Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo

Agjencia e Kosovës për Akreditim
Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency

UNIVERSITY OF MITROVICA
"ISA BOLETINI"

INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

18th May 2020, Pristina

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INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: 18ᵗʰ May 2020

Expert Team (ET) members:

- *Prof. Dr. Yelena Istileluova, University of Ljubljana*
- *Prof. Dr. Elene Jibladze, Ilia State University*
- *Ms. Delia Gologan, student*

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- *Naim Gashi, Executive Director of KAA*
- *Shkelzen Gerxhaliu, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring*
- *Arianit Krasniqi, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Accreditation*

Sources of information for the Report:

- *Self-Evaluation Report (SER) submitted by University Haxhi Zeka (UHZ)*
- *Information obtained during the online `site visit` - Meetings conducted with the management of the institution, teaching and administrative staff, students, graduates, external stakeholders and employers of graduates;*
- *The previous ET report;*
- *Video sent by UMIB;*
- *Web-site of UMIB;*
- *Supplementary documents requested by the ET and sent by UMIB prior to the development of the current report.*

Criteria used for institutional evaluation

- *KAA Accreditation Manual;*
- *Benchmarking of HEIs in Kosovo;*
- *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (only for reference/triangulation).*

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1.2. Site visit schedule

18th May 2020

08.50 – 10.20   Meeting with the management of the institution *(no slide presentation is allowed, the meeting is intended as a free discussion)*

10.20 – 11.00   Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative services

11.00 – 11.40   Lunch break *(to be provided at the site visit place)*

11.40 – 12.30   Meeting with the heads of study programmes

12.30 – 13.20   Meeting with teaching staff

13.20 – 14.10   Meeting with students

14.10 – 14.20   Short break

14.20 – 15.00   Meeting with graduates

15.00 – 15.40   Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders

15.40 – 15.50   Internal meeting – Expert Team and KAA

15.50 – 16.00   Closing meeting with the management of the institution

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1.3. A brief overview of the institution under evaluation

The Public University of Mitrovica was established on 6 March 2013 with the ratified the decision on 31 May 2013 based on the traditions of the Higher Technical School (founded in 1961). The Departments of Mining, Technology and Metallurgy launched its activities in 1970 under the umbrella of the Higher Technical School. It was renamed as the Faculty of Mining and Metallurgy in Mitrovica adopted by the Kosovo Assembly on 22 July 1974. The study programmes were offered in the departments of Mining, Technology and Metallurgy, as well as the Department of Geology which was opened later on, in 1980/81. The establishment of the Faculty of Mining and Metallurgy was a very significant event for Kosovo that needed engineering cadres for the Kosovo Power Plant, the Trepça-Mineral-Metallurgical Plant, and the entire industry and economy of Kosovo. The Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MEST) estimates that during 2010-2011 there were around 30,000 students enrolled in the pre-university system and approximately 10,000 students are enrolled in the University of Mitrovica (MEST 2011, 43)[1]. In 2014, the UMIB underwent institutional accreditation, whereby University of Mitrovica was granted accreditation for 23 programmes offered in six faculties. In 2019, the overall accreditation process has been quite challenging in nature, the University of Mitrovica was not accredited in the national accreditation process (1356/19D dated 29 July 2019), but 20 study programmes have been accredited for Bachelor and Master degrees for its Faculties.

The UMIB has the Faculty of Geosciences (FGS), Faculty of Food Technology (FFT), Faculty of Mechanical and Computer Engineering (FMCE), Faculty of Law (FL), Faculty of Economics (FE) and Faculty of Education (FE). There are 114 professors and assistants are engaged in the teaching process at UMIB with 95 full-time professors, 19 contracted professors (part time). Out of the full-time professors, there are 20 full professors, 12 associate professors, 28 assistant professors, 33 assistants and 2 lecturers. The ratio professor-students is 1:16 in the year of 2019-20.

2. INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

The institutional evaluation consists of 11 sub headings through which the administration, organisation and management of the institution, as well as teaching and research are assessed.

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[1] Selenica, E. (2018). Education for whom? Engineering multiculturalism and liberal peace in post-conflict Kosovo. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, *18*(2), 239-259.

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2.1. Public mission and institutional objectives

The University of Mitrovica "Isa Boletini" (hereafter: UMIB) has defined the following **mission statement** in its SER**:**

- *to provide relevant and high-quality higher education for the **preparation of cadres** in unique fields for the labour market in Kosovo, region and beyond, committed to developing **research,** professional projects, professional advising and to serve better on sustainable development, wellbeing, and social advancement.*

By the opinion of the ET, there is a direct emphasis on the pillars of **research** and preparation of academic staff members – through a **teaching** process for students. The ET thinks that "professional projects, and professional advising" of this mission refers to the **community service** as well.

The UMIB staff referred to the difficulty to change the Statute from 2013 (e.g. the mission): "We discussed the new mission with both internal and external stakeholders, based on that discussion the new short and concise mission has been developed. During the online meeting, the ET gathered the evidence that the mission has been discussed among the members of the academic community. The University of Mitrovica "Isa Boletini" (hereafter: UMIB) has defined the following **mission statement** in its SER**:**

- *to provide relevant and high-quality higher education for the **preparation of cadres** in unique fields for the labour market in Kosovo, region and beyond, committed to developing **research,** professional projects, professional advising and to serve better on sustainable development, wellbeing, and social advancement.*

By the opinion of the ET, there is a direct emphasis to the pillars of **research** and preparation of cadres – through a **teaching** process for students. The ET thinks that "professional projects, and professional advising" the mission is related to the **community service**.

The UMIB staff referred to the difficulty to change the Statute from 2013 (e.g. the mission): "We discussed the new mission with both internal and external stakeholders. Based on that discussion the new short and concise mission has been developed". During the online meeting, there was an evidence that the mission has been discussed among the members of the academic community. Among the stakeholders, the UMIB very well defines 8 groups of stakeholders – from academic staff, university management, technical staff, alumni, business community, students up to external academic staff and scientific community. During the online discussion

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(18th of May, 2020), the ET were told that initially the employers (representatives of the industry) were part of the mission, but it remained unclear why there is no reflection of any industry (for instance, mining). The ET also had a fruitful online discussion, where the top management mentioned that the representatives of a wider group - councils of faculties and representatives from industries were involved in creating the documents, developing mission statement.

The Strategic Plan 2018-2021 makes also an additional effort to explain the mission (e.g.: it is based on the future country's goals, aiming at the processes of change, etc.). The Strategic Plan of UMIB was also revised, and includes the same mission of UMIB, published: *https://www.umib.net/en/the-mission-and-vision/.*

The UMIB values are well-listed (from its mutual responsibility and respect up to diversity and society). The vision of UMIB is presented as:

- *to be a leading Higher Education Institution in the region, in **education** and scientific **research** and in preparing competitive professionals in areas unique to Kosovo and the region, in order to meet the requirements of the present and project the needs of the future, for the scientific-academic needs, the needs of the market economy, and institutional and diplomacy needs, focused on sustainable development and social welfare.*

Through its **vision**, the UMIB, *firstly*, shows it **leadership** in the education and research; *secondly,* it demonstrates the needs of its regional market in diplomacy and institutional development and welfare. Although the vision of UMIB looks quite general, because it could be written for any institution, but it is acceptable. It is important that the SER states that the UMIB discussed its mission and vision among the different stakeholders. As an evidence, it refers to the discussion of its mission and vision to the document which is not found (it is supposed to be in an Appendix 1.1.1 Summary of public discussions about the vision, mission and values).

By the opinion of the ET, the mission could be an effective guide for its further strategic planning. This mission is also divided into short-term, mid-term and long-term objectives with the activities, defined time frames, implementation, indicators.

