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Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

„HAXHI ZEKA” UNIVERSITY IN PEJA

INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

April 2019, Pristina



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: 10th – 11th 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 "Haxhi Zeka" University in Peja;
- 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



1.2. Site visit schedule

10th April 2019

17.45 Meeting at the reception of the hotel

18.00 Working dinner

11th April 2019

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 and infrastructure

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



1.3. A brief overview of the institution under evaluation

„Haxhi Zeka” University in Peja (hereafter referred to as „HZU”, „the university” or „the institution”) is a successor of the Faculty of Applied Sciences in Business (FASB) in Peja, which was founded in 1960, with the decision of Executive Council of KSAK as the High Economic – Commercial School in Peja. Initially, the school only had the Section of Commercial Business in the Enterprise and a small number of teachers, with the passage of time the courses were developed as well, and after 1999, the FASB becomes a part of the University of Prishtina which has functioned with the programs of Applied Business Sciences in Albanian and Bosnian language until 14.11.2011 when the „Haxhi Zeka” University in Peja was formally established.

„Haxhi Zeka” University in Peja, was founded based on the decision of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, no. 434/01 B, date 14.11.2011, and its statute was approved on May 30, 2013 by the Assembly of Kosovo.

„Haxhi Zeka” University in Peja is an autonomous institution of the high education that develops academic education, artistic creativity, professional consultations and other areas of academic activity in the following fields: Business, Law, Tourism, Hospitality and Environment Management, Agribusiness and Arts.

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, HZU defines its mission as follows:

“Haxhi Zeka” University in Peja is an autonomous institution of the high education, that develops academic education, artistic creativity, professional consultations and other areas of academic activity. The mission has these purposes:

- *To act as an institution for the advancement of knowledge, ideas and science in the high education system of Kosovo;*
- *To act as an institution in the development of education, science, culture, society and economy of Kosovo;*
- *To help the process of promoting civic democracy;*



- *To aim on creating and supporting the highest standards in the field of teaching and learning, scientific research and artistic creativity;*
- *To utilize its resources in the most efficient way;*
- *To maximally cooperate and participate in all high education activities at national, regional and international level;*
- *To be adapted to European standards;*
- *To be fully integrated into the European High Education Area in the European Research Area and to take the appropriate reform steps necessary to achieve this mission.*

The mission statement of HZU 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, as HZU believes. However, the ET still considers this practice as being unethical and is surprised to find it within a university, and with something as important as the mission statement.

The mission statement is defined in a way that it includes the three main pillars: teaching, research and community service. However, the ET believes that 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. In fact, 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 refer to what they think the mission should be, but it does not resemble the actual mission statement.

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.

The ET believes that the current mission statement could be easily transferred to any higher education institution (and it has been!); therefore, the mission statement should present to the internal and external community what distinguishes HZU from other universities.

It is not clear to what extent the mission statement is sufficiently specific to provide an effective guide for decision-making and choices among alternative planning strategies and, even less, clear enough to ensure the evaluation of progress towards the institutions goals and objectives. Still, the medium and long term objectives of the institution are consistent with and support the mission.



The mission statement could not be located on the website of the institution, in English or Albanian.

The university defines its vision in the SER as “to be an important regional cooperator, guaranteeing sustainable development, advanced teaching, innovation, research and practical knowledge”.

HZU assumes an education and research mission by accomplishing the threefold task of a modern university: education–research/artistic creation–community service/promoting civic democracy. Those ambitions are praiseworthy, and so are the 9 common values and graduates’ values listed a in the SER, and the relevant interest in working in and with the region.

The SER makes no mention of the process leading to the drafting and revision of the mission statement. When this aspect was addressed during the site visit, the representatives of the institution have declared that the revision process was concomitant with the development of the strategic plan; however, the mission included in the strategic plan is different than the one that has been declared by HZU as being the official institutional mission statement. Moreover, according to the meeting minutes of the Steering Council from the discussions on the development of the strategic plan, there is no discussion dedicated to the revision of the mission statement. Therefore, the ET cannot state that the mission of the institution has been revised based on a consultation process involving external and internal stakeholders.

