveyed and actively participate in relevant committees and councils. This collective involvement adequately contributes to a culture of continuous quality improvement. Additionally, the SER clearly shows that UBT is collecting and monitoring key performance indicators broadly covering all academic aspects.

The Faculty produces annual quality reports based on several surveys:

- Course evaluation by students, which is done in Moodle;
- Semester reviews of programmes based on course evaluation by students;
- Annual review of programmes of the Faculty against performance indicators;
- Programme and Faculty evaluation by alumni, surveyed electronically;
- Programme and Faculty evaluation by industry, surveyed electronically.

The ET particularly examined the annual report which forms a comprehensive report of the Faculty in all academic aspects, based on quantitative (KPI monitoring) and qualitative feedback (surveys). For quality assurance purposes, the ET recommends such a report to be dated. This report clearly shows that the evaluation processes are perfectly embedded in normal processes.

Additionally, the ET appreciates that UBT adequately addressed most of the recommendations expressed during the last accreditation review (SER pp. 5-15)

The quality assurance principles, mechanisms, procedures, and manuals are guided by the Regulation on Quality Assurance and include the four steps already mentioned in Standard 2.2. Although the annual report is good and comprehensive, addressing many relevant areas related to programme planning, it is unclear whether the Faculty is making a clear self-assessment, identifying areas of improvement from this report and deriving possible actions. The ET recommends including a clear section about improvement in the annual report.

There are several mechanisms that the UBT FCEI employs in order to implement QA measures (SER p. 46):

- A rigorous course approval process is in place;
- The curriculum committee reviews and approves course assessments to ensure that students are fairly graded;
- Students course and teaching evaluation at the end of each course offering to collect feedback;
- Regular course review to monitor the quality of the courses;
- Annual programme and Faculty review based on input indicators, process, and output indicators.

All these measures are positive and contribute to the overall programme quality evaluation. Although the programme and module learning outcomes are particularly relevant and very well designed, the SER insufficiently reports how they are reviewed and how the lecturers are actually measuring and monitoring their achievements. Questions should be developed in internal quality measures (surveys, reports) to review the learning outcomes specifically.

The quality assurance processes are continuous, engaging with stakeholders throughout the programme's lifecycle and include the following relevant steps:

- Active stakeholder engagement to align the programme with external needs and expectations;
- Development and execution of the Faculty Strategic and Implementation Plan to monitor progress;
- Effective management of the programme to uphold academic standards;
- Management of departmental and programme human resources to support staff development;
- Dissemination of public information to ensure transparency and accountability.

The ET particularly appreciates the quality of the SER itself which has been carefully written to demonstrate how all KAA Standards are met. However, as already mentioned in Standard 2.3, better attention should be paid to PDCA loops (Plan-Do-Check-Act) and continuous improvement in the Annual Self-Evaluation report.

Statistics about the survey data collected from students, staff and external stakeholders have been shared with the ET. All findings from these surveys are not only utilised to inform the

institution's Quality Assurance Action Plan but are also made available to the public, demonstrating UBT's commitment to transparency, which is positive.

The Curriculum Committee is responsible for all the changes and modifications in the study programme. The committee includes both practitioners in the field of study, academics and student representatives and the ET has received much evidence that the programme review is based on several evaluation results. It also involves consulting the Industrial Board which gives its input on the newest requests of industrial evolution. Additionally, the Dean of the Faculty and the programme director periodically review individual courses and make suggestions for improvements based on student feedback.
During the site visit, the ET learnt that the student workload and academic success are monitored by the Curriculum Committee but this is well reflected in the Annual Report.

The Faculty produces an annual report about the quality of the programme, which is very positive. Additionally, the programme is subject to regular external review through accreditation. The SER mentions that the self-evaluation process may also include external experts and the ET learnt during the visit that, for this programme, a lecturer from Politecnico de Milano (Italy) played this role. Although this is positive, the ET could not find evidence that it actually occurred and recommends making this more visible.