The key institutional objectives are defined in the following priorities:
1. Professional teaching, development;
2. Scientific research;
3. Institutional and international cooperation;
4. Quality advancement;
5. Development of HR;
6. Digitalisation, information management and public information;

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7. Learning resources and student support;
8. Financial management

These objectives are identified as the so-called "*strategic development objectives*" of the University for the medium-term development in the Strategic plan 2019-2021. The SER points out in its SWOT analysis that the mission which is a good guide for the academic staff, is "*not used sufficiently as a guideline by external stakeholders and directly or indirectly affected parties*".

The ET also notes that there is no clearly observed and listed connection with the industrial representatives and other community links among the UMIB priorities (out of the listed institutional objectives above). In addition, during the online discussion between the ET and UMIB it was mentioned that initially the employers (representatives of the industry) were part of the mission, and "the giant" industries of Kosovo insisted that the UMIB addresses their needs. The ET thinks that the UMIB has to find the right balance between protecting its academic freedom as an educational institution and to be linked to the industries of Kosovo in its practical and applied research, paying more attention to their own ongoing internal and external trends to find the opportunities to meet the needs or demand in the various research and consultancies´ projects.

It can be done through initiating joint projects, consultancies, research and covering *various* marketing needs of various industries, as well as becoming the pioneers involving the industries into the projects that take place under the various calls of the EU and Western Balkan cooperation through Erasmus+ (more to explore in the ET recommendations). The same is valid for the various community interactions. The ET ensures that there is much more potential of the UMIB with the industrial and community circles that should be explored under the right legitimate option possible for the public institution in Kosovo.

The ET also observes that the UMIB has a good and informative web-site:
https://www.umib.net/en/, with the strategic updated and revised documents placed on it:
from Strategic Plan of UMIB, Provisional Statute, research development plans and the plan of development for academic staff.

Thus, the ET provides the following comments for 2.1 "Public mission and institutional objectives":

1. The ET is lacking the document entitled: 1.1.1. Summary of public discussions about the vision, mission and values. The document with the clear evidence has been received after submission of this first version of ET report.

2. The ET is uncertain about the types of difficulties linked to the lack of implementation of an interaction plan, because this topic has not been clearly explored in its SER SWOT analysis. The ET has received the clarifications, the UMIB referred to the difficulties faced in cooperation with businesses and industry, as results of their daily obligations.

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The so-called "interaction plan", includes the updated list of satisfactory activities provided by the UMIB which have been carried out during the challenging period of pandemic coronavirus.

3. SWOT analysis (SER, p. 19) refers to the lack of culture to use the mission as a tool, which is a common problem for those HEIs who are at the first processes of their accreditation practices. At the same time, the ET understanding could be different, because UMIB did not explore and comprehensively explain the statement "*Public mission is not used sufficiently as a guideline by external stakeholders and directly or indirectly affected parties*".

After the first submission of the first draft of this report, there was a clear and satisfactory evidence received from the UMIB which particular discussions have being taken place regarding the mission, vision and values of UMIB among the actors such as the deans, academic staff, the administrative staff, the students, alumni, and the advisory board.

The ET also accept the satisfactory comments that the process of reviewing the mission, vision and values of UMIB has taken place in the last year, and the UMIB´s stakeholders needs more time to make it part of this mission and make it an integral part of their goals as partners.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Use the mission as a tool for approaching various stakeholders (first of all, industrial ones) with various goals, incorporating the research services, consulting and other appropriate links;*
2. *Include the evidence (pictures or documents) of some public mission´s discussions with some references to the stakeholder groups on the web-site;*
3. *Make its SWOT analysis more comprehensive for "outsiders" bringing more explanation to its text regarding the »interaction plan«;*
4. *Explore the potential of the UMIB with the industrial and community circles through the projects initiated, consulting and other related services. One of the examples is the EU-Western Balkan cooperation through Erasmus+ with the detailed information provided on the following web-site: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus2/files/westernbalkans-regional-erasmusplus-2019_en.pdf*

2.2. Strategic planning, governance and administration

The UMIB Advisory Board was set up on 03.04.2019 to develop the Strategic plan for 3 years. The web-site provides the evidence for the establishment of the UMIB Advisory Board (on 03.04.2019) which also includes the representatives of the external stakeholders - the managers and business representatives. In addition, the Committee was established (listed 21 people) on 21.10.2019 to prepare the draft of the Strategic Plan. The ET satisfactory recognizes the efforts of UMIB with "the synergies of all stakeholders", including involvement of 2 industrial board members, 3 students-representatives (3 members), MEST representative. The strategic planning is also integrated into annual and long-term budget processes which ensures regular adjustments.

The web-site identifies eight strategic areas that Strategic Plan of University of Mitrovica 2018-2021 includes: from research (1), students´ support (2) teaching & teaching resources and accreditation and quality assurance (3) up to globalization/internationalization (8). There are so called strategic areas and strategic initiatives in the Strategic plan in line with 9 overall development goals and objectives listed in the Strategic plan.

The Strategic Plan is an indicator of the performance of UMIB's management with its monitoring and review. The main key documents are placed on its informative and good-structured web-site, with an easily accessible, monitored information: https://www.umib.net/en/. It includes the revised versions of the key strategic documents – from the Research Development plan up to Regulations and Decision up to the updated version of the Strategic plan. The UMIB set up the working group for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Implementation of the Strategic Plan, with the evidence (the Decision for the appointment of the Monitoring and Evaluation Team of the Strategic Plan, in Albanian language) provided on the web-site: https://www.umib.net/en/decisions/

The ET considers that the Strategic Plan reflects both the internal and external environment needs and recommendations to develop the institution, which is partly reflected in the SER, and in the web-site materials. The SER also refers to the provided documents under 2.4.1. entitled "The Report with recommendations for the Strategic Plan", but the ET did not manage to find it. The understanding of the ET is that it reflects the opinion of various stakeholders (recommendations from industrial representatives, HERES, etc. on the UMIB development). At the same time, there was a document submitted by the UMIB: Minutes of meeting of the

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working group/Commission (as of 10.11. 2019) about eight strategic objectives of the Strategic plan initiated by the Steering Committee (on the date of 21.10.2019). This document provides the evidence that the academic staff, students were informed about discussions and the external members were invited for this discussion as well.

During the online discussions of the ET and UMIB on the connections between the industries´ representatives – on research oriented towards industry and the involvement into the mission, but various difficulties of bringing the representatives of industry. The ET considers that more efforts should be put into its strategic planning and governance to the various circles of industrial representation in Kosovo, because it is one of the main sources of income as well and the future employment of the UMIB students and alumni. In addition, the industry representatives are always ahead of the conservative structures of universities in terms of their trends, practices and very often, they are the pioneers in innovations and development, which makes them a great experience as the bridge between internal teaching (based on practices) and external expertise.

The decision-making system is not explored in the Strategic plan, but it is outlined in the Statute of the University of Mitrovica. According to the article 17, the Provisional Steering Council of the University is the main governing authority of the University. The Council consists of nine voting members, with the inclusion of 4 voting members from the MEST and 5 members of the UMIB. The UMIB provides the Regulation on the work of Governing Council of the University of Mitrovica (N 527 as of 28.03.2019) which refers to the decision-making body and the procedures on its voting and elections of its 5 members according to its article 13. This relevant information is also reflected on the web-page of the UMIB. Students representation in decision making bodies is well-described in a Regulation as of 2018, March: the REGULATION FOR STUDENTS' ELECTIONS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MITROVICA "ISA BOLETINI" in terms of process of elections and explored in the documents.

At the same time, the ET observed that during online discussions on 18th May 2020 the students knew very well the process of elections, but had some difficulties to describe the differences between executive and consultative bodies of the university for student representatives. This confusion among the student body might be generated by the overlap of the componence of these structures – as the Rector and Vice-rector, for example, are part of both the Senate and the Administrative Council. Therefore, a recommendation of ET regarding this aspect is included below with the purpose of encouraging the university to split the power between these structures in order to ensure the functioning of a check-and-balance system.

