UNIVERSITY OF MITROVICA
"ISA BOLETINI"

INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

April 2019, Pristina

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: 9ᵗʰ – 10ᵗʰ April 2019

Expert Team (ET) members:

- Dr. Anca Prisacariu, Senior Quality Assurance Expert
- Ms. Oana Sarbu, PhD student, University of Bucharest

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- Avni Gashi, Acting 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 of Mitrovica „Isa Boletini";
- Information obtained during the site visit;
- Meetings conducted with the management of the institution, teaching and administrative staff, students, graduates, external stakeholders and employers of graduates;
- Supplementary documents requested by the ET (Appendix 1).

Criteria used for the institutional evaluation:

- KAA Accreditation Manual

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1.2. Site visit schedule

9th April 2019

17.45 Meeting at the reception of the hotel

18.00 Working dinner

10th April 2019

07.50 Meeting at the reception of the hotel

09.00 – 10.30 Meeting with the management of the institution

10.40 – 11.50 Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative services

12.00 – 13.00 Meeting with the heads of study programs

13.00 – 13.50 Lunch break

13.50 – 14.50 Visiting tour of the facilities

14.50 – 15.40 Meeting with teaching staff

15.50 – 16.40 Meeting with students

16.50 – 17.40 Meeting with graduates

17.50 – 18.40 Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders

18.45 – 19.00 Internal meeting – Expert Team and KAA

19.00 – 19.15 Closing meeting with the management of the institution

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1.3. A brief overview of the institution under evaluation

The Foundation of Higher Education Studies in Mitrovica were set up in 1961 by opening the Technical High School. In 1970, the Mining, Technology and Metallurgy branches were opened within the Technical Faculty, initially in Mitrovica (1970/71 academic year), then in Pristina. According to the the Law of the Assembly of Kosovo, the Faculty of Mining and Metallurgy in Mitrovica was established on July 22, 1974. As a result, the studies were organized in Mining, Technology and Metallurgy areas, whereas the Geology area was opened in the 1980/81 academic year.

Based on the tradition in higher education in Mitrovica and the faculties' achievements, the Government of the Republic of Kosovo established the Public University of Mitrovica (hereafter also referred to as „UMIB", „the university" or „the institution") on March 6, 2013 and the Kosovo Assembly ratified the decision on 31 May 2013.

The University of Mitrovica organizes its activity at a campus spread out over 17.67.75 hectares. The faculties are accommodated in one building with a total surface of 15386 m2, while the staff of the rectorate and the central administration are hosted in one building with a surface of 2197 m2. Within the university campus there are one amphitheatre, labs, classrooms, library spaces, reading rooms and academic staff cabinets.

According to the Provisional Statute approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), there are six faculties within UMIB - Faculty of Geosciences, Faculty of Food Technology, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Computer Science, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economics and Faculty of Education – where the students can pursue one of the 18 study programs in the first and second cycle of higher education studies, bachelor and masters.

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.

2.1. Public mission and institutional objectives

According to the SER, the mission statement of the institution is as follows:
- *To act as a leading center for the advancement of knowledge, ideas and science in Kosovo' s higher education system;*

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- *To play the leading role in the enhancement of education, science, culture, society and the economy of Kosovo;*
- *To assist in the process of promoting civic democracy;*
- *To seek to create and support the highest standards in teaching and learning, scientific research and artistic work;*
- *To utilize its resources in the most efficient way;*
- *To fully cooperate and participate in all higher educational activities at the regional, national, and international levels;*
- *To adjust European standards;*
- *To fully integrate into the European Area of Higher Education (in line with the Bologna Declaration, the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the European Research Area) and to take the appropriate reform steps necessary to achieve this objective;*
- *To create and transmit knowledge, and to develop and protect it through teaching, research and innovation, as well as through other services in the fields of educational sciences.*

The mission statement of UMIB is 53% identical (copied and pasted, according to Microsoft word version comparison tool) with the mission statement of another public university in Kosovo, while the large majority of the remaining words are synonyms. The ET is unsure which institution got inspired from the other one, but is aware of the national context of the 6 branches of University of Pristina that were established as autonomous public universities in the past years, which could have influenced this similarity. However, the ET still considers this practice as being unethical and is surprised to find this at a university level, and with something as important as the mission statement.

Moreover, considering the tradition and the specifics of UMIB programs, the ET strongly believes that the institution could easily develop a mission statement that reflects its uniqueness in the region. The current mission statement could easily be transferred to any higher education institution (and it has been!); therefore, the mission statement should present to the internal and external community what distinguishes UMIB from other universities.

The mission statement is defined in a way that it includes the three main pillars: teaching, research and community service. However, the ET believes the format of the mission statement is very long, which is not a specific feature in the global higher education landscape, and which makes it difficult for the academic community to identify itself with the mission. The current format and wording of the mission do not fully meet the characteristics of a mission that properly guides management in their decision making: brief, clear, concise, specific and distinguishable.

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The mission statement is made publicly available on the website of the institution. However, the ET has observed during the site visit that the members of the academic community cannot recollect any elements of the mission statement, but rather referred to strategic objectives and development priorities instead. In other instances, the answers were rather what staff believed should be the mission, but it did not resemble the actual mission statement.

It is not clear to what extent the mission statement is sufficiently specific to provide an effective guide for strategic planning, decision making and operations of the institution. Still, the medium and long term objectives of the institution are consistent with and support the mission.

In the light of changing circumstances and based on the recommendations provided during the previous accreditation process, the institution has revised its mission statement in the same time with the development of the Strategic Plan of the University of Mitrovica "Isa Boletini" (SPUMIB).

The Governing Council established a working group for the development of the mission, vision and strategic plan of the university. The group was made of 5 members, no student and no representative of the labour market; the group had in its composition one external stakeholder - a representative from MEST - which has been voted out by the rest of the group due to inactivity, as reflected in the minutes of the meeting held on December 19 2018. According to the SER, this working group has prepared a „format of mission and vision for the UMIB it has sent to the academic units and industrial boards of UMIB". However, the SPUMIB itself describes the process as „drafting the document from the working group, and finalizing the document for public discussion with managerial offices and academic units, before being approved by the Governing Council." Therefore, there is no evidence that the consultation process for the revision of the mission statement engaged external stakeholders as well.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. Adjust the format of the mission statement so that it is brief, clear, concise, specific and distinguishable;
2. Revisit the mission statement so that it reflects the uniqueness of the institution and what it distinguishes it from other providers;

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3. Ensure that the revision of the mission statement is done based on a consultation process involving external and internal stakeholders, including students, employers and other representatives of the labour market;
4. Ensure that the mission statement is sufficiently specific to provide an effective guide for strategic planning, decision making and operations of the institution;
5. Increase the dissemination of the mission statement across the academic community.

2.2. Strategic planning, governance and administration

The Strategic Plan of the University of Mitrovica "Isa Boletini" (SPUMIB) has been developed for the period 2018-2021 by a Professional Committee appointed by the Governing Council in September 2017, and it identifies the following strategic areas and priorities:
1. Teaching, Research and Service;
2. Teaching resources and student support;
3. Accreditation and Quality Control;
4. Levels/Programs Required by the Market;
5. Human Resources Development;
6. Development of public information system;
7. Fiscal Accountability and Improvement of Financial Data Information;
8. Globalization/Internationalization.

The SPUMIB has been drafted in consultation with the academic community at the institution, which involved a „public discussion with managerial offices and academic units". However, as mentioned under Standard 1, there is no indication that the consultation process engaged any students or representatives of the employers and labour market. The only external stakeholder member of the group (MEST representative) has been removed by the rest of the members.

The SPUMIB generally has budgetary allocations associated to individual strategic objectives, but that is not always the case even for actions that will eventually have budgetary impact. For example, the institution has reflected in its SPUMIB that „increasing the number of administrative staff according to the needs presented by the AU" does not imply any associated cost. Also, in other cases, the institution has not anticipated/evaluated the costs associated to some strategic aims, but has simply stated that the resources are „donations". Also, the strategic planning is not integrated with the budgeting processes; the financial

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priorities reflected in the budget made available to the ET are not the as the same priorities included in the strategic plan.

Moreover, the strategic plan is not properly scheduled calendar-wise - all strategic aims set a deadline for „2018-ongoing" or „2018-2021". Therefore, the ET is unsure of what are the most pressing needs of the institution and how is the institution prioritising its aims over the specified timeframe.

The strategic plan does not include any measures, targets and KPIs (intermediary and final); the ET is therefore unsure how does the university evaluate the progress of its actions, if they are heading in the right direction, with the right speed and, most importantly, identify when it has achieved the set objectives.

In some areas the aims are phrased in a very unfit manner. For example, across the SPUMIB, we can identify the following strategic aims „This issue has been raised by the self-motivation and enthusiasm of academic staff aiming to implement a number of processes to support the quality of learning", „In order to continuously monitor and improve the quality assurance systems at the UMIB, responsible mechanisms should be developed for this issue", „Basic and postgraduate studies ensure higher education achievement which is based on scientific research". We therefore remind the institution that the strategic aims should be phrased in the form of goals the university wants to achieve, rather than simple sentences or justifications. Likewise, the strategic objectives are not appropriately phrased so as to reflect a detailed picture of a step the institution takes in order to achieve its strategic plan. For example, the following are quoted from the SPUMIB as strategic objectives: „Number of employees…", „Staff´s Continuous improvement and student services", „Information system and UMIB support". The institution is being reminded that strategic objectives need to be SMART in order for the institution to know what progress it has made towards achieving the objective.