However, the ET would like to commend the FCEI for the very good quality of the SER which clearly addresses (most of) the KAA standards, providing useful evidence and data. This example could be used as a best practice throughout UBT.

The SER misinterpreted the need to define a policy to regularly review and improve the quality assurance arrangements themselves. According to the SER (p. 46), the Annual Internal Faculty Report measures the performance and overall effectiveness of the quality management system, but this is not reflected in the corresponding report. The intention is valuable and could address meeting the corresponding KAA Standard and the ET recommends including such a section in the Annual report.

ET recommendations:

1. *For quality assurance purposes, the ET recommends the Annual Self-Evaluation report to be dated.*
2. *The ET recommends including a clear section about improvement in the annual report.*
3. *The ET recommends developing questions in the internal quality measures (surveys, reports) to review the learning outcomes specifically.*
4. *The ET recommends including an external expert in the evaluation process and making it visible in the subsequent reports.*
5. *The ET recommends including a section in the Annual Self-Evaluation report about the performance and effectiveness of the quality management system itself.*

2.3. Academic Staff

The academic staff involved in the programme has a valid contract agreed with the institution, UBT College, based on the relevant laws and regulations that are in force and regulate this area such as the Labor Law (03/L-212), the Law on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo (04/L-037) and other administrative instructions issued by the Ministry of Education. The academic staff contract reflects the legal framework mentioned above.

The SER provides a table (pp. 57-58) showing that the total number of full-time teaching staff is 50, comprising 100% of all lecturers engaged in the programme. On the other hand, there are two lecturers who work as part-time academic staff and the third group is visiting staff. Overall the workload distribution is divided between teaching, administration, and research in a (theoretical) ratio of 30%, 30%, and 40%. The teaching workload of academic staff is determined by regulation and varies between 6-12 academic hours per week, depending on the academic position responding to the related workload represented in the table on pp. 57-58. The ET recommends that the administrative activities be detailed in future SERs. This should include specific descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of academic staff, the processes, and procedures they follow, and how these activities support the overall mission and goals of the faculty. Enhanced detail will improve transparency and provide a clearer understanding of how administrative functions contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of the institution. The research activities are detailed in each staff's CV and will be analysed in Standard 6 of this report.

The Academic staff comply with the legal requirements regarding the occupation of teaching positions. The 80% of academic staff have a PhD degree (Fig. 11, SER). This exceeds by far the legal requirements on HE and other relevant legal documents and norms. In this regard, in the Administrative Instruction (Ministry of Education and Technology) No. 15/2018 for accreditation of HE institutions in the Republic of Kosovo, respectively the requirement in Article 26, point 5.3.3 'At least 50% of the academic staff should be full-time employee and should account for at least 50% of classes of the study programme' is met.

Based on the declarations given in fulfilment of the academic and key administrative system professors of the FCEI do not cover more than two teaching positions (one full-time and one part-time) in an academic year.

The total number of academic staff who are engaged in the BSc FCEI, in accordance with SER and Annex 15) is 50 (full-time), two professors and 8 visiting lecturers (part-time). Regarding the gender ratio of the academic staff engaged in the programme, 70% of them are males and 30% are females. The FCEI is aware that this is not a very satisfactory ratio, and the ET finds their efforts on improvement and recruitment of more female academic staff positive and supports their endeavours.

The programme in Civil Engineering and Infrastructure fulfils all the requirements derived from the Law on Higher Education (No. 04/L-037) and from the Administrative Instruction (no. 15/2018 for accreditation of HEI in the Republic of Kosova, respectively with Article 26 (Quality Standards for Study Programmes, point 5.3.4 which specifies that 'for every 60 ECTS credits of the study programme, the institution must have at least one (1) full-time staff with PhD title from the field of study programme'. All heads of the study programme fulfil these requirements as it is shown in SER Fig. 15.