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The ET thinks that other parts related to the Regulation on Internal Organization and Systematization of Jobs in Administration and responsibilities of administrative staff is well-defined and presented in the relevant documents.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant
ET recommendations:
1. *Bring more efforts for more systematic connections between the teaching, the industry and practice including direct interactions;*
2. *Ensure that all relevant recommendations from all stakeholders and community groups are incorporated to the process of strategic planning, including the relevant adjustment made for the University´ Strategic plan;*
3. *Explore the difference not only for the decisional, but also for executive and consultative bodies for student community. Makes the relevant additions to the related documents and regulations if needed.*

2.3. Financial planning and management

The UMIB can demonstrate that it possesses sufficient financial resources in the short (one year) and medium term – 2019-2021 to achieve its mission and objectives set out in its strategic plan. During the online discussion between the ET and UMIB, the representatives of institution clearly confirmed that they have sufficient funds to carry out the UMIB strategic plan. The total amount of 4.2 million euro was mentioned during the online meeting by UMIB for 2020. At the same time, the budget shows about 4.8 million euro (2019) and 4.5 million euro for the consecutive 2020 and 2021 years.

The ET checked the university financial planning, and *first of all*, it was curious why the „Goods and services" for the fiscal years 2020 and 2021 are allocated an amount of 366.339.00 Euros compared to the last fiscal year of 2019 (in the amount of 866.339.00 Euro), which is 2.4 times less (only 42% from the funds for the fiscal past year). The explanation was received from the document submitted by the UMIB after the online discussions (as an extra document) about the budget for the 2019 year allocated for "Goods and Services". The ET understands it as an explanation for the "rationalization of budget" activities, with a creation of budgetary measure to save the funds to be used to "raise level for services and quality of teaching". During the online discussions, the students also confirmed that the level of teaching has become much better and more interactive during 2019-2020 academic year.

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Second, the ET also looked at the share of the funds between the faculties, and discovered that for the listed 5 faculties (p. 45 of the SER) there was a demonstrated gap between the amount planned and used. The Faculty of Food technology had allocated funds in the amount of 430.000.00, but it spent only 257.550.00 Euro. This question was raised during the online meeting, and the explanation was provided by the UMIB. From this explanation, the ET understood that there were the long-term procedures connected with the purchasing of equipment for food technology lab of equipment planned for some time, and eventually, it did not take place. The ET also addresses to cover the issues of the financing planning by faculties and provide more detailed analysis regarding what are the priorities and the most urgent tasks for the Budget and Finance Office.

The Budget and Finance Office is responsible for organizing budget hearings with management, academic units and administration regarding the harmonization of requirements. There are 8 employees in total planned to fill the positions. At this time, it seems that there are only 5 employees out of the listed positions that are working on the filled positions:

1. Director of the office;
2. Senior Budget and Finance Officer (1 employee);
3. Budget and Finance Officer 2 (1 employee);
4. Financial Revenue Officer (1 employee);
5. Asset Officer (1 employee);
6. Budget Commitment Officer (1 employee);
7. Expenditure Officer (1 employee);
8. Treasurer (1 employee).

At the same time, there is a reference of the UMIB towards the lack of the administrative staff in the area of revenues and expenditures, and since there are another 3 positions that have been planned, the ET recommends to fill in the position in the area of revenues and expenditures. The ET is not sure why there are only 5 positions filled out of 8 available, and if the UMIB still has the problem to hire the expenditure officer, if it experiences the difficulties in this area of finance.

> Comments of the ET: After the submission of this first draft report, the comments have been received from the UMIB, that the positions have been filled out for the Expenditure Officer and Financial Revenue Officer (appointment dated 30.04.2020).

The UMIB also lists that there is a deficient information for technology infrastructure for internal use, that includes financial indicators, but it does not explore what are the particular

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problems the institution is experiencing in this particular case. For instance, it might be the case that it has an inadequate technology (the integration issues between the new and older systems, back up and security issues, or other problems) or excessive complexity, software engineering, etc.

The ET recommends to formulate exactly what technology infrastructure the UMIB refers to and what sorts of information is missing. The general recommendation, therefore, to define the problem more precisely, and then to describe which particular competences and skills are needed for this designated problem to be solved.

> *Comments of the ET: After the first draft of this report was submitted to UMIB by KAA, the UMIB provided the comments that the new software for financial indicators is expected to be fully operational in early September 2020 as all the necessary financial, technical and human resources are available. Therefore, this challenge stated as a weakness at the time the self-assessment report was written, will be overcome in early September 2020, enabling the Finance and Budget Office of UMIB to be followed by other Finance and Budget Offices of other Public Higher Institutions in Kosovo.*

The ET also recommends to discuss the legitimacy of generating the UMIB own revenues from consulting and research and what can the UMIB offer as the services: consulting, projects, the applied and scientific research. The UMIB may refer to the individual and group expertise as well as the individual specialization, and interdisciplinary experience is always helpful. The ET suggests to check under which legal infrastructure and conditions can UMIB carry out this expertise before it offers it to third parties. The ET also refers to the internal consulting of the technology infrastructure checking the UMIB adequacy of processes and results achieved in each of the standards.

> *Comments of ET: The UMIB provided also the comments that the Regulation for the establishment and the functioning of the institutes in UMIB (decision with no. 598 dated 30.04.2020) and the regulation on the functioning of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center in UMIB (decision no. 597 dated 30.04.2020), has been approved. The personal revenues planned by the provision of these services are also reflected in the structure of own revenues planned for 2021/2023. Whereas, for the fiscal year 2021, is planned to be collected the amount of 15,000.00 EUR; in 2022 the amount of 20,000.00 EUR, and in 2023 the amount of 20,000.00 EUR also (the planned structure of our own revenues).*

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

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1. *Ensure that the planning the expenditures will be done within one fiscal year with three possible scenarios and address these possible options*
2. *Organise the internal specialised training in the fields of financial planning, and expenditures*
3. *Cover the issues of the financing planning by faculties and provide more detailed analysis regarding the priorities and the most urgent tasks for the Budget and Finance Office*
4. *Pay attention to the analysis of the demand and supply expanding the alternative own revenues from putting to value the internal expertise in projects, applied and scientific research activities, consultancy series, including the interdisciplinary options for the industrial partners and other stakeholders*

2.4. Academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability

The university has adopted a Code of Ethic as well as the regulation on Disciplinary Measures and Procedures for the University Staff. These two documents, combined define and govern main principles of behavior, and are in line with professional, moral and ethical values. According to the wording of the Code of ethics, it seems to refer to all of the constituents of the university – academic personnel, administrative and support staff, as well as students. The Code of Ethics defines the principles of academic freedom and scientific integrity and address the matters of plagiarism is separately. Any sort of discriminatory behavior and harassment is articulated and prohibited. The matters of various forms of corruption is put forward to a greater extent in both documents. However, at some points, it is rather unclear what are the areas that apply to administrative staff only, or students only. *It would be helpful to distinguish those.* Moreover, it is recommended that the university continues its efforts to discourage plagiarism. The university is already part of a project that will grant access to an anti-plagiarism software and this effort is praised by the ET. But given the usual limitations of such software, other steps could complement this initiative – for example: including in a methodology course provided to all students, the proper ways of citing or including in the syllabus of all programmes a discipline connected to the ethics of research and ethics of the profession.

Also, the Code of Ethics does mention "artistic … work" (p. 5, Code of Ethics), while the University does not have any programmes of the artistic nature, which in academic terms specifically refers to the performance and artistic disciplines. *It would be best, if the University revises this and other documents to eliminate this inconsistency.*

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The decision-making body that oversees ethical conduct in the university is the Council of Ethics, which consists of five members, four representing academic staff and one student, with the mandate of four and two years, respectively. The mandate of the Council, as well as the procedures of its operation are laid out in the Code of Ethics and the measures for the violations are laid out in the Regulation on Disciplinary Measures and Procedures for the University Staff. The rules and regulations are precise and clear. It is worth highlighting that according to the Code of Ethics of the university, unanimous reports on violations of ethical conduct are not taken into consideration. *This could be something to re-visit in the coming years, if the university finds that ethical misconduct is underreported and consider introducing anonymous reporting as a valid option. Especially for students, it is more difficult to report against the misconduct or potential abuse of a professor, as long as the identity of the whistleblower is not protected as well as his/her academic pathway. The ET recommends the university to consider naming an Ombudsman – who should not be one of the academic staff members – that the students could address to regarding any problems they face.*

Another interim decision-making body, which is created at the faculty/academic level is a Disciplinary Commission and its mandate is to deliberate upon disciplinary violations. It has three members – two academic staff and one student, with four and two-year terms, respectively.