The ET notes that the objectives and aims are very general, no measurable targets are determined, and that the assigned actions are not specific enough: for example, the university plans to „increase the number of administrative staff", but it does not clarify how this will happen, progress targets/KPIs, associated budget, how many new staff, etc; similarly, the university plans to „organize training workshops", but it does not clarify what is the associated investment, how many workshops, how many staff to be engaged, progress targets/KPIs, etc.

The strategic plan does not take full and realistic account of aspects of the internal and external environment affecting the development of the institution, such as the specific needs for education and training in the Mitrovica region, visa liberalisation in Kosovo as a

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challenge of internationalisation, etc and there is no evidence of SWOT and PEST analysis that have led to the current version of the strategic plan.

In terms of monitoring the achievement of the strategic priorities, the SPUMIB also mentions the „*Coordination and Monitoring Group for the Implementation of the Strategic Plan"* which is responsible for:

- Developing 6-month performance plans in accordance with SPUMIB;
- Progress analysis in the implementation of the SPUMIB, based on the data gathered;
- Drafting the annual budget for the implementation of the SPUMIB within the defined budget limits;
- Review and approval of additional processes to ensure the implementation of SPUMIB;
- Drafting requests for donation programs in order to ensure the implementation of SPUMIB.

The Monitoring Group, made of generally the same individuals as the Professional Committee that developed the strategic plan plus a student, has met in September and December 2018 (as shown by the meeting minutes provided to the ET). No 6-month performance plan has been elaborated in accordance with the SPUMIB. The ET believes that such operational document, in the form of an action plan, would help the institution narrow down its strategic objectives on a more short-term scale and assign specific actions supporting the achievement of strategic objectives and aims. However, during its meeting in December 2018, the Group discussed a six-month report on the strategic plan for the timeframe July-December 2018, and decided to send the report to the Governing Council for approval. The report presents a progress on the strategic plan implementation and has been submitted to the ET as part of the supplementary documents requested during the site visit. Firstly, the ET is again very disappointed to see that the introduction has been copied from a document of another public higher education institution in Kosovo (and the name of the respective provider has been forgotten in the document), which makes us wonder how seriously is the institution taking the strategic planning processes. The report does not suitably reflect the implementation of the strategic plan and evaluation of outcomes, because it fails to provide a progress on all strategic objectives; instead, the report is selectively presenting a status for only 10 out of the 37 objectives from the strategic plan. Secondly, the nature of the report is not very measurable; as mentioned before, the lack of measurable targets and KPIs is impacting on the quality of the monitoring and reporting (how much was achieved out of how much was planned). In other areas, the report is not even reporting the progress, but rather explaining the strategic objective itself (see Strategic Objective 9. Information System and UMIB Support, where the progress reported is as follows: "It is

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required that all regulations approved in the Senate be placed on the website, and increase the use of the website of the institution, where it is required that any change in the schedule of exams or class schedules be changed in real time").

Regarding the governance and administration of the institution, the ET should mention first and foremost that the organisation chart provided to the ET is not in line with the Statute provisions, the information provided in the SER, but is rather an incomplete mix of academic and administrative units, where some academic units such as the Faculty Council and Study Commissions are being left out. The ET confirmed that this chart is also posted on the website, and therefore we are looking at the latest official version: the titles of the vice-rectors portfolios are different than in the SER and other areas of the website, the *Legal Office and for Science, Academic Development and Quality Assurance* appears to be a single structure, even if the ET has learned during the site visit that these are three different ones.

Also, the ET has observed a very high gender imbalance all levels of governance and administration of the institution.

According to the Statute, the main governing authorities of the university are the Provisional Council (also referred in this report as Governing Council or Steering Council) who has the overall strategic responsibility and is also responsible for all decision related to financial issues, and the Provisional Senate, which is the highest academic body of the University; the mandate of their members cannot be no longer than 1 year after the establishment of the provisional bodies. However, the information in the SER is contradicting these roles and responsibilities, where it is stated that „the senate is responsible for general strategic issues related to research, studies, teaching and courses at the university".

According to the University Statute, faculties have the responsibility to propose to the Senate study programs, organize the teaching, examinations and assessments of students, student academic progress, including academic student services, develop scientific research or artistic creation, ensure quality, evaluation and reporting issues. There is a Faculty Council as the decision making body of each faculty, which is headed by the Dean. The Faculty Councils are responsible, among others, to provide advice and suggestions to the Senate and the Rector on all matters pertaining to the Faculty, its staff, structure and internal organization, as well as to propose to the Senate curricula and changes in curricula, to make recommendations on teaching methods, in the field of scientific studies or artistic work and on other academic issues.

According to the SER, the University Senate and Faculty Councils form a permanent committee called the Study Commission which acts as an advisory body for the Senate and the Faculty Councils. However, this Study Commission cannot be located on the organisation

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chart submitted to the ET, nor in the provisions of the Statute. The SER and the Statute are mentioning indeed a Study Commission established in every academic unit as an advisory body for the council of this academic unit, but these are not reflected on the organisation chart either.

According to the SER, following the recommendations from the previous accreditation, UMIB has developed some regulations and has set up several specific committees: Commission for Drafting the Strategic Plan, the Quality Assurance Committee, Commission of Studies, the Code of Ethics Commission, internal regulations for Bachelor and Master studies etc.

The institutional decision making system and internal operating regulations are not in full conformity with current legal provisions:

- according to the Law on Higher Education in Kosovo, the Governing Council should have between 5 and 9 members; a number of the members, to be specified in the Statute, shall be appointed by the MEST, but this number should not exceed one half of the total membership. However, according to the Statute of UMIB the Governing Council consists of 9 members, all of them appointed by MEST;
- according to the Law, „the procedures for selecting and appointing leading management authority, powers, duties, responsibilities, tasks, mandate and other issues are defined in the Statute of the provider". However, not all these provisions are provided for the rector, deans and members of the Senate; some but not all are included in the Rules and Procedures for General elections in UMIB. Therefore, the ET cannot say that the election criteria and processes of the decision makers and other elected positions are clear, transparent and published in institutional regulations.

Considering the contradictions observed between the SER, organisation chart, Statute and website, the ET cannot state that the responsibilities of the governance structures are defined in such a way that the respective roles and responsibilities for overall policy and accountability, the senior administration for management, and the academic decision making structures are clearly differentiated and followed in practice.

According to the SER, students are represented in the following structures:

- one student in the UMIB Senate, elected by the Student Parliament; according to the SER „student representatives in the Senate and the Faculty Council can be active in all issues discussed and dealt with in the Senate, respectively the Faculty Council, and especially on issues of interest to students";
- one student in every Faculty Council, elected by the Council itself;
- Council of Ethics, representative of the Student Parliament;

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- one student in the Quality Assurance Committee, with average grade above 8 (according to the *Regulation of the quality assurance and evaluation at the University of Mitrovica*);
- one student in the Study Commissions;
- one student in the Coordination and Monitoring Group for the Implementation of the Strategic Plan

No student has been identified as member of other decisional, executive and consultative bodies such as the Governing Council, Professional Committee for the drafting of the SPUMIB, Disciplinary Commission, etc.

As stated in the SER, UMIB Governing Council has issued a working regulation on Student Councils. According to the *Regulation on Student Elections of the University of Mitrovica*, „students' elections shall be announced by the Governing Board of the University" and „student organizations have to be certified by the Electoral Central Commission of UMIB".

According to the SER „the Rules and Procedures for the General Elections in UMIB clarify the procedures for students' elections". However, the ET has explored the document, which does not include any provisions relating to student elections. The regulation on student elections details all the procedures and process.

As a conclusion for student engagement, the ET underlines the importance for the student representation to be organised in line with Standard 2.9. of KAA Accreditation Manual, which is based on the four pillars of the student movement, as adopted by the European Students Union (ESU):

- Student representatives have to be members of all decisional, executive and consultative bodies, and have the right to attend all their meetings considering that there is no issue in a higher education institution that is NOT of interest to students;
- Student representation and elections should be organised independently - by the students themselves, without the involvement of the institution; UMIB structures should not issue/draft/adopt any regulation on student councils/parliament, nor should it interfere in elections in any manner, directly or indirectly;
- Elections should be organised openly - with all students having the right to vote and be elected, regardless of their academic performance or any other criteria; according to the ESU principles of student movement, there is no correlation between the academic performance and students ability to represent their peers;
- Elections should be organised democratically - the representatives should be elected by all the students at the corresponding level – e.g. students in the University Senate would be elected by all the students at institutional level, students in the Faculty

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Councils would be elected by all the students at faculty level and the same rule applies for all levels; at the moment the student representation system is organised in a very layered system that threatens the open character of elections;

- Student representation should be based on precise regulations that ensure the formality and transparency of the process – provide the exact rights and obligations of students' representatives, the length of the mandate for each position, mentioning the exact percentage/number students have in all decision making bodies composition, etc;

At the time of the site visit, the institution was not fully staffed in its administration, as also acknowledged during the meetings conducted by the ET. We have learned that the institution is planning to recruit new staff members: Officer for ECTS, Curriculum Officer, Officer for International Relations, Program Accreditation Officer. However, the ET observed that this was a need expressed since December 2018 in the Strategic Plan Evaluation Report, but has not yet been put into practice (in spite of some of these positions already existing on the organisation chart). The ET is therefore concerned about the management responsiveness to institutional needs so that to ensure that the administration is effective in terms of organization and functionality.

The ET has learned how administrative staff have been appointed, inducted, what their main tasks are, as well as the professional development opportunities available to them. According to the SER, „proposals for the staff who applied for the competition originally belong to the department, and the Faculty Council will review, approve the proposals and forward them for approval to the Senate".