The FCEI provides ample opportunities for the professional development of its teaching staff, with a particular focus on supporting those who may encounter challenges. As it is shown in the SER and as ET heard in meetings with the academic staff, the Faculty provides targeted support during various career phases: new professors receive comprehensive assistance in teaching, research practices, and pre-tenure leadership development, alongside support for academic staff who are also PhD candidates at universities outside Kosovo, mid-career faculty are offered programme development sessions, alternative teaching methods, interdisciplinary research opportunities, and development grants, late-career staff are supported in reframing their scholarly legacy and preparing for retirement with book publication grants.

Based on the SER, the allocation of work to full-time staff at the FCEI is designed to ensure a comprehensive engagement in various activities, including administration, research, and service to both the professional discipline and the wider community. The responsibilities of all teaching staff, especially full-time, include active engagement in the academic community and availability for consultations with students, as well as contributions to community service. This is evident through the activities listed in the SER on pp. 66-67. These activities demonstrate that the faculty meets the criterion of ensuring that all teaching staff, especially full-time members, are engaged in the academic community, available for student consultations, and involved in community service.

Based on the provided data in the SER and discussions with academic staff during meetings, the ET found adequate evidence that the FCEI conducts regular evaluations of its academic staff through a comprehensive process involving self-evaluation, student feedback, peer evaluations, and evaluations by superiors. These evaluations are formally conducted at least once each year, ensuring a thorough assessment of teaching, research, professional development, and community service contributions. The pedagogical activity is a significant criterion for staff appraisal, as outlined in the UBT's Regulation on Standards to Election into Higher Academic Titles, which is accessible online. The ET recommends that an annual appraisal meeting should be organised with the line management (not only with the Dean), starting with the academic staff's self-evaluation, to further enhance the evaluation process. Academic staff is evaluated by the students for their courses and the results are published online either with the name of the course or with the code of professor to preserve the

privacy of professors. The results of the evaluation are not made public because this would be incompatible with GDPR, which is a valid argument.

The FCEI implements quality assurance procedures to assess and enhance teaching quality. The outcomes of these assessments are discussed with staff members to ensure continuous improvement. All staff are required to produce Individual Professional Development Plans (Annex C, nr. 8 and 12), which include sections on teaching and learning methods, research, and technical skills. These plans encourage staff to propose advancements in teaching strategies and learning material development, fostering a culture of continuous innovation. Additionally, the Quality Assurance Sub-Committee carries out procedures for the ongoing monitoring of programmes, programme evaluation, and the selection, appointment, appraisal, and development of staff. The ET recommends that the faculty enforce clear policies regarding the quality enhancement of learning methods and materials.

During the site visit and meeting with the management of the FCEI, the ET can confirm that there are no cases where teachers who have retired, either due to reaching the age limit or for other reasons, have retained their status as full-time teachers. All retired teachers are considered part-time teachers and do not hold full-time positions.

ET recommendations:

1. *The ET recommends that the administrative activities of academic staff be detailed in future SERs.*
2. *The ET recommends that the FCEI enforce clear policies regarding the quality enhancement of learning methods and materials.*
3. *The ET recommends that an annual appraisal meeting should be organised with the line management starting with the academic staff's self-evaluation.*

2.4. Educational Process Content

The BSc programme in Civil Engineering and Infrastructure spans three years and is designed with a focus on learning outcomes and a competency-based approach. The primary goal of this programme is to equip students with academic competencies and skills pertinent to civil engineering and infrastructure. Additionally, the programme emphasises the development of specialised, methodological, and general skills, including the ability to solve key construction challenges, foster critical thinking, and enhance teamwork abilities essential for construction projects.

The study programme in Civil Engineering and Infrastructure complies with the National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. The programme components are strategically combined to meet the specified qualification objectives effectively. Each course within the programme has a detailed syllabus available to students prior to the start of the teaching process, outlining the goals, objectives, expected results, content, organisation of work, seminar and individual work requirements, mandatory and recommended readings, and specific assessment methods.