There is a third body within this chain of command, which is ad hoc committees – an implementing body. These can be created on demand, by both, Council of Ethics and Disciplinary Commissions.

What is slightly confusing is a Student Disciplinary Committee, which is mentioned in the SER (p. 51), but is not mentioned in the Code of Ethics. *It is important that the University of Mitrovica addresses this discrepancy and makes sure that if a Student Disciplinary Committee exists in reality, the relevant regulations reflect it and are made available. The share of responsibilities between all these structures should be clarified.*

It is also noteworthy that the governing bodies are not mandated to take the final decision upon ethical or disciplinary misconduct. The Council of Ethics presents their decision, i.e. recommendation to the Senate and only Senate in power of making a final decision. Likewise, the recommendations that are made by the Disciplinary Commissions as well as ad-hoc commissions, are presented to the Dean or the Rector for the final decision (Code of Ethics, p.13). The rules and regulations for the ethical conduct have been adopted in 2016.

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University administration makes sure that its operation is transparent and the information is accessible to its primary stakeholders. Most of the key and relevant information, such as governing regulations, procedures, QA forms and reports, and alike, is available on the university website. Nevertheless, Degree programmes lack key information, such as programme curriculum (with the learning outcomes, programme goals, assessment methods, etc.) as only the schedules for the current academic semester are available. Syllabi are also not available under the button 'syllabus', instead a copy of the academic schedule is presented.

It is important that the academic programmes' details are available online, as declared in the SER. It is the best that the programme description including learning outcomes and main goals and requirements of the programme is briefly outlined. If the University decides that they have to display syllabi of the courses online as well, they should do so properly. Alternatively, the University may decide to not upload course syllabi online, but only provide brief descriptions of the courses.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. In the Code of Ethics, at certain points, it is rather unclear what are the areas that apply to administrative staff only, or students only – consider revision in order to distinguish those;

2. In the Code of Ethics (as well as in other official documents) the University keeps mentioning "artistic work" as part of its mandate, which is inaccurate, if referred to this term as the disciplinary area of performative arts. We recommend the University to revise this and other documents in order to eliminate this inconsistency;

3. It is important that the University of Mitrovica addresses discrepancy and makes sure that if a Student Disciplinary Committee exists in reality, the relevant regulations reflect it and are made available. Consider the potential benefits of creating an Ombudsman;

4. University management has to put special attention to adherence to the ethical norms of the organization and perhaps, monitor the work of the Ethics Council for the first few years. Constant improvement is recommended especially if the cases are under-reported;

5. ET recommends the university to update the information on the website so that it presents all relevant data about the study programmes they offer;

6. Intensifying efforts of reducing the risks of plagiarism by checking all students papers against an anti-plagiarism software and developing skills of ethical research to all students etc.

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2.5. Quality management

The university declares quality assurance as one of its strategic priorities. As university management and QA representatives mentioned, they have used strategic plan to make sure that the QA principles are reflected in all parts of the University life – specifically, teaching, research and International Cooperation (Strategic Plan, pp 5-8). Key performance indicators are separately developed for each specific objective in the strategic plan. Overall, the University's approach to the QA is comprehensive, more specifically:

- At the regulatory level, the university has introduced the framework, which takes into account input, process and output measures of assessment. QA regulations and mechanisms are in place. QA mechanisms, which right now are in the form of data gathering through different kinds of questionnaires, target input, process an output of the key areas of the university life. Guidelines for the QA, as well as key performance indicators for the QA have been developed in 2020. This was, perhaps part of the review of the QA system in the university as part of the preparation for the accreditation, which is mentioned by the SER (p. 55). However, the regulation for the regular review of the QA mechanisms in the university were hard to locate. *It is important that the University introduces regular review of the QA mechanisms in the university and not wait for the external pressures, such as accreditation, to do so.*

- Quality teaching represents a substantially large portion of the university life, hence it is the main concern of the QA as well. Student satisfaction surveys, teacher assessment by the Deans as well as self-assessment measures are all primarily attending to the quality of teaching and learning. The link between these evaluations and the promotion processes should be made clearer for the academic staff. The research has its share of attention, however since the universities in Kosovo are just being introduced to the modern research practice, QA focuses on the basic parameters of its assessment, such as identification of main areas for assistance. Overall, the university has adequately responded to the governmental initiatives to increase its research capacity.

- Several units are designated specifically for the QA. The University has a Vice-Rector of QA, who chairs the Central Committee on QA and Evaluation thus proving the management commitment to the QA objectives. This Committee was created in 2019. In order to ensure impartiality of the QA assessment, university has opted for establishing a QA Office, which is not staffed from within the university, but hires staff members with an open competition. In addition, QA Coordinators are present at the

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levels of academic units. These are mainly the people who are implementing the evaluation processes, which are designed and planned by the QA Office, with the approval and oversee of the Central Committee. ET considers this arrangement adequate and recommends the university to continue the efforts of permanently improving these instruments as well as complementing them with other instruments of data collection. Consequently, the appropriate resources should be allocated to these structures and processes – for example to ensure a continuous training and development of the staff of the QA structures.

- Although the QA instruments have been recently introduced, QA office has already produced three reports covering BA and MA studies and an annual evaluation of the 2018-2019 academic year. This is a clear indicator the QA mechanism is operational in the university. Although, it was hard to find a document that would showcase how some of the results of the assessment efforts were used to for further improvement of different aspects of the university, ET learned through the interviews about different capacity building initiatives that the University has introduced over the course of past based on these diagnostics. To summarise, the university has taken into account inputs, process and outputs of the university life, and has demonstrated that it was incorporated into the outcomes as well. *In order to ensure the visibility of the QA's outcomes, it would be helpful that the university finds a way to also document how results of the QA assessments were translated into the improvement measures in the University (for instance, annual report of the QA work could be a relevant document to incorporate it in). Also, the university should make sure that the reports as well as the follow-up actions are made publicly known – for example, through the website. This will increase both the confidence of the academic community members in these processes and could increase response rate to the questionnaires.*

Just to mention an example of using QA assessment results to improve teaching quality – MA programme assessment revealed that there was an increased demand for better equipped labs and in general, technological advancement. The University responded positively to his challenge and directed its funds to upgrade labs through Government's support. Support to build academic staff's capacity in teaching methodology and inclusion of technologies in teaching was also a response to address the results of the self-assessment reports and students' feedback.

Finally, it is important to note that the QA development is still in infancy in the HE system in Kosovo, and so is in the University of Mitrovica. To put it differently, given the circumstances

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that the purpose of the QA is yet to be completely utilised, the University has done its best to incorporate it in its life-cycle, mainly following external requirements. The time has to pass, until the QA system that is driven by the external demand transforms into the internally-driven instrument for the institutional development.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *In order to ensure the visibility of the QA's outcomes, it would be helpful that the university finds a way to also document how results of the QA assessments were translated into the improvement measures in the University (for instance, annual report of the QA work could be a relevant document to incorporate it in).*
2. *QA structures should collect other types of data besides the perception of different stakeholders through questionnaires. The analysis of the collected data should also be included in the periodical reports the QA structures are preparing for the management.*
3. *The university should ensure that both the reports and the follow-up actions that determine a continuous improvement of the quality of the university and its programmes are made publicly available.*
4. *Consider including the monitoring of the achievements regarding the strategic objectives of the university among the responsibilities of the QA structures;*
5. *Allocate appropriate resources to the QA structures and their activities in order to ensure a constant staff development and a permanent improvement of the instruments they use and the processes they implement.*

2.6. Learning and teaching

UMIB offers 12 Bachelor programmes and 8 Master level programmes (currently, in June 2020) that were developed according to the legislation in Kosovo, in accordance with National Qualifications Framework and the European HE Qualifications Framework. The UMIB has adopted the University level Regulation on Bachelor Studies and the Regulation for Master Studies and the SER included these documents for the Food and Technology Faculty as an example and later on the regulations for the entire institution were submitted as additional documents. Moreover, basic rules of the programme development and the roles and responsibilities of the academic staff as well as the top management, and the rights and responsibilities of the students are put forward in the Statute (now Provisional Statute) of the university. *It is important to bridge this discrepancy between the information provided in the*

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SER and the reality. The ET advises the UMIB to produce the university wide regulation that will govern the programme development, implementation and evaluation process.