The job descriptions and responsibilities are clearly defined and, generally, staff qualifications are appropriate to the positions they occupy. However, proficiency in English is still generally underdeveloped. For some specific positions, such as the quality assurance roles, staff do not have a very suitable academic background. In this context, the university has to pay more attention and find appropriate solutions to increase personal competence in terms of knowledge, skills, personal attributes, with a view to increase their effectiveness in carrying out work responsibilities. The ET didn't identify any formal training for QA staff at the institution.

We also learned about the professional development activities the institution provides or facilitates, but these are not carried out systematically on the basis of a Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle, as further detailed under standard 8.

Compliance level: Non-compliant

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ET recommendations:

1. Ensure that the external stakeholders of the institution are engaged in the strategic planning processes at UMIB;
2. Integrate budgetary allocations for each strategic aim, based on specific forecasting of associated costs;
3. Ensure that strategic planning is integrated with annual and longer term budget processes;
4. Ensure that the strategic aims are appropriately distributed across the strategic plan timeframe, reflecting institutional priorities against specific deadlines;
5. Associate measurable targets and Key Performance Indicators to each strategic action designed for the achievement of the strategic plan;
6. Ensure that the structure of the strategic plan as well as the phrasing of the strategic objectives and aims are in line with strategic management theory and practice;
7. Draft and adopt action plans that narrow down the institutional strategic objectives on a more short-term scale and assign specific actions supporting the achievement of strategic objectives and aims;
8. Ensure that the strategic plan takes full and realistic account of aspects of the internal and external environment affecting the development of the institution;
9. Ensure the effective and transparent monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the strategic plan on short and medium term;
10. Revisit the organisation chart so as to reflect both academic and administrative units, as well as to eliminate the contradictions with the Statute, website and actually reflect the current state of affairs;
11. Ensure the implementation of legal and affirmative measures by establishing equal participation for both females and males in all levels of the institution, in line with section 3 of the Law on Gender Equality no. 2004/2 in the Republic of Kosovo;
12. Clarify the overlaps and discrepancy in the governance and management bodies; ensure that responsibilities of the governance structures are defined in such a way that the respective roles and responsibilities for overall policy and accountability, the management, and the academic decision making structures are clearly differentiated and followed in practice.
13. Ensure that the decision making system and internal operating regulations is in full conformity with current legal provisions:
14. Improve the student representation at all institutional levels, as detailed above;

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15. Improve the management responsiveness in terms of administration structure and staff needs;
16. Increase the English language proficiency of administrative staff;
17. Ensure that staffs' qualifications are in line with job descriptions.

2.3. Financial planning and management

The institution generally has sufficient financial resources in the short and medium term to adequately reach its mission as well as objectives set out in the strategic plan; however, areas such as research, staff development and internationalisation should benefit of more resources in order to have a realistic chance of achieving the objectives the institution has set (see standards 7, 8 and 11).

According to the SER, UMIB's budget is characterized by the process of consultations and systematization of central administration requirements and academic units harmonized with the final budget limits set by the Ministry of Finance. The institution has a realistic annual budget and a three-year budget; however, the ET is concerned about the financial sustainability: the expected budget increase is quite high - 33%, but there is no mention of attracting other sources of funding so it is unclear how exactly is the institution planning to achieve this increase.

There is insufficient information and analysis of future projections (forecast), in particular in areas such as staff development and research budgets, scholarships and other financial supports for students.

The Governing Council is responsible for approving and overseeing the budget, while the responsibility for executing the budget is delegated to the Budget and Finance Office through the Rector. The Budget and Finance Office is also drafting the cash flow plan, in cooperation with the management and the possessors of academic units. The plan determines the dynamics of expenditure fulfilment, allocation of funds and their source. All financial performance activities are recorded in the Integrated Financial Management Control System (SIMFK), which reflects all the expenses and allocation of financial resources. There is an accurate monitoring of expenditure and commitments, and the rector draws quarterly and annual reports of spending and funding resources.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

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1. Ensure appropriate budgetary allocations for all areas to allow the achievement of the strategic plan;
2. Ensure the financial sustainability of the institution by supporting the budget increase expectations with forecast analysis;
3. Take more consistent steps to reduce dependency on public funds and student fees by ensuring more diversified financing sources.

2.4. Academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability

The Governing Council of UMIB approved the Code of Ethics in its meeting held on February 25 2016. According to the SER, the Code of Ethics aims to establish the rules of conduct of academic, administrative and student staff, according to the rules and standards established in accordance with the spirit of professional and ethical ethics of the university and with academic freedom. The code aims at developing culture within the university to expose our values and building a contemporary ethics based on commonly accepted values to help our work orientation and enhance the image of the University of Mitrovica.

However, the ET was unable to identify the Code of Ethics on the institutional website. While a link to the document was provided in the SER, the Code is not placed in an easily accessible location for all interested parties.

The Code of Ethics defends the values of academic freedom, institutional autonomy and ethical integrity and requires that all internal stakeholders act consistently with high standards of ethical conduct in research, teaching and in the conduct of administrative duties. The code also provides the institutional definitions of conflict of interest, incompatibility of positions and plagiarism.

The Code applies to all staff and structural units in the institution.

At the moment, if it is proven that the ethical principles in the Code have been violated (in any area, no matter how serious is it), the measures the code is offering are „written notice, public notice". Therefore, the ET considers that the Code of Ethics should be more specific, transparent and predictable on the sanctions side, so that all the members of the academic community know exactly what is the sanction for what and to ensure that there is consistency in handling the cases.

When asked about the regulations for academic misconduct, plagiarism and cheating, including sanctions, many members of the academic community the panel has met were not aware of the existence of a Code of Ethics that regulates this area.

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According to the SER, the bodies which have competence for the implementation of the Code of Ethics are:

a.   The Council of Ethics, which is elected by the Senate of the University, competent for analysis of cases when the Code of Ethics is violated by the teaching staff and associates of the university;

b.   Disciplinary Commission at the level of each faculty, selected by the Faculty Council, competent for analysis of cases when the Code of Ethics is violated by students;

c.   Ad-hoc Disciplinary Committee, appointed by the Rector, respectively the dean of the academic unit, competent for analysis of cases when the Code of Ethics is violated by employees outside the teaching process at the University Rectorate, respectively in academic units.

Based on these descriptions, the ET is unsure who is responsible for the enforcement of the Code of Ethics and breach analysis by the administrative staff.

The composition of any of these structures could not be located on the institutional website.

As the ET has asked for the composition of all these structure as part of the supplementary documentation, we could observe that students are only members of the Council of Ethics, but not on the Disciplinary Committee. The ET expects that, if it is acceptable for the ethical breaches of staff to be analysed by their peers, the same is applicable to students.

Other section of the SER is actually describing a slightly different situation: „If any of the members of UMIB whether an academic or administrative staff breaks the Code of Ethics, then the Rector establishes the ad-hoc code that examines the case, compiles the report about breaking this code of ethics and proposes to the senate to issue a decision to the person in words as it may be: verbal remark, written remark, suspension from work, or any other remark depending on the code break." The ET is confused about which procedures apply and is hoping that at least the message to the academic community is more unitary.

Also, we are wondering as to why the organisational structure needs so many bodies in order to respond to the same scope: defend the values of academic freedom, institutional autonomy and ethical integrity, as well as for the analysis and resolution of any potential breaches in the code of ethics. The ET found this structure unclear, over-burdened and not properly ensuring the transparency and predictability of the institutional processes in defending the Code of Ethics.

There is evidence of the actual implementation in practice of the Code of Ethics and its associated processes and mechanisms, as observed from the meeting minutes of the Council of Ethics. However, the results of its application have not been made public yet.

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All in all, the ET can conclude that the processes and mechanisms dedicated for the enforcement of ethical norms and values across the institution are not clear and transparent enough. In the same time, the university has to find ways to create a more ethical workplace culture, not only to act in case of violation of Ethical Code, but also to try to prevent such situations by disseminating more the university's ethical expectations.

In spite of the SER stating that „University of Mitrovica, using its website, made public all the internal regulations", the ET could not locate the internal regulations, procedures, self-evaluation reports and decisions of governing bodies publicly available on the web page of the institution in easily available locations, in the English or Albanian versions.

The institution should generally improve its practices in publishing clear, accurate, objective, relevant, accessible and detailed information regarding its academic staff, its research and academic activities,, the number of students enrolled, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to its students, graduate employment information, as well as tuition and administrative fees.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Reconsider the provisions for sanctions in cases of ethical breaches, so that to make them more specific, transparent and predictable;
2. Revisit the organisational structures responsible for ethical compliance so as to ensure a unitary system for the entire academic community, including the administrative staff;
3. Ensure that the Code of Ethics and composition of the ethical organisational units are made available on the institutional website in easily accessible locations;
4. Improve the dissemination of the Code of Ethics so that the entire academic community is aware of its content;
5. Revisit the composition of all relevant ethical structures so as to ensure student representation;
6. Ensure that the code is enforced through more clear processes and mechanisms;
7. Organise seminars, workshops, trainings and similar programs to promote ethics within the academic community;
8. Ensure that all internal regulations, procedures, self-evaluation reports and decisions of governing bodies are made publicly available on the web page of the institution in easily available locations;

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9. Improve the offering of information on the institutional website both in Albanian and English languages.

2.5. Quality management

The SER describes quality management at UMIB as a process of continuous improvement of the university by the engagement of all parties involved. The ET will explain, as follows, that the process is not described by any of these two features.