Teaching and learning methods are designed to achieve the programme's educational goals. The introductory subjects emphasise lectures, individual or teamwork, and discussions. Core subjects are practice-oriented and usually organised as laboratory courses involving active participation in practical tasks and teamwork, including creative and research work. Methods such as case studies, project work, problem-based learning, and simulated learning are widely applied. Field visits and professional internships re an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Interactive learning opportunities are enhanced through project-based learning, case study analysis, guest speakers, teamwork, and e-learning (e.g. Moodle, Office 365 – MS Teams, Video projects, Whiteboard and smartboard, Computer lab.). The favourable teacher-student ratio and small group work further support these teaching methods. Emphasis on practical and relevant industry knowledge is a key feature of the civil engineering study programme, ensuring that the individual components of the programme are combined in a way that best achieves the specified qualification objectives and provides adequate forms of teaching and learning.

In the first year, there are courses similar as Introduction to Civil Engineering and Infrastructure, followed by courses in Math, Physics, and Construction Materials then through the second year there are more detailed courses such as Design of Hydraulics and Infrastructure Design following the logical sequences and in the third year, there are higher level courses where the knowledge obtained in the first and second year should be applied, e.g. Timber Structures Design, Steel Structures, Bridges, etc.

Eleven learning outcomes for the study programme are listed; however, it is not clear how the learning outcomes of individual courses contribute to and form the learning outcomes of the

study programme. The ET suggests that the FCEI create a matrix to demonstrate how the learning outcomes of individual courses contribute to the overall learning outcomes of the study programme and review this regularly.

Although the minimum guidelines for syllabus content are determined by the Academic Council, the Appendix Syllabus BSc (ENG) shows that these guidelines are not followed in all courses. The minimum requirements that course bearers have to observe are as follows: course aims and objectives, learning outcomes, course lecture and practice plan, course teaching and learning methods, course ECTS workload and its distribution, course assessment methods, course resources and mandatory and recommended literature. The learning outcomes should be short and precise, contain only 1-2 active verbs and be measurable. The ET suggests that academic staff undergo additional training with guidelines for properly writing learning outcomes, and subsequently, the learning outcomes should be reviewed and standardised. The bibliographical sources should be updated for some courses, and the ET recommends standardising the minimum number of mandatory and elective literature across courses. The ET believes it is necessary to revise the course descriptors (syllabuses) and ensure they all comply with the existing guidelines.

For visiting professors, whose lectures are not in Albanian, the FCEI takes measures, with the UBT Language Centre support, to translate simultaneously for students who have not reached the needed level of understanding. Based on discussions with academic staff and the SER, it is evident that the faculty is prepared to teach in English. However, there is no clear plan to attract more foreign students, which would foster international experiences and better prepare them to work in an international environment. In previous years, the benchmark of a minimum of five international students that would guarantee an English course was not reached so no courses in English were offered.

The student-teacher relationship is indeed a partnership in which both parties take responsibility for achieving the learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are explained and discussed with students to highlight their importance for the student’s development. However, it has been noted that students are not fully aware of what the learning outcomes mean. Therefore, it is recommended to dedicate more attention to explaining the learning outcomes during the initial presentation of the syllabus at the beginning of the course. This approach will ensure that students better understand the significance of these outcomes for their academic and professional growth.

The teaching strategies are well-suited for the various types of learning outcomes that the programme aims to develop. The strategies for teaching and assessment outlined in the programme and course specifications are adhered to with flexibility, effectively meeting the needs of different groups of students. This ensures that all students are supported in achieving their learning goals. A correct balance between theory and practice is observed, with numerous tutorials complemented by subjects to assess the student's learning skills. The

variety of teaching methods includes case studies, project work, problem-based learning, simulations, and so forth to foster an inclusive learning environment. The new IT resources that teachers use in their subjects, such as whiteboards, flipcharts, video projectors, Virtual Reality (VR), and online teaching, are commendable.