As the academic staff representatives explained, science degrees – Bachelors in Science and Master in Science – are granted in, so called, technical disciplines, such as geosciences, food technology and mechanical and computer engineering. The degree in arts – bachelors and masters of Arts – are granted in social sciences, such as education, economics and law. The reasoning behind this differentiation, as they explained was that more 'theoretical' knowledge is included in the scientific degrees, than in the degrees of art. While this is a useful distinction between the two degree types, it has to be mentioned, Faculty of Economics is offering Bachelor of Science and Master of Science, although Economics is a social science discipline. While the ET could examine the syllabi of separate courses in the programmes among the five faculties, we were not able to locate programme curriculums. This made it difficult to assess whether course learning outcomes correspond with the programme learning outcomes. The syllabi that are available online contain all necessary components, such as course objective, its learning outcomes, teaching methods and alike. However, *not all of the programmes' syllabi are available online, which is something that the University should attend to as soon as possible.* Overall, the university is in the process of transitioning from the old to the modern teaching practices, which will take a considerable time and effort to be streamlined. It is evident that the university is putting its efforts and resources into it.

It seems that the decision to display the programme information on the web-site is mainly externally driven (i.e. quality assurance standards require certain degree of transparency, hence the university provides information online). Put it differently, for the University, the web-site is not perceived as a communication channel with e.g. potential students, industry partners or other stakeholders. The ET recommends that short descriptions of the programmes (main aims and learning outcomes) with corresponding course-descriptions (perhaps a short paragraph) is available on faculty web-pages.

The university has an efficient system to check the fulfillment of the teaching and learning standards, which includes: the syllabus review and the instruments in the package of Quality Measurement, such as self-assessment, student evaluation, Dean's evaluation. The University has a good plan to introduce academic staff's evaluation of its management and students evaluation of the university management.

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University has 95 full-time academic staff and 19 – part-time. This makes a student/faculty ratio quite satisfactory – 16/1. University cares about its staff, staff development plans are available at the faculty levels. University representative mentioned that they cooperate with the University of Pristina in providing trainings in teaching methods. This is one of the good example of University's staff development efforts and university cooperation within the country.

According to SER and the interviews, the learning methods and learning environments offered by the institution are student-centered. The students are represented in different committees and partake in decision-making processes including those related to the learning process.

ET understands that most of the monitoring and evaluation processes have been just recently introduced, hence we *recommend that the university develops performance standards for the programmes, collect all the data that the QA instruments mentioned above provide and use it to monitor the quality of the programmes.*
The ET also wants to mention that the online discussions with the UMIB students have revealed that even if it is already May they didn't progress very much with their final thesis. Though the whole COVID-19 situation and lockdown might have played a role in this, the university should check whether this is a common practice to postpone thesis writing for so late in the final semester or just an exception. The ET recommends that the workload for the last semester of the final year, both for students and staff members is reorganized in such a way, that students choose their coordinator and theme earlier and start working on their thesis in due time so that they can defend their final thesis in June/July. This way, the university can guarantee that the students can apply for a Masters' or PhD programme and continue their studies if they desire – defending their thesis later might put this at risk.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *It is important to bridge this discrepancy between the information provided in SER and the reality. ET advises the University to produce the university wide regulation that will govern the programme development, implementation and evaluation process;*
2. ET *recommends that the university develops performance standards for the programmes, collect all the data that the QA instruments mentioned above provide and use it to monitor the quality of the programmes;*

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3. *Not all of the programmes' syllabi are available online, which is something that the University should attend to as soon as possible;*
4. *As far as the thesis is concerned, it is recommended to have a monitoring mechanism, as part of the QA measures, over the Mentors who supervise the students´ final theses*

2.7. Research

Research is a strategic priority of the university, and it is a strategic goal for the university. The institution also has a separate plan for academic staff development, which puts considerable emphasis on research capacity building of the academic staff through creating opportunities for short-term mobility abroad, for participating in (and organizing) scientific conferences, for producing research papers (Plan for the development of the academic staff 2019-2021, pp. 7-10). This does indicate that the University takes the research capacity building seriously, however, it should be noted that the staff development plan does not have a timeline, neither specific resources (funds, infrastructure) anticipated for each specific objective and its corresponding actions. Therefore, it is hard to assess, whether the plan is feasible. In absence of the report on e.g. work carried out in 2019, it is also difficult to assess, whether the development plans have been implemented so far. It is also difficult to identify what are the annual targets in research, as of the University's strategic objective, as strategic plan does not provide measurable indicators (e.g. number of faculty trained annually, number of applied research carried out annually, number of conference attended annually, and alike). *It is important that more effort is devoted to the capacity building of the university management to master a strategic planning process, including development of annual plans and monitoring mechanisms of the implementation process. In this manner, strategic documents will help the university in gradual development. As mentioned in the QA (2.5) section, we recommend the university to monitor the achievements of its strategic objectives and publish reports on the progress and constant improvement of the university activity.*

The importance of research is reflected in the organizational structure as well, as the university has a Vice-Rector in International Relations and Research and in the current year, the Research Development Centre was created. The center is brand new, therefore, it has not had much of the activities yet. *It is crucial that this unit has a strong support from the university management, as university's success in the research realm mainly depends on the effectiveness of this Center.*

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According to the SER, the university has committed a considerable sum of money to support research. For the year 2021, the University plans to spend 16 thousand Euros on staff capacity development. However, it is hard to differentiate, whether these are funds for attending conferences, or other type of activities that would boost staff's research capacity. The SER also mentions the funds that were made available through ERASMUS project, which devotes 18 thousand Euros to anti-plagiarism software and access to the electronic scientific databases, such as SAGE or EBSCO for three years. And the rest of the funds, over the course of the years – 2018-2021 – 3,131,500 (presumably) Euros will be allocated to the upgrading and equipping of different Labs (SER, p. 82). This kind of investment of this kind over the course of four years is valuable and ET considers that concentrated funding is a right step forward to ensure that the University starts producing quality research, both scientific and applied, (Upgraded labs will also increase the quality of education.) *Having said that, the ET wants to highlight that it is equally important that these investments are not one of a kind, but operations and maintenance costs of the labs are duly calculated and reflected into the annual budget of the University. Without adequate funds the labs will quickly go out of date, or the faculty will not have enough supplies for research or education purposes. Moreover, given the limited resources usually allocated to research activities in the Central and Eastern European universities, it is crucial that the university prioritizes its investments in strategic research areas. These should be defined through an ample consultation process at the level of the university but also considering input from external stakeholders – for example UMIB could consider the national research priorities or the research trends in Europe or the research interests of its partners instead of investing in all the research fields connected to all of its study programmes.*

The University has encouraged international cooperation for research. It has listed 54 partnerships and has 36 memoranda of understanding with international instiutions. It is also part of two important networks: the Academic Association for Contemporary European Studies (AACES) and the Francophone University Association (L'Agence universitaire de la Francophonie).