The Quality Assurance Policy (*Regulation of the quality assurance and evaluation at the University of Mitrovica*) has been approved by the UMIB Senate at the meeting held on May 25 2018. According to the SER, „the purpose of the UMIB Quality Assurance Document covers teaching, research and service, including administration, administrative support, and management effectiveness."

The policy describes the institutional quality assurance system, its processes and mechanisms, data collection and reporting, timeframes, quality cycle, responsibilities of all individuals and units involved in these processes. However, the ET learned that, one year after its adoption, the policy has not yet been implemented, as detailed in the upcoming sections.

While the SER makes reference to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), the ET could find little concrete evidence of any use made of or of any engagement with the principles or standards of the ESG.

Quality assurance functions throughout the institution are not integrated in a defined cycle of planning, implementation, assessment and review: the interviewees the ET has met had difficulties indicating examples of changes operated based on the data collected (quality assurance data used to guide enhancement and as a base for improvement).

According to the *Regulation of the quality assurance and evaluation at the University of Mitrovica*, the evaluation data is used as follows:

1. To prepare self-evaluation reports within the process of the institutional and programs evaluation;
2. For the annual and strategic planning of the university and prioritization of development activities;
3. To identify the interventions that should be done by the level of academic units or central management to address issues of interest;
4. The subjects evaluation data done by the students will be available to the teachers and management of the academic units and are used for the purposes of teaching

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performance improvement and for academic promotion of the staff according the statute requirements.

However, none of these practices were confirmed during the site visit; instead, it is the view of the ET that the quality assurance functions are not integrated into normal planning and development strategies as the QA system does not have any contribution in the monitoring of the strategic objectives achievement. According to the same regulation, the evaluation activities are carried out to meet the accreditation system requirements in Kosovo; therefore, the ET is concerned that the quality assurance system is driven by the external processes the university is undergoing (program and institutional accreditations) and not by the internal commitment for the constant quality improvement. Moreover, at the moment, the level of development of the quality culture across the institution does not support the development of the institutional operations. The very idea of quality culture is not well defined, spread or promoted across the institution. The institution should increase its efforts to promote the development of quality culture as a common understanding of quality values, for which every individual of the organisation is responsible, a set of shared ideas, beliefs and values about quality united when everyone inside the academic community is sincerely engaged and motivated.

Course evaluations are carried out at the end of each semester and fragmented reports are produced. However, overall self-evaluation reports to provide an overview of performance for the institution as a whole and for organizational units and major functions within it are only prepared on the occasion of external quality assurance processes.

The quality management at UMIB is divided in the organisation chart between:

- the Vice-rector for International Cooperation and Quality Development;
- the Central Quality Assurance Commission, as a Senate Advisory Committee;
- the Quality Assurance Office;
- the Academic Development Office.

Additionally, each academic unit has a quality coordinator.

The Central Quality Assurance Commission consists of:

- Quality Vice-dean (ex-officio);
- Officer from the Academic Development Office;
- Up to 6 representatives of academic staff from different academic units;
- 1 student representative.

The roles and responsibilities of these units are clearly specified but not implemented in practice.

The Central Quality Assurance and Evaluation Commission has the following duties:

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- to draft the activity guide for evaluation of quality assurance;
- to draft instruments for qualitative and quantitative evaluation;
- to draft and review evaluation/self-evaluation reports;
- review the self-assessment reports for institutional accreditation and programs;
- to review self-assessment reports for institutional re-accreditation and programs related to the level of addressing of raised issues;
- to approve the members of the working groups for carrying out the assessments as needed;
- to lead the process of publishing evaluation reports.

However, according to the meeting minutes of the QA Commission, the structure only meets once a year, mainly in order to discuss the student survey results. The ET has requested an activity report of the Commission for the 2017-2018 academic year, but this was not provided by the institution.

The Quality Assurance Office is intended to coordinate the functioning of quality assurance activities and processes, performs student assessment surveys, and analyzes data from these surveys.

The Academic Development Office supports the quality teams that are established for cooperation and public trust and central commissions, guides specific quality initiatives, ensures that information provided through various mechanisms is disseminated.

According to the *Regulation of the quality assurance and evaluation at the University of Mitrovica*, the university conducts evaluation activities on a continuous basis in the following areas:

- Teaching quality;
- Student services;
- Scientific activities and doctorate studies;
- Administrative services;
- International cooperation;
- Learning resources;
- Perceptions of the graduates about the quality of studies;
- Perceptions of employers about the graduates quality;
- The quality of organizational culture and management.

However, when the ET asked for the templates of all surveys conducted by the institution (see annex 1), we have only received one questionnaire dedicated for the course evaluation by students (which also includes questions on infrastructure and facilities). It was also confirmed during the meetings conducted by the ET that the students and academic staff are

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familiar with this survey; no other stakeholder has confirmed the existence of other data collection instruments (alumni, employers, administrative staff). Therefore, the ET observes that the quality assurance system does not cover the whole range of institutional activities; where present, the satisfaction results are not made publicly available and are not used in analysis of results including trends over time.

The ET believes that the only survey template the university is conducting is not very fit for purpose:

- the university claims that this is conducted for every course (every teacher) at the end of the semester; however, the wording of the questions indicates the usage of plural „teachers", therefore we are not sure how is this being conducted exactly;
- if the survey is being conducted for every individual teacher, does it mean that the students have to fill out the same section on „Services and infrastructure" every time with the same content?
- the survey is asking for student feedback in areas that the university does not offer at the moment; students are asked to rate their agreement towards statements such as „Office of External Relations offers sufficient information to students, Students have sport and recreation centres within the university premises, The accommodation in the students` centre is satisfactory, University provides healthcare for students", as well as 3 other questions about the library that does not exist yet;
- the questions should be phrased more specifically so that the collected data is detailed enough to serve as a basis for improvement. For example, it may not be enough to learn students views on whether the „university library offers quality services for students", if one cannot know if a potential low satisfaction refers to the availability of resources, opening hours, loans system, training of library staff, individual and group spaces, etc.

There is no integrated data management system or an integrated administration system. The course evaluation surveys are currently conducted in hard copy (there was one attempt to move them on a Google Forms platform, but according to the interviewees the ET has met, this was not successful) and statistical data cannot be found in an accessible central database for its use in preparation of reports on indicators and other tasks in monitoring quality.

The ET is concerned that, considering the lack of structure in the data management, the quality assurance system does no have the ability to act as an early warning system in detecting irregularities and provide potential causes and solutions for them; for example, according to the meetings during the site visit, the institution „is now in the process of

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discussing the issue of student failing", long after this issue has started to be a significant challenge.

In order to better handle its challenges in terms of data management, the institution should provide more training on data analysis, for both academic and administrative staff.

As mentioned under standard 2, QA staff do not always hold qualifications in line with the job description and there is no evidence of any formal training in quality assurance for relevant staff. The institution could even consider hiring a professional specialised staff member for quality assurance, that does not share their load between administration and academic tasks.

There is no coordinated process for the surveys to be themselves regularly evaluated and improved; the ET has learned during the site visit that survey templates are revised „when there is a proposal".

With the exception of academic staff evaluation, students are not engaged in the design and implementation of quality assurance processes, mechanisms and instruments. Actually, the SER presents a table with the various actors (responsible persons) in the QA process and describes the distribution of their duties and responsibilities, according to which students are responsible for:

- Filling out the questionnaires;
- They are informed about the continuity of evaluations through their teachers through the Dean.

Overall, there is no evidence of a functional internal quality assurance system with periodic analysis at all levels of the university and annual self-evaluation reports, analysis and action plans to improve the weaknesses. The internal evaluation processes are almost entirely linked to external evaluation processes. There is no systemic quality management of any institutional area - strategic planning, human resources management, study programs, etc, as demonstrated in other areas of the report.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Better enforce the implementation of the *Regulation of the quality assurance and evaluation at the University of Mitrovica;*
2. Ensure that quality assurance functions throughout the institution are integrated in a defined cycle of planning, implementation, assessment and review and that the data is used to guide enhancement and as a base for improvement;

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3. Improve the role of the QA system in the processes for planning and development and its use in the daily strategic and operations management;

4. Increase the internal commitment for the constant quality improvement and develop the quality culture across the institution so that it supports the university in the development of its operations;

5. Conduct regular evaluations to produce self-evaluations reports that provide an overview of performance for the institution as a whole and for organizational units and major functions within it;

6. Ensure the continuous activity of the Quality Assurance Commission in order to meet the roles it was established to meet;

7. Ensure that the QA system and the data collection instruments cover the whole range of institutional activities (academic activity, student services, administration - students, academic and administrative staff, graduates and employers);

8. Publish the results of the satisfaction surveys so that to increase the transparency and trust in these instruments, which can support the institution in safeguarding its response rates;

9. Establish a regular process of survey revision in order to ensure their reliability and so that they are fit for purpose and provide sufficient details to serve as basis for improvement;

10. Establish a central database where statistical data is being retained and provided routinely to departments and units for their use in preparation of reports on indicators and other tasks in monitoring quality;

11. Increase student participation in quality assurance processes;

12. Provide or facilitate the access of QA staff to relevant training for the positions they occupy.

2.6. Learning and teaching

The institution has drafted and adopted policies and procedures applicable for bachelor and master programs: *Regulation for bachelor studies at UMIB, Regulation for master studies at UMIB*. According to the SER, the university is in the process of opening up the third cycle – doctorate studies.

According to the *Regulation of the quality assurance and evaluation at the University of Mitrovica*, the program evaluation includes information on:

1. The quality of teaching and learning;

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2. The quality of scientific activity;
3. International cooperation;
4. The perceptions of the graduates about the quality of studies;
5. The perceptions of employers about the graduates quality;
6. The quality of students services;
7. The quality of organizational culture and management.