Student's knowledge is assessed continually during the coursework and at the end of each course, as stipulated generally by articles 14-24 of the Regulation on Bachelor Studies. The student knows, at all times, the progress of his/her learning. The student assessment mechanisms are conducted fairly and objectively, tailored to the various forms of learning, and are clearly communicated to students at the beginning of the courses.

Based on SER (p. 90), and what was discussed in the meeting with the academic staff, the Faculty also utilises data analysis to confirm consistency in grading over time and across programme courses, ensuring comparability with the standards of other highly regarded study programmes. Appropriate, valid, and reliable mechanisms are employed to verify student achievement standards. The criteria for different grades are defined, ensuring comparability within courses offered in the programme. This consistent approach guarantees that students' achievements are accurately and fairly assessed.

The FCEI programme has designed a course named Professional Development/Practice which contributes directly to the practical training of the students. This is held totally in building sites, which first have to be confirmed by the leader of the course, and then continuously the student is obliged to report to the mentor of the course. Internship processes are allocated in the curriculum and have their own ECTS credits. This practical part is a requirement where students, guided by tutors, are responsible for integrating theoretical knowledge with practical on-site experience. The tutors also assess the students' performance. The students must present this practical work in a final report, which will contribute to their final grade and ECTS credits.

Based on the list of the FCEI partners, which includes universities, industry, and other partners to facilitate practical and academic development, shown in the tables in SER, pp. 93 and 136, and Appendix B-11, it is evident that the faculty has signed cooperation agreements with 37 partners (272 on UBT level), which is considered an impressive number. The ET suggests continuing and deepening cooperation with partners on internship opportunities to international placements. The ET recommends increasing staff and student mobilities with partners in European projects and other relevant collaborations, as well as enhancing collaboration with other stakeholders.

ET recommendations:

1. *The bibliographical sources should be updated for some courses, and the ET recommends standardising the minimum number of mandatory and elective literature across courses.*

2. *The ET suggests that academic staff undergo additional training with guidelines for properly writing learning outcomes, and subsequently, the learning outcomes should be reviewed and standardised.*
3. *The ET recommends creating a matrix to demonstrate how the learning outcomes of individual courses contribute to the overall learning outcomes of the study programme.*
4. *The ET recommends increasing staff and student mobilities with partners in European projects and other relevant collaborations, as well as enhancing collaboration with other stakeholders.*

2.5. Students

The BSc programme in Civil Engineering and Infrastructure enrolled 145 students in the academic year 2022/2023 (the last year for which data is available). The enrolment trend over the past 10 years has been that of significant growth in the numbers of admitted students, doubling from 64 in 2013 to 135 in 2018, only to drop back to 110 in 2020 and recover to 145 in 2022 (SER Fig.9, p. 100). In this reaccreditation, UBT is asking for an increase of maximum annual student enrolment numbers to 200.

Student admission to the study programme is regulated by Article 29 of the Law on Higher Education of the Republic of Kosovo, Article 54 of the Statute of College UBT, and Faculty Council Admission Regulation. All applicants within the enrolment quotas for full-time students who have completed secondary education and successfully passed the Matura Exam are eligible to enrol in the programme. There is no entrance exam and the ET was informed that all students applying to enrol in the programme are also admitted to the programme. While at first sight, this might appear as a measure of inclusion, under the surface this is a sign of weak entry requirements which increases the need for many remedial courses in the first year to get all students of varying levels of background knowledge up to speed. In open systems such as this one, there is a tendency for many students to drop out after the first year as they cannot keep up, but since the dropout rate at UBT is very low and studying time very long, the ET concludes that students that are underperforming are simply allowed to continue extending their studies indefinitely. This is not considered good practice and measures should be taken as part of the admissions criteria and quality assurance criteria to solve this issue.

The size of the study groups is adequate. UBT established a maximum student-to-teacher ratio of about 25-30 students per group in classes that require interactive work and 60 students for lectures. During the site visit, it was clear however that many lecture halls are crammed with seats and tables and that clearly some lectures take a very impersonal and ex-cathedra mass education approach. It is however not possible to assess whether this is related to this BSc programme or other UBT programmes. If the information on high class attendance by BSc students in civil engineering is correct, then lectures are attended by up to 145 students, which means the cohort is split into 2-3 groups, but the ET did not receive confirmation of this during the interviews.