The University also has a strong footing with the local industry and capitalizes on it in producing applied research. It has also identified needs of the academic staff to produce scientific papers and provided trainings to support them. The University also has some funds available for those who would like to attend and present at international conferences or produce a research paper, i.e. competitive research grants at the central university level. Efforts to keep

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the resource allocation process transparent are important. Additionally, the university has also concentrated its efforts to support younger generation interested in academia to advance to the doctoral degree. Apart from this, in 2019 the university has financially supported organization of the first International Multidisciplinary Geosciences Conference. The University is strategically approaching international cooperations and collaborations with industry representatives. For instance, in cooperation with Kosovo Dairy Industry Association and Van Hall Larenstein University (Netherlands), Yuniko Organization and Faculty of Food and Technology of University of Mitrovica a Centre of Experience (During the interviews, it was referred to as a Centre of Entrepreneurship) was created. The Centre will mainly focus on applied research.

One of the main challenges that the university faces is lack of English language competence to do scientific research well. During the interviews, it was mentioned that the English language courses are provided for those, willing to learn, and also, peer-support is one of the ways to tackle the problem of translating the research results into publishable articles. However, it has to be mentioned that knowledge of English is not only needed for translating the research piece, but also in being able to have direct access to the up-to-date scientific literature. And the university is already putting up efforts to ensure access for its members to international online databases/journal. Therefore, it is important that University's efforts are not left at the level of peer review and voluntary English language courses, but have it supplemented with a long-term hiring strategy – for example: investing in the faculty with high English language proficiency and foster collaborative work among newcomers and experienced academic staff.

ET remains skeptical that the university will be able to produce one research article per academic staff annually. Apart from lacking English language skills and lack of research experience, the academic staff has a heavy teaching load, they could have administrative responsibilities as well, and have to be involved in the community work (as per their contracts), and in addition, most of them have supplementary jobs as well. As ET learned from the interviews, the research output is not linked with the career promotion either (which is a systemic problem as universities are bound to recruit strictly according to the open competition and internal promotion schemes are not practiced as an anticorruption measure). The only benefit or incentive that the academic staff receive in recognition to their outstanding research/scientific work is a written gratitude. In this sense, the system does not have strong incentives why academics staff would do research and it has only punitive measures. As ET learned during the interviews, in those cases, when (mainly, full time) academic staff does not

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produce research article annually, then their contract, which usually is for three years, is not renewed. The ET thinks that the most stimulated example for students´ research is to bring the examples of the world´s best research practices for the relevant industries (mining/ metallurgy, etc) into the teaching practices (more is in the recommendations), Participation in the Erasmus+ projects would be another good practice to link research and project together (the previous recommendations in 2.2.). The SWOT analysis also pointed out the limited use of integrating research into teaching.

Also, given the scarce number of academic personnel, who have up-to-date research skill and English proficiency, it is also highly unlikely that punitive measures will be actually practiced, as the University, simply cannot afford to lose them. *It is important that the University takes into account all of the systemic and university-wide challenges and develops a robust research development plan that will actually work. Moreover, it is important that the university develops a reward system that will recompensate those who manage to meet the research standards required both by MEST and UMIB.*

To summarize, the university has introduced a number of activities to work towards achieving its strategic goal on building research capacity. This mainly concerns rebuilding/updating research infrastructure and supporting its academic staff in producing research output. However, the support is heavily donor driven and there is no guarantee that the university will be able to maintain the support system in a long-term perspective.

While the university is under tremendous external pressure to produce quality research and has an ambition to be recognized both nationally and internationally, it is unlikely that this will happen in the coming years. *The University needs to gradually build its capacity in several specific areas, where it has a positive advantage and capitalize on it.*

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Continue devoting efforts towards the capacity building of the university management to master strategic planning process, including development of annual plans and monitoring mechanisms of the implementation process. In this manner, strategic documents will help the university in gradual development.*
2. *Ensure that the Research Development Center receives a strong support from the university management, as university's success in the research realm mainly depends on the effectiveness of this Center.*

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3. *Ensure that considerable investments in research are not one of a kind, but constant and that they include funds for covering duly calculated operations and maintenance costs. Without adequate funds the labs will quickly go out of date, or the faculty will not have enough supplies for research or education purposes.*

4. *Develop a robust research development plan that takes into account the challenging context and that will actually work. Ensure that the indicators included in the research development plan are specific and measurable, and constantly measure its achievements.*

5. *The University needs to gradually build its capacity in several specific areas, where it has a positive advantage and capitalize on it prioritizing funding strategic research areas.*

6. *Intensify the efforts of increasing the levels of English proficiency among academic staff members. This will also help other initiatives of the university: improve international cooperations, increase student and staff exchange programmes etc.*

7. *Integrating research into the teaching activities based on the (1) published personal works or works of the UMIB colleagues as well as the related international works that can be easily found in the https://www.journals.elsevier.com/international-journal-of-mining-science-and-technology/most-downloaded-articles*

2.8. Staff, employment processes and professional development

The university UMIB has developed a handbook entitled Human Resources Manual that includes rights and responsibilities, recruitment processes, supervision, performance appraisal, promotion, support processes and professional development. The web-site provides the Manual for its Human resources with the reference to academic and administrative staff´s positions and their development (as of December, 2019): https://www.umib.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Manual-per-burime-njerezore-1.pdf. The UMIB explains that it is a tool which helps administrative and academic staff to define the areas of their evaluation and professional development.

The same Handbook (HR Manual) provides the evaluation procedure for promotion or appointment to an academic title are based on the criteria of:
- Research activity
- Scientific activity, and
- Professional activity

The job contract contains a full job description, and the UMIB also include the determined equivalent and comparable international qualifications. The UMIB provides also the examples of the appointment, reappointment and promotion of academic staff at the University of

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Mitrovica "Isa Boletini" as of November, 2019. (Source: https://www.umib.net/en/competition-on-the-appointment-reappointment-and-promotion-of-academic-staff-at-the-university-of-mitrovica-isa-boletini/)

As for the orientation programme of the new teaching staff is concerned, during the online meeting, the UMIB officials provided the description how the UMIB organizes this process:

- Usually when the new members of staff are hired, they have a meeting with the dean, then with the QA office and the teachers they are going to work with;
- The new members of staff receive a package of relevant procedures and instructions

The new staff´s members are introduced to the rights and responsibilities of the staff and the professional development opportunities of the academic staff described in the Handbook.

The overall students/professor ratio is approximately 16:1 (1812 students/114 professors), with the UMIB´s 95 full-time and 19 part-time professors. The list of all 95 full professors and 19 part-time professors is attached in the SER with the different types of degrees and contracts specified. The ratio is the usually the one that takes place in the first cycle of studies. Groups are formed if they reach from 10 to 25 students and over 80 students for lectures.

Academic staff is allocated according their degrees and contracts.

The staff has the relevant qualifications to effectively manage educational, scientific, research, creative and administrative processes.

The SER says that the academic staff´s norm is 40 hours a week, where the teaching loads includes the uniform approach for the assistant professors, associate and full professors - 6 hours per week with an additional - up to 5 hours of the paid overtime load per week, 1-2 hours of students´ consultations, including 3 students for Diploma thesis (in average).

Both the SER and the extra-documents provided by AC later on, mentions an equal norm for the assistant professor, associate professors and full-time professors, but the ET recommendation is to differentiate them.

The CV of academic staff have also been submitted with the relevant and appropriate qualifications and needed skills. The performance evaluation process for the promotion of academic staff considers three areas of research, scientific and professional activities, and the professors and the academic staff are also subject to student evaluations. The evaluation of academic staff is discussed with staff individually, and some information is published on the web-site. The check-up of this evaluation in the forms of photographs of the representatives of

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Faculty (the one which is place on the web-site is the self-evaluation of the Faculty of Economics) is placed on the web-site -
https://www.umib.net/en/?s=evaluation&lang=en. The improvement plan is monitored by the Dean. The improvement plan is usually monitored by the Dean.