However, as mentioned during standard 6, there is no formal quality assurance instrument besides the course evaluation done by students. The teaching quality and the effectiveness of programs is not evaluated through graduates and employer surveys.

According to the SER, the main performance indicators in programs monitoring are: the number of students enrolled in the program, student progress statistics, as well as feedback from the Alumni Board on the employment rates by graduates. It is not clear what exactly the monitoring process implies and what the impact and consequences are, besides a general statement in the SER stating that „based on these monitoring and evaluations is decided for new programs, closing any program".

In the same policy it is mentioned that the evaluation of programs should be done at least once in a five years as planned, which the ET deduces that is on the occasion of KAA accreditation.

When asked how is the performance and quality of the study programs monitored, the university representatives the ET has met mentioned, besides the student surveys, „processes that are coming from the rectorate level and processes that they develop themselves at the academic unit level; focus-groups with teachers about program contents, as well as focus-groups with students to ensure that the programs are implemented in the right way (such focus groups were only confirmed by some faculties, not all); the collected information is aggregated in a report to the Faculty Council". However, the ET found no evidence of these processes, in the QA Regulations or during the other meetings taking place on the site visit; when specifically asked about, for example, periodicity of the reports produced there was no indication that the institution monitors quality indicators, identifies and investigates differences in quality between programs, and takes action required to ensure that all programs meet required performance standards. Therefore, the ET cannot state that there is an effective system for ensuring that all programs meet high standards of learning and teaching through initial approvals, regular changes and monitoring of performance.

Also, when asked about the processes in place to ensure the fitness and effectiveness of the assessment methods for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, the university representatives declared that all teachers submit their syllabi to the head of the program at the

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beginning of the semester, which is then analysed by the Study Commission together with the head of program in order to check if the intended learning outcomes are suitable cand can be achieved through the proposal assessment methods. However, this is again one process that has not been supported by evidence in the documentation submitted by the university.

The ET strongly recommends the institution to formalise the processes that part of the quality assurance system; if the processes are based on individual and informal discussions, they risk to disappear when people in certain institutional positions are changing. Therefore, such mechanisms for quality monitoring in the study programmes should be integrated with the rest of the QA procedures, formalised and implemented across the entire institution.

According to the SER, study program development and revision are based on the *Guideline for reviewing syllabus for teachers and staff,* a document resulted from the cooperation between MEST, Austria Development Cooperation and University of Pristina, funded by HERAS. This document is seen as a manual that supports and supervises the development of the curriculum across the institution.

Student learning outcomes of each program are consistent with the National Qualifications Framework and with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. The assessment methods are regulated in the *Bachelor and Master Degree Regulation* and *Manuals for Bachelor and Master Diploma Preparation.*

According to the SER, the type of examination and assessment for each course is based on the expected competences and the assessment methods are designed such that students with a range of learning styles have the opportunity to excel. In order to not only test the students' knowledge, but also their understanding of a specific topic and ability to work scientifically, different forms of assessment such as presentations, study cases, oral/written tests, competitions, experiments, are included in the forms of examination and assessment. Also, a multitude of assessment methods and strategies are employed by the academic staff with the mission of ensuring a fair student assessment that contributes to the process of academic excellence. Student's final grade is not entirely summative, but formative as well: according to the syllabus, the final grade is drawn from 4-5 different assessment components, and the syllabus also presents the impact each component has on the final outcome.

The syllabuses of the study programmes present a short description of the course, the learning outcomes, curriculum, evaluation methods, student workload, ECTS number etc.

Teaching staff are appropriately qualified and experienced for their particular teaching responsibilities and, according to the meetings conducted by the ET, they use teaching strategies suitable for the different kinds of learning outcomes. However, there is a large

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consensus among the different stakeholders that there is a substantial needs for more practical learning, work-based training and contact with practitioners.

Generally, the learning methods are considered student-centred and stimulate students' motivation. However, the ET has not identified, in the institutional documentation or during the site visit, innovative methods of teaching that involve students as active participants in their own learning, flexible learning paths and alternative access routes, including recognition of prior learning.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. Ensure the implementation of the instruments and methods included in the *Regulation of the quality assurance and evaluation at the University of Mitrovica* in regards to program evaluation;
2. Develop an effective system for ensuring that all programs meet high standards of learning and teaching through initial approvals, regular changes and oversight of performance;
3. Implement a more coherent process to monitor the quality of the study programs: define and monitor quality indicators, identify and investigate differences in quality between programs, and take action required to ensure that all programs meet required performance standards; such system would support evidence-based decision making and the usage of data as a driver for improvement;
4. Develop internal accountability for quality management at the institution that is not dependent to external accreditation processes;
5. Ensure good practices for program quality management are identified, formalized and standardized across the institution;
6. Revisit the task division across the institution in order to ensure the monitoring of the fitness and effectiveness of the assessment methods for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes;
7. Increase the practical component of the teaching and learning process, work-based training and improve the connection with practitioners;
8. Develop and support innovative methods of teaching that involve students as active participants in their own learning, flexible learning paths and alternative access routes, including recognition of prior learning.

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2.7. Research

According to the SER, UMIB has a Research Development Plan. However, this was not provided as part of the supplementary documentation the ET has requested during the site visit (see annex 1). Moreover, according to the staff the ET has interviewed, a Research Development Plan does not exist at UMIB as it is only now being developed.

The institution is formally acknowledging giving special attention to scientific research, which is also considered in accordance with the UMIB mission, that includes:

- To create, transmit, develop, and protect knowledge through teaching, research and innovation, as well as services in the fields of the natural and social sciences;
- To aim to create and support the highest standards in the field of teaching and learning, scientific research and artistic creativity;
- To create, transmit, develop, and protect knowledge through teaching, research and innovation, as well as services in the fields of the social and natural sciences.

However, there is no evidence of the actual implementation of these principles considering the lack of a Research Development Plan; also, the SER does not clarify what are the research objectives of the institution, its priorities, performance indicators or aspirations in terms of research.

Also, the role of research in the institutional mission and in the strategic plan was not confirmed during the site visit, when different groups the ET has met considered that research is not sufficiently prioritised; even where present, they see research as not focused towards innovation and discovery, but rather defined as exploring specialised literature to stay current in the teaching activity or practical research.

When asked about priorities in research, the management of the institution considered that historically, the core is in the area of technical science - mining, metallurgy and geology - which are unique in the region. However, the ET believes that this uniqueness is not sufficiently exploited and more marketing should be capitalised in this direction. A second priority, as reflected during the site visit, is to restore the activities of the research institutes; this is also reflected in the strategic plan.

Since there is no Research Development Plan with its associated budget, and the Budget Statement for Fiscal Years 2017/2021 does not include any section referring to research, the ET could not locate the overall research budget that the institution has dedicated to enable the achievement of its research priorities.

However, the ET has identified the following research objectives in the strategic plan, together with their associated resource allocation:

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- Excellence Criteria and relevance (includes publishing research papers - budgetary allocations unspecified: „donations");
- Young researchers support (budgetary allocations unspecified: „MEST");
- Scientific research work (includes publications, conferences, equipment, international cooperation - budgetary allocations 150.000 EUR);
- Scientific development and perfection (includes strengthening professors` scientific competences and mobility - budgetary allocations 0 EUR).
- Development and management of resources. Material resources (only partly dedicated to research - budgetary allocations 90.000 EUR)

Considering the total allocation of 240.000 EUR into research for the timeframe 2018-2021, the ET considers that the institution does not allocate sufficient financial, logistic and human resources for achieving the proposed research objectives. In fact, the limited budget for research has been acknowledged by the institution as a weakness of this standard in its SER SWOT analysis.

According to the SER, the institution encourages the creation and activity of research groups, structured around professors and assistants within the department, and the collaboration between the departments, depending on the nature of scientific research. However, the ET finds this as unsupported by evidence: there is a very underdeveloped research culture across the institution, research production and validation is reduced, budget is limited and, as also admitted in the SER, there are the challenges of the academic staff continuing to see their role as teachers, the staff not having the willpower to publish in journals with high publication criteria, and the management of the institution is not working together to push for more research. On the other hand, the ET has observed during the site visit that there are sufficient testimonies of staff being financially supported (totally or partially) to be research active, whether that is attending a conference or publish a paper.

According to the meetings conducted by the ET, staff are contractually obliged to produce research outputs; however, it was not clarified whether specific KPIs are set for this purpose in order to determine the specific expectations the institution has. The list of publications made available to the ET is not subdivided into clearly defined categories (such as refereed articles, chapters in books, abstracts etc.) and is not very informative. It should be possible for a reader to distinguish easily between, for example, articles and proceedings papers and between more substantial (and refereed) proceedings papers and publications that are just short abstracts. This would give a more accurate view of the research output.

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Roughly, the average number of publications by the university academic staff appears at least in one research publication, as observed in the *List of academic publications of full time staff* provided in the SER.

The ET cannot assess if staff involvement in research activities is considered in the individual performance review system considering that there is no performance review policy, as further detailed under standard 8.

There have been isolated examples of staff members integrating their research results into their teaching activity; however, the ET considers this as an area in need of improvement so that it becomes a more generalised practice.

The ET didn't identify an active participation of students in the research processes. The involvement of students in research activities would give them the opportunity to learn about the research process and to gain organizational and networking skills. UMIB has to encourage students to be part of research projects, present research papers at conferences, as well as to meet and interact with others who have similar interests. Student conferences may be less intimidating than other options and UMIB could try to organize such conferences.