The promptness of student evaluation and feedback is assessed positively by the students. Evaluation methods are outlined in the syllabi. The course syllabi define the % of the grade that is dependent on class attendance and in some cases, additional minimum attendance requirements are defined (for instance, the number of lectures or seminars that need to be attended for the student to pass the subject). This is good but not harmonised across subjects and also sometimes quite low.

The FCEI maintains a list of student records in the Student Management Information System (SMIS): exam log, application data, list of students taking the exam in the designated exam

period, exam reports, student books, and student files containing information on student review activities and grades.

According to SER (p. 101), measures are in place to ensure flexible treatment of students with disabilities or impairments with respect to deadlines and formal study requirements, assessed on a case-by-case basis through the Faculty Appeals Sub-Committee, but no written policy has been quoted in the SER on this.

There are four KPIs monitored by UBT that give a sense of the student progression and completion rate. The figures from pp. 30-32 of the SER show inconsistency either in the data or in the indicator methodology. The indicator on the graduation rate in 4 years is extremely low, with over two-thirds of students taking longer than 4 years to complete a 3-year degree. With those figures in mind, the student retention rate cannot be higher than 95% unless it only measures those students that fully drop out/deregister from the course, in which case the retention rate should be fully consistent with the drop-out rate which is not the case. To remedy the situation, the exact methodology of indicators should be clarified, the accuracy of data on student attendance should also be reviewed, and an indicator on the student progression rate from one year to another of the BSc programme should be introduced and monitored regularly and rules should be established on when the student loses his/her right to continue studying. The university policy on full-time students should also be reviewed as it is impossible to imagine that students who take longer than 4 years to complete the BSc course are still full-time students.

Type of indicator	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**
Student retention	80%	81%	90%	84%	87%	90%	93%	95%
Graduation Rate in 4 years	7 %	16%	15 %	17 %	18 %	20%	23%	27%
Student Survival and Drop-Out Rate	2 %	4.5 %	4 %	2 %	2 %	5%	3%	1%
Student transition rate	90%	91%	92%	94%	94%	97%	98%	

Table 1. Quality indicators related to student progression, as per SER (pp. 30-31).

Ethics is regulated by the Code of Student Ethics and Conduct which includes standards of student conduct, student conduct during education, presentations and written assignments. The Subcommittee of the Faculty of Ethics is charged with promoting ethical behaviour in teaching, learning, research and projects and dealing with alleged violations of the Code. The Student Handbook is used to inform the students about their rights and responsibilities. Also, students sign a written statement attesting to the authenticity of their written work prior to submitting a written work. The ET is informed that the faculty operates a plagiarism detection programme (Turnitin) to detect potential violations and tolerates up to 30% of matching text. It is also questionable to what extent Turnitin operates well in Albanian and to what extent academic staff is uploading students' written texts into the software systematically, as the ET found little evidence of that. There are no guidelines as to the use of generative artificial intelligence and the code of ethics should be updated to include rules on the responsible use of AI.

Students' rights and obligations are set out in the Student Handbook and students are actively participating in the governance bodies of the Faculty. However, their main concerns seem to be about the scheduling of exams and timetabling, which shows a low level of student awareness of how they can influence other parts of the education process and studying experience.

Rules for transfer from other institutions are clearly set out in the SER pp. 104-105. However, it is not specified which internal documents regulate the rules of the transfer.

Finally, the availability of staff for consultation and feedback is assessed positively by students, however, it is noted by the ET that the staff cabinets are located in the building in the centre of Prishtina which students do not attend every day as some lectures take place in the UBT campus on the outskirts of the city. However, it seems that some professors are available for online consultations too.