The publication of texts, workshops, works and other texts, which contain the professional and scientific achievements of the academic staff will be supported. At the same time, the text of the Plan for development of the academic staff in UMIB for the period 2019-2021 includes the general text, and it is written that the support provided, but without a specific number or amount of money. There is a reference that the "numbers of the publication of texts, workshops, works and other texts, which contain the professional and scientific achievements of the academic staff will be supported". The academic staff have the opportunity to take also a sabbatical leave for one year.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Performance indicators should be more clearly identified, being more comprehensive, with the certain numerological characteristics or the provided explanation;*
2. *Staff promotion procedure should clearly state how does the university value the involvement of the academic staff in international cooperations and at community level as well as the risks connected to not meeting the standards imposed by MEST or UMIB.*
3. *The institution should consider closely monitoring the improvements in staff activity after the performance evaluations are discussed with them.*
4. *The ET considers that the university should target to gradually reduce the number of academic staff that have a full-time job else-where by motivating them to dedicate most of their time and energy to the university.*
5. *The ET recommends to change the uniform approach and differentiate the teaching load for the assistant professors, associate professors and full time professors.*

2.9. Student administration and support services

Admission at University of Mitrovica is organized as a „public competition, which is published on the University's web site in the first term in July" (SER, 112) and it follows the regulations set at national level: „Admission requirements are identical in all public universities in Kosovo, since they are set by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology" (SER, p.113). The ET could not find sufficient information about the admission

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criteria, but it praises the fact that the scoring formula for the entrance exam is announced/public (p.113).

The SER mentioned at page 114 that „**In order to facilitate student information about admission procedures, the announcement is published on the University of Mitrovica website and in newspapers" –** the ET checked and on the page of the university one can still find the announcement for entry exam in 2018/2019 in English, but no updated information for 2020/2021. UMIB has provided the ET the selection criteria and formula, but since they are not published on the website (for example a set of results from previous admissions) it is difficult to evaluate whether the admission requirements are consistently and fairly applied. And the online discussions with the internal stakeholders were not relevant.

The ET recommends *the university start publishing the admission criteria earlier, for example, with 6 months before the intended exam date, so that potential future students can get ready for the entrance exam, even if the details regarding the calendar and number of available places are announced later on.*

Many details about the university and the programmes it offers are available on the website of the institutions. Moreover, the university organises information days for the potential students, a **Science Fair (one-day fair) on 6th March** and meetings with potential students from other regions in order to inform interested persons about the study programme offer. However, some of the efforts mentioned here are rather specific to only some faculties, not institutional policies for promoting the opportunities and programmes offered by the university.

Last but not least, the university has developed in 2019 a Student Handbook - `a compilation of informations, acts and main UMIB regulations regarding students`, and published it on the website. T*he ET has tried to also find it on its own on the website, but observed it is difficult to find, thus recommends that the university makes it easier to find.*

Part of the efforts put into facilitating the integration of new students in the university community is the organization of an Orientation day on the 1st of October – a festivity but also information day with the purpose of informing the new coming students them about the programme, the university campus, conduct policies, while the new students are given the opportunity to be informed on anything of interest to them.

UMIB offers scholarships based on performance criteria – e.g. 1000 Euro to those students who fulfill a competition. Moreover, some scholarships are allocated based on social criteria: „Students of public universities, including UMIB students, are also eligible to apply for scholarships at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology" – scholarships that are

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allocated on social criteria**.** Likewise, some students are exempted from paying the student fees.

Some data about the students is generated from SMU and discussed in the council of each academic unit but it is not clear whether it is integrated in the QA processes
The ET recommends that *more data should be systematically collected and analysed at the level of the QA structures.*
Based on Article 33 of the Regulation on Bachelor Studies and Master Studies, students have the right to submit a written appeal to the Dean of the academic unit against the grade he/she received. Student appeal procedure was known by all those interviewed during the online discussions. The appeal has to be submitted within two business days after the results were announced. According to the SER, the Dean automatically appoints a Review Committee consisting of three members – but not including the academic staff member that evaluated the student the first time.
Moreover, the university has a Code of Ethics and regulations on the disciplinary conduct of students. **The following measures may be imposed on students for disciplinary violations:** *"Written warning, Last warning before expulsion, Expulsion from studies up to two years",* Final expulsion from the Faculty. However, very little was included in the SER regarding the punishments for disciplinary violations of the academic staff. The ET recommends the college to identify adequate disciplinary measures for all its internal stakeholders, not only for students. **The ET** *recommends the university to consider creating an Ombudsman – a trustworthy person that is not an academic staff member, that the students can address to it with problems they face or in order to report a misconduct or a disciplinary violation. The procedures should guarantee the protection of the identity of the whistleblower.*

`Students are provided with a comfortable environment for the normal course of study` (SER, p.120), thus the university provides a range of services, but does not offer yet dormitories, or a cafeteria, but has a recreation area in the same building with the faculties. Both the administration and the UMIB library are working extended hours to deserve the student needs. The library is equipped with computer that ensure students' access to the Francophone University Library. Moreover, UMIB has a collaboration agreement with the National Library of Kosovo in order to access more resources for the members of its community. As it was highlighted during the interviews, UMIB plans to improve the student services and the ET recommends the university to continue these efforts and not give up trying to constantly improve its services. In order to reach this objective, the university should constantly monitor

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the implementation of these services. UMIB has already started doing so, through the student surveys collected periodically. They have indicated that up to now, students are satisfied with the received services and the institutions' facilities – for example they are satisfied with the hygiene of the institution and the green areas of the campus. The ET was also impressed with the video presenting the campus. Up to now, feedback was collected through student surveys (applied online recently) and through the Student Parliament.

Students mentioned they knew about services like academic counselling, career planning and employment counselling but did not access it. Even though the university declares that they monitor the efficiency of these services, more efforts have to be put into making them more popular among students so that the investment made by the university in these services are put to value.

The university supports its students to get involved in extra-curricular activities. The proof provided in this case is that during each academic year, the Student Parliament organizes a Science and Culture Fair, knowledge Competitions, a humanitarian action in cooperation with the Red Cross, a march on the Children Day and the various sports competitions such as in football, chess, table tennis, etc. We recommend that the university supports initiatives of individual students or informal groups. For this the administrative management should ensure that spaces around the campus are available for extracurricular activities of students with a minimum of bureaucracy.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant
ET recommendations:
1. *Consider putting more efforts into increasing the popularity of some services for students – e.g. counselling;*
2. *Consider creating sleeping/living arrangements for students who are out of town or just want to move on their own, but don't afford a full rent. Also consider creating a cafeteria/buffet on campus, thus encouraging students to spend more time on campus, which will in the end help them be more involved in the life of the university.*
3. *Ensure that the spaces of the university campus are available for students´ activities with a minimum of bureaucracy;*

2.10. Learning resources and facilities

The campus of Mitrovica University is impressive: it operates on a 17.5 hectares campus situated in the municipality of Mitrovica and provides adequate, clean, attractive and well

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maintained facilities adequate to host learning and research activities. The university monitors the usage of space and, when necessary, reallocation of facilities is done to respond to the changing requirements.

The university continues to invest in the facilities – for example during the 2019/2021 period, the institution has previsioned an investment in a dining facility and a student accommodation. The need of these two types of facilities has been brought up during the online interviews and the ET commends the effort put in this initiative by the university. We believe that it will be appreciated by the students and will help them spend more time on the campus, and thus better integrate in the academic community and maybe even be more involved in the student life.

Recent investments were also made in the teaching facilities – e.g. academic units benefited from a more than 700.000 euros budget for investments in laboratories and laboratory equipment. And more such investments are previsioned by the university management for the period to come (2020/2021).

UMIB provides students with a library equipped with books both in Albanian and in English, from the subject areas taught within the university. The university also `has an agreement with the National Library of Kosovo that provides our students with access to about 700,000 book titles and also improve the possibilities to have access in online libraries` (SER, p.126). Moreover, the university has agreements with the University of Pristina to ensure access to ScienceDirect for its academic staff through a VPN system.