The Code of Ethics provides a general policy for plagiarism, authorship, fabrication and counterfeiting of research results. Also, the Code also provides the general principles for use of people in scientific and professional research. However, none of the ethical structures is responsible to ensure the safeguarding of ethical principles in research and to ensure their implementation through the approval of research methodologies (for staff, as well as students) that have to meet minimal measures required with use of people in scientific and professional research (signed consent forms for all human subjects, ensuring confidentiality of research data, etc.).

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. Develop and adopt a research development plan that is consistent with the nature and mission of the institution and the economic and cultural development needs of the region, and includes clearly specified indicators and benchmarks for performance targets;
2. Ensure that the research development plan has its own budget that includes key areas such as international cooperation, conferences, publications, infrastructure and facilities, skills development, student research projects, etc;

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3. Consistently follow the research focus the institution has set for itself through the mission statement;

4. Ensure a coherent strategic planning and evidence based process for determining the prioritized research topics;

5. Better exploit the uniqueness of the rare research opportunities at UMIB;

6. Increase the allocation of financial, logistic and human resources for the achievement of the proposed research objectives;

7. Enhance the institutional efforts (including the management approach) towards instilling a culture of research at the university;

8. Set specific KPIs for research production that includes at least an average of one scientific/applied research publication per year for the past three years, for all categories of academic staff;

9. Encourage and monitor if research results are being integrated into the study program curriculums, as well as in the teaching activity;

10. Promote research among students;

11. Encouraging staff to improve their English language competences so as to extend the range of publications and international cooperation opportunities;

12. Revise the institutional task division as far as ethics is concerned so that to ensure that one organizational unit is responsible to ensure the safeguarding of ethical principles in research.

2.8. Staff, employment processes and professional development

The institution has developed and adopted clear criteria and processes for staff appointment. The selection of academic staff is based on the public competition in line with the Statute. The selection of administrative staff is based on public announcements, which is also regulated by the Law on Civil Service. According to the SER, specific responsibilities and qualifications for each position are set out in the *Regulation on Internal Organization* and *Systematization of Jobs and Descriptions of Tasks and Responsibilities.* The recruitment processes ensure that staff have the specific areas of expertise, qualification and experience for the positions they occupy.

However, staff related policies and procedures are not centralised in the form of an employment handbook and made available for staff during their induction period.

Candidates for employment are not provided with full position descriptions and conditions of employment. Only once the candidate has been selected, the job description will be presented

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as an annex to the contract. However, there is no evidence that staff are given specific KPIs to reflect measurable expectations they have to meet.

According to the SER, once a new staff member is contracted, if the person is selected as an assistant, he/she has a mentor professor who advises and gives guidance on the UMIB's rules, services and strategies for professional and scientific development, if the staff is selected in the position of a professor, and this person did not work at UMIB early, then the chief department appoints a meeting with the research group of the department belonging to the new candidate and this group introduces with all the duties, responsibilities and development strategy department. No formal procedures are in place for the induction of administrative staff.

The total student ratio per professor is approximately 28:1 (2823 students/102 professors = 27.67). According to the SER, groups are usually considered those who reach a minimum of 10 students and a new group will usually be created if the registration increases to or over 25 students for numeric exercises or over 80 students for lectures.

Generally, the staff employed in the institution hold the relevant qualifications so that they are able to effectively manage educational, research activities and administrative processes. However, there are some mismatches across the administration, where the institution should give supplementary attention, as mentioned in other sections of the present report.

The institution has not developed a staff performance review policy/procedure that reflects all instruments dedicated for the evaluation of each category of staff, the impact each instrument outcome has on the overall annual score and their impact on promotions, contract-related decisions, incremental pay, etc.

According to the SER, the performance evaluation is carried out „through a quality assurance policy". However, the ET was unable to locate the staff performance review system in either the *Regulation of the quality assurance and evaluation at the University of Mitrovica* or in the *Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulation*. Therefore, there is no evidence that these processes are formalised and that staff are informed about what kind of evaluation they will go through. When asked about this aspect, academic staff referred only to student course evaluations and have no knowledge of any other instrument; the results of the student surveys are not made public. There is no evidence of self and peer evaluation, or an assessment conducted by the line manager.

According to the SER, if any professor has been evaluated less than satisfactory, then the dean discusses with the professor what is the reason for this evaluation. Other than such reactive measures, there is no process of discussing the evaluation results with academic staff (by the dean or personnel office) for professional development purposes or otherwise. Even

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in the reactive situations, there is no process to assess if there is any development in the situations identified as challenges; this is reliant on the next student course evaluation, but there is no special monitoring or continuous attention given to these cases in order to observe improvements. The institution did not develop an improvement plan for academic staff that assigns the actions recommended and assumed by the staff member in case of deficiencies identified through the evaluation; the interviewees the panel has met have declared that „this process is not necessarily formalised".

In regards to the administrative staff, the institution did not develop any processes for the performance evaluation, but implements the general annual line manager evaluation mentioned in the Law on Civil Service. There is no evidence of self or peer evaluation, and there is no instrument that collects the perception of students and academic staff about the professionalism and responsiveness of administrative staff. The institution presented to the ET an improvement plan for the administrative staff (which we assume is also provided by the Law on Civil Service together with the line manager form), but there is no evidence of its implementation.

UMIB has developed and adopted a *Plan for development of the academic staff*, following the recommendation of the accreditation report of 2017 (the ET observes that the plan has been adopted in March 2019, one month before the current accreditation, in spite of having 2 years to get aligned with the respective recommendation aimed at the development of the institutional quality). Considering the recent adoption of the staff development plan, the ET cannot assess its implementation; however, we can observe that no measurable targets are set and no budget is being allocated for the implementation of the plan. When asked about the staff development priorities, the representatives of the institution the panel has met declared that these are only used in conjunction with the promotion processes.

The strategic plan provides a separate section dedicated to „Staff´s Continuous improvement and student services" which has a budgetary allocation of 0 EUR. However, this section refers to an increase in the number of administrative staff, and not to all staff professional development. Other than that, there is another section dedicated to the „scientific development and perfection" (includes strengthening professors` scientific competences and mobility) and its budgetary allocation is 0 EUR. The only staff developmental areas under the HR section of the strategic plan - „capacity building and continuous training of the administrative staff" - has an unspecified budgetary allocation: „donations").

The Personnel Office is responsible for the staff professional development amongst the administration, while the dean is responsible for the development of academic staff. However, there is no systematic approach over how this area is being organised: other than

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the outcomes of student surveys, there is no instrument to collect the training needs of staff - academic or administrative.

As mentioned under standard 7, the ET has observed during the site visit that there is evidence of staff being given appropriate and fair opportunities for personal and career development. However, this is not part of a planned approach, with coherent needs identified for certain areas that are prioritised and the institution does not assess the impact of the training staff are going through.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. Develop an employment handbook that collects the rights, responsibilities, recruitment processes, performance evaluation, promotion, support processes, professional development, promotion, etc for both academic and administrative staff;
2. Ensure full position descriptions and conditions of employment are made available to candidates for employment before their contract signing process;
3. Provide benchmarks and KPIs for all staff and the work completed by them in order to effectively manage the institution's activities;
4. Organise an induction process for administrative staff as well in order to get them familiar with the institution and its services, programs and student development strategies, institutional priorities for development, infrastructure, facilities, organization chart, policies and procedures, etc. The employment handbook should be made available during induction;
5. Ensure all staff qualifications meet their job description;
6. Develop a staff performance review policy/procedure that reflects all instruments of evaluation for each category of staff, the impact of each instrument outcome in an overall annual score and their impact on promotions, contract-related decisions, incremental pay, etc.
7. Ensure that criteria and processes for performance evaluation are clearly specified and made known in advance to all staff so that they are aware of what is expected of them;
8. Ensure that academic staff evaluation is done at least through self-evaluation, students, peer and superiors evaluations, and occur on a formal basis at least once each year;

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9. Ensure that administrative staff evaluation is done at least through self-evaluation, peer and line manager evaluations, as well as through students and academic staff feedback, and occur on a formal basis at least once each year;

10. A discussion between each staff member (both academic and administrative) and their line manager should be conducted irrespective of the evaluation results; an action plan should be formally agreed as there is always room for improvement;

11. Monitor the improvements in staff activity, especially in the segments underlined as challenging during the evaluations;

12. Ensure the consistent implementation of the *Plan for development of the academic staff*; expand it so that to include administrative staff as well, define a more coherent strategy for identifying training needs and associate measurable indicators for the defined objectives;

13. Allocate appropriate resources for the implementation of the staff development plan, as well as for the objectives related to HR identified in the strategic plan;

14. Revisit and improve the overall management of the performance review system for all staff – assigned responsibles, design and conduct instruments, data collection, data aggregation and analysis, decision making, monitoring – in a transparent and predictable manner;

15. Revisit and improve the overall management of the staff development system for all personnel – assigned responsibles, identify training needs, budget allocated, training provided, impact assessed, monitoring – in a transparent manner.

2.9. Student administration and support services

The total number of students enrolled at the 6 faculties of UMIB during the 2018/2019 academic year is 2823 (2635 in bachelor programmes and 188 in master programmes).

The admission requirements are identical in all public universities in Kosovo since they are set by MEST, where the main criteria are: the points from the State Matura Exam, the points from the secondary school and the points from the admission exam organized by UMIB. These national criteria are consistently and fairly applied at UMIB.

According to the SER, at the time of application, students are offered assistance in applying through administrative staff, and the Student Parliament offers counselling on the application form and admission to the university.