ET recommendations:

1. *The ET recommends taking proactive measures to reduce the time to graduation and introduce and monitor a quality indicator on student year-to-year progression.*
2. *The ET recommends introducing guidelines and increasing awareness among students and staff on the risks of plagiarism and academic misconduct, especially in relation to the use of generative AI.*

2.6. Research

The Research Plan, SER Annex 16, of the Civil Engineering and Infrastructure program's main objectives are to: establish research centres, promote the development of research and group activities to maximise opportunities for research groups (SER Annex 17) and create the right critical mass to increase and build relationships and partnerships with stakeholders in industry, academia and the public sector. The FCEI support is visible to the members to carry out research-scientific and professional activities of high international quality and standard and to secure financial resources for research, professional, cultural, and social activities. The study programme has clearly defined scientific and applied research objectives. These objectives are integrated into the research development plan of the institution. Additionally, as stated in SER, pages 111 to 117, and confirmed with academic staff during the site visit, the programme is allocated sufficient financial, logistical, and human resources to effectively achieve the proposed research objectives.

The expectations for Academic staff to be involved in research and other scholarly activities are clearly specified in the Regulation on Standards of Election into Higher Academic Titles of College UBT by stating the cumulative level of scientific production to be reached to be promoted. These criteria define clear milestones in the academic career, but it does not ensure continuous involvement in research activities. The ET recommends defining research output objectives as part of the expected annual appraisal procedure.

The research and scientific work of College UBT and the organisation of research are regulated by the Regulation on Research Work and Publications of College UBT. According to Article 6 of the Regulation, the activities are defined as research and scientific activities, and according to Article 7 of the Regulation, the research is validated through scientific publications. The criteria for what constitutes research at the FCEI align with international research standards and norms in the field.

When reviewing the CVs, and SER Table (pp. 122-127), the ET was able to confirm that the academic staff is or has been active in topics related to their teaching activity. The academic staff is publishing their work in various journals, additionally, the CVs show some participation at national and international conferences, symposiums and seminars.

The staff members generally achieve the minimum expected research output and perform much better than that (Annex B-9). As the list of publications shows, there is a growing tendency in publications. The staff members are engaged in scientific boards of conferences and as peer-reviewers in the major European and worldwide journals. The staff members have also cooperated in the form of report publication, expertise provision, convention and curricula development with international institutions.

UBT emphasises the commercialisation of research as a specific validation mechanism, where faculty members are encouraged to collaborate with the industry to translate their research into patents, prototypes or research with community impact. When reviewing the CVs, the ET found evidence that some academic staff are active in consultancy or expert groups, which is positive. The ET recommends developing a clearer strategy for the commercialisation of the program's research activities for the private sector.

In the List of publications, Annex B-9 it is visible that the faculty has numerous publications from its full-time staff. However, it is also noticeable that some academic staff are much more active in publishing papers than others. The FCEI should define an academic research support system to further motivate academic staff in their scientific research endeavours. For instance, through a reward system for faculty members with the highest scientific contributions (e.g., publication of papers in high-quality international journals indexed in WoS and Scopus within Q1 and Q2 quartiles, successful implementation of research projects, etc.), active academic staff would be encouraged to achieve even more, while those who are not active would be encouraged to become more engaged.

When reviewing the scientific outputs, the ET could confirm that the academic staff are adequately publishing under the name of UBT, FCEI.

During the site visit, the ET learnt that many academic staff are sharing information about their recent research or consultancy activities with the students, which is positive.

Issues concerning the protection of intellectual property arising out of the research Staff are regulated by the Code of Ethics of College UBT. The intellectual property rules of UBT foresee that for any commercialisation of ideas developed by staff and students. The rules foresee that even the smallest form of contribution is acknowledged even if the student, staff, or external stakeholder did not contribute directly to the research, but only to the provision of data. UBT has a comprehensive policy called the Intellectual Property and Commercialisation Policy. This policy encompasses ownership, disclosure, patents, licensing, commercialisation, confidentiality, ethics, dispute resolution, education, and compliance to provide a unified framework for managing intellectual property and fostering commercialisation efforts at UBT.