However, even if the library provides 30 computers to the academic community and up-to-date software, very few students and staff actually access the online libraries mentioned before, thus not benefiting from having access to up-to-date research results in their own research endeavors. The ET recommends the university to continue its efforts to ensure access to online databases relevant for the subject areas taught (e.g. EBSCO, ScienceDirect etc.) but also continue to encourage the academic community members to use these resources and monitor the usage rate. The ET recommends that the online databases are made accessible from home via the institutional email of both students and staff members, especially as the library and its associated facilities are only available from Monday to Saturday from 08.00 to 16.00 – with the possibility of students to stay over these working hours upon request. Students should be encouraged by the academic staff to use such resources when preparing a course paper or their final thesis as part of their research elements. The university could consider extending the working hours of the library after the dormitory and cafeteria are functional, especially during periods when students prepare for their exams or for defending their final thesis.

Moreover, the ET recommends UMIB to ensure that students have access to all the studying materials they are required to cover in order to prepare for their exam. The SER does not

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mention financial resources provided for acquisition, cataloguing and system development, but does mention the investment in the technology infrastructure. This should be covered within the budget plan. An inventory of all equipment is kept by the university with all the equipments owned by the university and their usage – including the computers installed in the academic staff offices.

The ET praises the university initiative to pay the 2020 fee for the francophone library (https://bneuf.auf.org) as well as on the usage of a book registration software to ensure a reliable system of recording loans and returns. The electronic book keeping is doubled by a physical register, but the ET consider that this system, though perceived as more secure, it might generate loss of time and resources and has the disadvantage of the impossibility of sending automatic reminders to those who borrowed books or materials from the library, but are late in returning them. In order to prevent loss of material and books, the university adopted a Regulation of the Library which includes provisions regarding the recovery of borrowed materials. The regulation stipulates that for lost or damaged materials, the student has to pay a 100 euros fine. Though this is a good measure, the university could also consider complementary actions - For example before graduating each student could be asked to prove that they returned all borrowed books/materials and pay for any lost material so that it can be replaced by the library.

The university provided a list of the software licenses acquired for the learning and research activities of its members, and mentioned that `UMIB continuously encourages academic units to make use of free software, e.g. to use PSPP or R instead of SPSS` (SER, p. 128) which is a very creative way to make use of the available resources and prioritise investments in the necessary softwares that are not available in free/trial versions.

Both for the usage of the technological infrastructure – e.g. smart boards, projectors etc. - and the adequate software there is an Information Technology Office within the Rectorate providing support to the computer labs and the academic staff. UMIB could consider organizing trainings to ensure effective use of its equipment – especially as this could translate in improved teaching and learning experience.

The ET salutes the online survey for students applied by the university concerning the facilities and student services and encourages the university to also adopt formal mechanisms of periodically considering and responding to the views of students.

As far as potential students with disabilities or special needs are concerned, UMIB has taken some measures already: parking signage, where these categories have been allocated designated lots, the large amphitheater is equipped with a sound system and the possibility of moving the wheelchair up the amphitheater, placing such students in smaller groups, organizing consultations. Such efforts should be continued and directed to also making available studying materials /resources for these students. Usage of the available technological infrastructure can ease the accommodation of their special needs.

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Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Consider organising training programmes to ensure effective use of its equipment – especially as this could translate in improved teaching and learning experience.*
2. *Consider implementing a system of preventing loss of material and return of borrowed books.*
3. *Continue the efforts of ensuring the learning materials that students are required to cover for an exam as well as the efforts to ensure access to online databases of recent/up-to-date research results (e.g. EBSCO, Scopus, ScienceDirect – but choosing those that are most relevant for the study areas covered by the UMIB programmes. Consider ensuring access to these databases from home, via institutional emails, both for academic staff and for students.*

2.11. Institutional cooperation

UMIB has included in its Strategic plan for 2018 – 2021 objectives linked to internationalization and institutional cooperation aiming, among others, to increase its global partnerships; increase staff and student mobility (Internships, further studies, etc.) and increase the number of applications for scholarships.

In the submitted Revenue and expenditures report for 2019 years, there is no clearly allocated budget budget which would include funds for the research activities There is some detailed information, but it is not translated in English. The SER provides this information in terms of participation in international conferences, but it also include the official trips related to gaining experience, international communication and making agreements with universities abroad. Thus, it is difficult to differentiate between the amount of money allocated for the institutional cooperation or research (conferences) which is quite limited for the UMIB. It is 7.324.61 euro for the year 2020 and 16.000.00 euro – for the year of 2021.

The institution has created and assigned the portfolio of International Relations and Scientific Research to an upper management - a Vice-Rector – the university justifies this with the logic that most of the international cooperation are based on or generate cooperation in scientific projects.

The university is part of 54 partnerships and has signed 36 memorandums of understanding with international institutions and is part of two important networks: the Academic Association

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for Contemporary European Studies (AACES) and the Francophone University Association (L'Agence universitaire de la Francophonie).

Some of the signed agreements have already been operationalized in mobility opportunities for both students and staff, as well as projects co-funded from European funds – the SER gives sufficient details about these at pages 142 - 147. Given the complicated political context of Kosovo, the efforts done by UMIB to be part of these partnerships are recognized by the ET. More should be done, however, in the direction of prioritising those types of cooperations considered of strategic importance for the institution based on its current and future objectives. The arrangements for mobilities, the organization of conferences and summer schools as well as the financial support offered to its academic community members to participate in international conferences are part of the institutional efforts of supporting the increase in visibility of both the university and its members. For example, in 2018 The University of Mitrovica organized the International Interdisciplinary Conference "Historical Continuity and Change: The Balkans in a European and Global Context which gathered about 220 authors, co-authors and contributors from 16 countries. The university should focus its financial support mechanisms towards encouraging the habits they want to promote and make the distribution of resources transparent.

Locally, the university has a traditionally very good relationship with local industries and potential employers of UMIB graduates. This has been proven by the discussion with the employers who described their relation with the university as a very close one. Though the SER does not detail it, the interviews indicated that some members of the community are involved in different committees at the level of municipality offering their expertise in strategic planning. More should be done to support this involvement in solving the community's problems with expertise from HE. The university at its turn involves local business representatives both in teaching and in the review of the programme it offers – feedback forms are distributed to employers.

Involvement in developing institutional cooperation, research projects and mobility opportunities by a staff member is valued by the institution and considered in the promotion process. Similar is the case with the involvement of staff in projects and discussion at local level (involvement in the community). However, the university should increase the level of transparency on how these contributions are valued.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Define the priorities in international cooperation in close relationship with the strategic objectives of the institution.*
2. *Correlate budget with the strategic priorities in terms of institutional cooperation, while ensuring a transparent distribution of resources among faculties.*

3. *Clearly state how the involvement of academic staff in institutional cooperation – local and international – are valued during the promotion process.*

3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND JUDGEMENTS OF THE ET

The ET would like to note that the process of accreditation was carried out in the conditions of externalities of COVID-19, which went smoothly during the 18th of May, 2020 with no technical problems. The University organised all processes effectively, and also responded to the needs of the ET providing it with the additionally requested documentation.
Overall, the ET should notice also the team´s motivation, and the commitment by the members of this institution during the online session. However, the ET also believes that the UMIB has much higher potential, and despite a lot of efforts have been made, the institution should continue to improve its quality, finalising its documents and paying attention to the ET´s recommendations.

The ET also expresses its hope that the recommendations of its team will be taken into account. In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that:

the **University of Mitrovica** (UMIB) has reached its overall "**Substantially compliant**" level with the standards included in the *KAA Accreditation manual* and, therefore, recommends *to accredit* the institution for a duration of *3 years*.

4. APPENDICES *(if available)*

Not applicable.

Expert Team

Chair

Prof. Dr. Yelena Istileluova
_____
(Signature)   (Print Name)   (Date)

Member

Prof. Dr. Elene Jibladze
_____
(Signature)   (Print Name)   (Date)

Member

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Student Delia Gologan

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