The institutional website presents complete information about the institution, its programs and syllabi for each, program requirements and scholarship opportunities. Other relevant

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information such as infrastructure, facilities and the services available for students, as well as the tuition and administrative fees are not made publicly available prior to application for admission, so that to properly inform the decisions of prospective students and parents.

The Office for Academic Development, in cooperation with the Quality Coordinators and the Student Parliament, organize the UMIB orientation day on October 1st of each academic year in order to ensure that starting students get a thorough understanding of the range of services and facilities available to them, policies and procedures at the institution and of their rights and responsibilities.

The institution offers two kinds of scholarships from its own funds:

1. Academic/performance scholarships - to students that have an average grade of at least 8.00 for bachelor students at the Faculty of Geosciences, the Faculty of Food Technology and the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Computer Science, 9.00 for students of the Faculty of Law, Economics and Education, and 9.00 for master level students.

   The number and amount of the scholarship offered is decided on an early basis based on the available budget.

2. Fee waivers (exemption from semester payment), applicable for:
   - Students whose families are in social assistance;
   - Students of War Invalids families (whether they are military or civilian);
   - Students who have remained without a parent as a result of the last war (in the period from 1.1.1998 to 12.6.1999);
   - War veteran students or their children;
   - Students with physical disabilities;
   - If two or more students from the same family study at UMIB, only one of them is required to pay.

Additionally, the university also makes publicly available the announcements for scholarships at MEST.

The data management about students is scarce and unexploited: the university does not collect data on the profile of the student population, reasons for drop-out or career paths of graduates. The institution administers data on student progression and success, drop out numbers and students' satisfaction with their programmes, the learning resources administration and support services. As explained under standard 5, the questions included in the student survey are either referring to services that the institution does not currently offer or are too general to provide the necessary details to serve as a basis for improvement. In all cases, there is no coherent usage of the data neither to support decision making, nor for

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quality assurance purposes, since it was already demonstrated that the QA work. At the moment, there is no quality assurance instrument aimed at collecting teachers' satisfaction with administration and support services.

There is no standardised practice of a student handbook being made widely available for all the students across the institution, covering including all concerning regulations, the rights and responsibilities of students, actions to be taken for breaches of discipline, responsibilities of relevant officers and committees, and penalties that may be imposed. According to the SER, such handbook exists at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Computer Science (which the ET cannot confirm due to language difficulties) but it is gas confirmed that this is not a generalised practice.

According to the SER, student appeal procedure is specified in the *Regulation on Bachelor and Master Studies*. As concluded during the site visit, the academic staff and students are aware of these provisions, but they were never engaged in an appeal, as they always considered the informal resolution as a remedy.

A Code of Ethics is in place to deal with academic misconduct, including plagiarism and other forms of cheating, and a Disciplinary Committee has been established especially in case of student breaches, as further detailed under standard 4.

The range of resources devoted to students generally reflects the requirements of the student population, as detailed under standard 10.

Insufficient formal plans are developed for the provision and improvement of student services; the strategic plan includes a section dedicated to „Staff´s Continuous improvement and student services" which has a budgetary allocation of 0 EUR. This section refers to an increase in the number of administrative staff and not towards expanding it, adding new services or training the current administrative staff. There is no quality assurance instrument dedicated to evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of student services.

The institution does not provide services for academic, personal or psychological counselling. Limited attention is given to professional/career counselling for students and to preparing them for the transition to the labour market. UMIB does not have a Career Development Office and these activities seem to take place more at an individual and informal level, rather than as a reflection of an institutional task.

The university doesn't have any recreational spaces, cafeteria, sports facilities, medical services and doesn't provide accommodation to its students. All these are included in the development plan of the campus and are expected with interest by students.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

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ET recommendations:

1. Increase the level of publicly available information for students on the institutional and faculties website;

2. Establish effective processes in place to collect and analyse reliable data referring to the profile of the student population, student progression, success and drop-out rates (including the reasons for them), students' satisfaction with the learning resources and student support available, career paths of graduates; the statistical data is used for quality assurance purposes, as well as to support decision making;

3. Design and periodically conduct a survey to evaluate teachers' satisfaction with administration and support services, as they are also a beneficiary of the administration;

4. Ensure that a student handbook is made widely available within the institution, covering all information relating to admission, progression, recognition and certification, regulations, the rights and responsibilities of students, actions to be taken for breaches of discipline, responsibilities of relevant officers and committees, and penalties that may be imposed;

5. Ensure that the effectiveness and relevance of student administration and support services is regularly monitored through processes that include satisfaction surveys, and that services are modified in response to evaluation and feedback;

6. Provide more formally institutionalised services for academic counselling, career planning and employment advice;

7. Continue working towards the development plan of the campus so that to provide recreational spaces, cafeteria, sports facilities, medical services and provide accommodation to students.

2.10.   Learning resources and facilities

During its tour of the facilities, the ET visited the new campus with the two new buildings in use and another one under construction. The ET observed the seminar and lecture halls, employees' offices, the available infrastructure and facilities of the university.

One of the new buildings is exclusively dedicated to administrative offices and it offers a good environment for work. The other building hosts the learning and teaching activities for all six faculties of the university, but it is not fully functional yet. Additionally, the panel has learned that big laboratories are currently still hosted in the old building.

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Both new buildings provide an adequate, clean, attractive and well maintained physical environment. The facilities meet Kosovo legislation on health and safety.

Considering that the library was at the time of the site visit still unavailable for students (books and resources were being unpacked during the ET tour of the facilities), we cannot assess the number and quality of the books, journals and other materials are required for programs and research organised at the institution, the access to online databases, research and journal materials relevant to the institution's programs, library opening hours and staff preparedness, loans system and computer equipment and software provided to support electronic access to resources and reference materials.

Students have been having limited access to the library for the past 6 months. According to the meetings conducted by the ET, staff and students are being given the possibility to use the public library of the city during the whole time when the institutional library is not functional. A cooperation agreement has been signed in this sense.

According to the SER, „within the framework of agreements with the University of Pistina, the academic staff with official UP email, initially opens the user within the UP domain in the ScienceDirect database, and then through Virtual Private Network is provided access to these databases for UMIB staff. Also, UMIB students also have access to the National Library that provides students access to the EBSCO database, while the local city libraries of Vushtrri, Mitrovica and Skenderaj offer free services to UMIB students. Also Duke University Press in the framework of the agreement with the Kosovo National Library provides accessible material for Kosovo".

The research laboratories are also in the process of being equipped.

As confirmed during the meetings conducted by the ET, the computer equipment, operating systems and software used in educational processes are not updated according with the labor market needs, especially in the IT field. Also, staff do not have sufficient research softwares. Also, research laboratories for social sciences should also be made available.

The university doesn't have any recreational spaces, cafeteria, sports facilities, medical services and doesn't provide accommodation to its students. All these are included in the development plan of the campus and are expected with interest by students. During the 2019-2021 period, UMIB has planned to spend 1,050,000.00 Euro per year (301.500 Euro in 2018) for the supply of equipment, laboratories or campus.

The quality assurance processes used to evaluate the satisfaction of students with the learning resources and facilities are not fit for purpose; as explained under standard 5, the questions are either referring to services that the institution does not currently offer or are too general to

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provide the necessary details to serve as a basis for improvement. No equivalent instrument is in place to collect teachers' satisfaction with learning resources and facilities.

Appropriate provision for facilities is made for students and staff with physical disabilities, such as ramps, elevator and special parking spaces. However, the panel has no evidence that the same adaptation is considered in terms of learning resources (such as special visual or hearing software, Braille materials, etc).

Complete inventories are maintained of equipment owned or controlled by the institution including equipment assigned to individual staff. Technical support is available for staff and students using information and communications technology.

There is no anti-plagiarism software, but UMIB is planning to associate with University of Pristina, which plans to acquire such software soon, for the purpose of resource sharing. Until then, there are no procedures in place to guarantee the originality of the submitted work. The institution is relying that it will be the teachers themselves that can identify plagiarism in students' work, projects and thesis; the ET has serious concerns that individual teachers have the ability to identify theft of intellectual property considering the amount of references in the world and the accessibility of information online.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. Ensure that the remaining areas under development in the new building are made available for the academic community at the earliest convenience (library, research labs, etc);
2. In preparation for the library opening, ensure that this is compliant with KAA standards and performance indicators under standard 10;
3. Ensure that the computer equipment, operating systems and software used in the educational processes are updated according to labour market needs, especially in the IT field and provide relevant software for research;
4. Continue working towards the development plan of the campus so that to provide recreational spaces, cafeteria, sports facilities, medical services and provide accommodation to students;
5. Revise the quality assurance instruments used to evaluate the satisfaction of students with the learning resources and facilities so that they are fit for purpose;
6. Design and periodically conduct a survey to evaluate teachers' satisfaction with learning resources and facilities, as they are also a beneficiary of the these;

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7. Ensure appropriate provision for learning resources is made for students and staff with learning disabilities or difficulties;

8. Regulate alternative mechanisms to ensure the originality of the work submitted by students, such as ensuring the formal commitment of teachers to process the respective work through one of the anti-plagiarism software available online free of charge.

2.11. Institutional cooperation

The institution does not have an institutional cooperation or an internationalization strategy/policy. This portfolio is assigned to the Vice-rector for International Cooperation and Quality Development, a senior member of the upper management that is directly mandated and accountable for the initiatives and results in this area. In spite of repeated insisting, the panel was unable to meet this person, and the reasons for his absence were confusing and contradictory.