The SER (p. 133 and Fig. 33) shows that students are involved in research work, which is evidenced through their wide participation in scientific conferences, research projects of the staff and Faculty, and involvement in contract research and other UBT projects. This was confirmed by academic staff and students during the site visit.

ET recommendations:

1. *The ET recommends defining research output objectives as part of the expected annual appraisal procedure.*
2. *The ET recommends developing a clearer strategy for commercialising the programme's research activities for the private sector.*
3. *The ET suggests defining an academic research support system to further motivate academic staff in their scientific research endeavours.*

2.7. Infrastructure and Resources

UBT FCEI is spread over several locations in Prishtina and students commute between two different locations for their lectures, though they view positively the fact that the commute never happens within the same day thanks to good scheduling of lectures/seminars. The campus that was the site of the ET visit boasts a modern infrastructure, well-equipped and spacious classrooms and social spaces and cafeterias for students. The main building could improve the sanitary conditions of student toilets. The building is wheelchair-user-friendly. There is a lot of unused wasted space in the corridors and the entry hall of the main building which could be used more optimally as student and staff working space or as group/project workspace, currently, it is not conducive neither to quiet private learning nor to more dynamic group work as there are too few tables and chairs provided. The ET visited the virtual reality lab which is a result of an externally funded project and is very commendable. The laboratories are well-equipped, well-maintained and accredited for 46 different chemical procedures. The computer labs are spacious and well-equipped for improving the digital skills of students. There are ongoing plans to build a new building in the vicinity which would house a student dormitory and additional space for teaching and practical work on the UBT campus. Based on these arguments and Standard 4, the ET can conclude that the long-term implementation of the study programme is ensured in both quantitative and qualitative terms as regards the premises, human resources and equipment.

The key drawback of the infrastructure is a complete lack of relevant printed books and literature in the library. Students have to rely on their professors to provide them with the electronic resources or books they need, which is suboptimal and doesn't contribute to the independent learning and research skills of students. The library does have subscriptions to some electronic platforms such as EBSCO, Cambridge, JSTOR, Koha and others.

The SER provides (Fig. 23-24, pp. 146-147) a clear financial plan with projected incomes and expenditures for the period 2024-206. It shows a clear and significant imbalance that is not properly justified and raises concerns about the programme's sustainability.

ET recommendations:

1. *The ET recommends compiling a stock of library books relevant to the BSc in Civil Engineering that would meet the needs of all students in the cycle and year of study.*
2. *The ET recommends balancing the financial plans between incomes and expenditures.*

3. FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

The Faculty of Civil Engineering and Infrastructure (FCEI) of UBT is applying for the re-accreditation of the Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering and Infrastructure (180 ECTS, NDF/EDF level 6). The Mission, Objectives and Administration are fully compliant with minor recommendations related to extending the international benchmark and Code of Ethics. The Quality Management is substantially compliant with a clear commendation on the quality of the SER but a missing procedure to evaluate the quality arrangements themselves. The Academic Staff is substantially compliant, with enough qualified staff but further attention is to be paid to a systematic regular staff appraisal and clear strategies for learning strategies and material enhancement. The Educational Process Content is substantially compliant with a curriculum that is well designed with attention to be paid to the learning outcomes and increasing international mobility. The aspects related to the Students are very good and substantially compliant with attention to be paid to plagiarism and inadequate IA use prevention. The Research standard is substantially compliant with attention to be paid to integrating the research output in the appraisal procedure and developing an academic research support system. Finally, the Infrastructure and Resources are substantially compliant with a minor recommendation on compiling a stock of relevant books. The ET is very positive about this programme which is substantially compliant and considers it at a very good international level. Therefore, the ET recommends its accreditation for five years.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant.
Student quota recommended: 200 seats **– Five-Year Accreditation**

Expert Team

Member
Member

	Philippe Bouillard	03-06-2024
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

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