The Strategic Plan includes several objectives in the area of internationalization and institutional cooperation, from which we select the most notable:

1. Increase global partnerships; however, during the 2018-2019 academic year no new partnerships were signed (the two ones dating 2018 are counted for the end of the 2017-2018 academic year);

2. Increase staff and student mobility; during the 2018-2019 academic year, 14 academic staff and 11 students (both incoming and outgoing) are or have been on a mobility; also, the institution is currently engaged in 3 mobility projects for higher students and staff;

3. Increase the number of scholarships (Office for International Cooperation);

4. Increase the applications for joint projects for doctoral programs and obtaining international funding;

5. Electronic database for management of donations and international project;

6. Increase the efficiency on verification of transcripts and documents (according to international partners' requests);

7. Increase cooperation with international non-university public or private corporations by conducting joint projects;

8. Organization of conferences and joint activities with relevant partner - during the 2018-2019 academic year, only one international conference was organised.

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The institution takes part as a partner in three other international projects (besides the mobility ones mentioned above): Erasmus + Innovative Teaching Education in Mathematics, HERAS – Higher Education, Research and Applied Science, Green Tech WB: Smart and Green Technologies for Innovative and Sustainable Societies in Western Balkans.

The ET is concerned again about the reliability and effectiveness of the strategic planning process, considering that very small steps have been taken in order to reach the objectives the institution has set for itself.

The institution has approximately 50 agreements and memorandums of understanding with international partners and organisations (none signed in the current academic year). However, the panel observes that most of these are inactive and is therefore wondering based on what criteria does the institution choose the institutions it signs memorandums with, if there are clear measurable objectives and if the university is assessing the benefits/impact of these cooperations at any point.

Considering that the institution does not have a formal and transparent staff performance review, the ET cannot assess if the staff engagement in international cooperation and contributions to the community are impacting this process in any way. According to the SER, in the framework of staff promotion criteria, UMIB puts emphasis on the importance of the international cooperation provided by its staff. It is not clear at this stage how is this emphasis put into practice.

Also, according to the SER, UMIB has been admitted to the Academic Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES) and is a member of the Francophone University Network (L'Agence universitaire de la Francophonie). However, as identified during the site visit, no assistance is given for teaching staff to develop collaborative arrangements with the international community; international cooperations of staff are minimal and usually based on individual initiatives.

Based on the discussions taking place during the site visit, staff are not sufficiently encouraged to participate in forums in which significant community issues are discussed and plans for community development are considered.

In terms of relationships established with local industries and employers to assist program delivery (such as placement of students for practice or employment), the ET could confirm during the site visit that many such cooperations are in place, as also reflected in the SER: UMIB has a cooperation agreement with Trepça, as an ancient mine of lead, zinc, silver, crystals and minerals in Kosovo, and with Ferronikel-Nickel Production Plant, where mining and metallurgy students perform practical work, with Municipal Education Directorates (Skenderaj, Vushtrri and Mitrovica), where education students perform pedagogical practice

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in various schools of these municipalities, different food companies where food technology students carry out practical work.

Based on the meetings it has conducted, the panel can conclude that there is very little engagement of the local employers and members of professions in the work of committees or other structural units considering study programs and other institutional activities. According to the SER, the university has established the Industrial Board at institutional level and individual Boards for each separate unit, which have as members „mainly influential persons in the local industries", and where their suggestions are taken into account when drafting the curricula. However, the panel could observe that the external stakeholders would like to be more active in the university's life by more involvement in governance and organisational development arrangements, in matters relating to the development of the course portfolio and in identifying what is distinctive about the profile and attributes of the UMIB students and graduates. It resulted that there is no systematic communication for the university to actually ask the employers in the region what is it that they wish from the UMIB graduates (which the panel learned that it refers to better connection between theory and practice, making practice mandatory for all specialisms, introducing in the relevant curriculums special needs education, legislation on food safety and new research methods in geophysics), as well as to get insight on the profiles currently in demand (it seems that, according to its external stakeholders, in some fields the university is preparing graduates Kosovo does not need) so the institution needs more direction in responding to the current needs.

The institution has formally established an Alumni Association in UMIB; however, the graduates the ET has met during the site visit are not familiar with this structure. Some of the graduates confirmed that the institution has addressed them an invitation to a meeting where opportunities for mutual cooperation were discussed. However, the relationship with the graduates is not systematic: there is no survey asking about their fitness to the labour market after finishing their studies (how long did it take to get employed, if in the field of studies, what level are they working at, what skills were they missing, etc), the communication is either based on personal connections or using different mechanisms (some received calls, some invitations for meeting).

The interviewees the panel has met considered that the institution should do more in order to create better conditions to host international incoming academic staff on mobility. In fact, it was a generalised desire of most people the ET has met to increase the possibilities for mobility, for both students and staff.

The ET has identified a limited exploration of the current possibilities of internationalization for the university. UMIB should increase its efforts to significantly improve this situation.

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Internationalization should not be only a result of individual initiatives, but it needs a significant institutional engagement (led by the management) to provide a bigger support and better promote such activities in making internationalization a strategic objective. The current trends in higher education clearly underline the necessity of internationalization and the move towards a more integrated higher education framework in Europe is only the more visible development of a broader and deeper trend. Hence, growing mobility among students and staff is likely to become a central issue for many universities, especially within the European Higher Education Area.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Increase the provision of English language courses and study programs delivered in English as an important competitive advantage that enhances the reputation and attractiveness of the university (nationally and internationally);

2. Develop and adopt an internationalization/institutional cooperation strategy to guide the institutional efforts into this direction (consider including the types of memorandums the institution wishes to establish, the global regions targeted by international cooperations), including measurable indicators and allocated budget;

3. Increase the efforts towards reaching the strategic objectives the institution has set for itself in terms of internationalization and institutional cooperation so that the impact in those areas is more significant (in terms of mobility, cooperation, projects, memorandums, etc);

4. Ensure that staff engagement in international cooperation and contributions to the community are included in the staff performance review system;

5. Better assist and encourage staff to develop collaborative arrangements with the international community and to participate in forums in which significant community issues are discussed and plans for community development are considered;

6. Substantially improve the engagement local industries and employers to assist program delivery and content (including engagement in the work of committees or other structural units considering study programs and other institutional activities);

7. Give a close attention to employers demands by ensuring a better connection between theory and practice, making practice mandatory for all specialisms, as well as introducing in the relevant curriculums special needs education, legislation on food safety and new research methods in geophysics;

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8. Increase the role of the Industrial Boards so as to ensure a better connection between the higher education offerings and the labour market needs;

9. Increase the visibility of the Alumni Association in UMIB by keeping them informed about institutional developments, inviting their participation in activities, and encouraging their support for new developments;

10. Ensure a more systematic communication with the graduates, including the usage of formal satisfaction survey;

11. Increase the prioritization and resource allocation dedicated to internationalization and institutional cooperation.

3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND JUDGEMENTS OF THE ET

The overall accreditation process has been quite challenging in nature: in spite of the institution being aware that the process will be conducted in English exclusively, very little documentation has been made available in English so as to enable the international experts to assess the institutional compliance with the external standards.

Secondly, whilst the SER is theoretically structured in line with the KAA Accreditation Manual, the institution has not provided sufficient explanatory information for each individual standard, as requested by the KAA SER template; in other instances, the narrative section of a standard is addressing a different topic than the one intended in the standard. Also, the SWOT analysis requested for each general area does not always provide a self-critical analysis of the respective general area specifically.

Thirdly, the optimistic view the institution has approached while writing the SER might been taken slightly to the extreme; the ET has concluded that parts of the SER are not at all reflecting the reality on the ground (the real implementation of processes, the real impressions of the academic community).

Moreover, UMIB might have been too preoccupied to present institutional practices in a positive light that has copied and pasted some sections of the SER from a different Kosovar higher education provider and has forgotten to correct the name from the original document; the ET is seriously alarmed to identify such practices in an institution that claims that it safeguards academic honesty and integrity (especially since it is the third situation of this case in the course of the present evaluation, where the institution plagiarises other Kosovar providers).

Generally, the institution lacked the self-critical capacity, both in the submitted documentation, as well as in the meetings conducted during the site visit; this not only made

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it difficult for the ET to distinguish between objective information, facts unsupported by evidence and unsubstantiated judgements, but also made the ET wonder if the institution is generally self-aware of its current and upcoming challenges and has the ability to identify its risks and be honest about them (at least to itself) so that to address them accordingly. The ET considers it is a significant shortcoming when an external quality assurance process identifies weaknesses that the institution has not already identified by itself or has not acknowledged in the self-evaluation documentation or during the site visit. The university should therefore be more open and honest when referring to its weaknesses, shortcomings and areas in need of development since it is the only way the experts can have a realistic picture over the institution and provide relevant recommendations. The university should perceive the external evaluation as an opportunity to enhance and continuously develop their internal processes and operations, and therefore take advantage of the evaluation accordingly.

Overall, there is evidence that the university has put substantial efforts into developing its infrastructure recently. There still are big challenges left, same as any other higher education institution has their own. However, the ET genuinely believes that these could be easily overcome if there was an overarching strategic planning process, informed and capable management, well organised leadership, administration and quality assurance, and if the academic community would be gathered around an institutional ethos motivating them towards the achievement of the institutional mission. Having seen the lack of governance and institutional capability, the ET is very concerned about the medium to long term sustainability that should lead the institution forward.

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the University of Mitrovica "Isa Boletini" is only **partially compliant** with the standards included in the KAA Accreditation manual and, therefore, recommends **not to accredit** the institution.

4. APPENDICES

Additional documentation requested by the ET (Appendix 1).

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Expert Team

Chair

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(Signature)   (Print Name)   (Date)

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Member

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(Signature)   (Print Name)   (Date)

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