According to the SER, „the mission is recognized by the members of the academic community of the institution (Senate)”. However, the ET needs to clarify that in the European Higher Education Area and in the spirit of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG), the „academic community” of an institution is defined by its students, faculty and staff; sometimes, graduates and external stakeholders tend to be integrated and recognised as academic community. The institution should therefore recognise and embrace its entire academic community, not only decision making bodies.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Adjust the format of the mission statement so that it is brief, clear, measurable and distinguishable;
2. Ensure the mission statement is sufficiently specific to provide an effective guide for decision-making and provides for an appropriate evaluation of progress towards the institutions goals and objectives;



3. Ensure that the drafting and revision of the mission statement is conducted in consultation with the academic community and external stakeholders of the institution;
4. Increase the dissemination of the mission statement across the academic community.

2.2. Strategic planning, governance and administration

The institution has developed the Strategic Plan (Development Strategy) for the five year period 2017-2022, which was approved by the Steering Council on May 3rd 2017. The Development Strategy provides, according to the SER, an effective and efficient guidance for the functioning of the institution. According to the document, the analysis of political, economic, social and technological factors were considered in the form of a PEST analysis when drafting the Development Strategy.

The Steering Council has appointed the Commission for Drafting the UHZ Development Strategy, with the following composition:

1. Prof. ass. dr. Ibrahim Krasniqi;
2. Prof. asoc. dr. Muhamet Sadiku;
3. Prof. ass. dr. Sabiha Shala;
4. Prof. ass. dr. Mimoza Hyseni-Spahiu;
5. Prof. asoc. mr. Dardane Nallbani;
6. Prof. ass. dr. Agim Rysha;
7. Msc. Astrit Ademaj.

Four subcommittees (Subcommittee on Academic Affairs, Subcommittee on Structural and Management Matters, Commission for Resources, Infrastructure and Planning, Subcommittee on Student Affairs and Alumni) were also formed to contribute to distinct sections of the document. According to the SER, „these committees are obliged to consult all relevant parties for drafting the document”. However, there is no evidence of further consultations outside the format of these five commissions. There is no indication of any engagement or consultation being conducted with the employers and other external stakeholders. The ET wants to underline that a Strategic Plan must be collective, all voices must be heard; it must be integrated and informed, based on factual and up-to-date information. It is not a wish list, a collection of desirable outcomes with no indication as to how these outcomes can be achieved.

It is the impression of the ET that the strategy takes full and realistic account of aspects of the internal and external environment affecting the development of the institution.



The strategic objectives established are:

- Continuing Advancement in Teaching and Learning;
- Advancing Research and Innovation Orientation;
- Continuous engagement in international and inter-institutional cooperation;
- Sustainable resource management and development.

Sub-objectives and projects/activities are assigned for the achievement of the four general objectives; however, the format of the strategy makes it difficult to identify which activity is associated to which sub-objective.

The institution should develop action/operational plans to support them in narrowing down its strategic sub-objectives: such plan would allow HZU to provide even further details to some of the activities that are not very specific (for example: Activities related to cooperation and development of the university, Mobility of UHZ staff and students, Functionalization of quality offices, etc) so that to establish exactly *how/through what mechanisms* they will be implemented.

Timeframes are set for the achievement of each activity; however, these are usually very general (2017-2022) and it is unclear to the ET how will the university prioritise its actions. A GANTT diagram associated to the action/operational plan would be useful for HZU to break down its calendar planning.

The Development Strategy includes a column called *Measuring indicators*; however, not all of these are specific and measurable enough to support the institution in analysing if they are heading in the right direction, with the right speed and, most importantly, identify when it has achieved its objectives; for example: by 2022, the devices will be bought (referring to musical instruments, but it does not clarify how many), In 2018, start using online libraries (how many? What kind?), etc. This could be also clarified through an action/operational plan. The institution might also consider setting intermediary KPIs in order to periodically evaluate the progress of its actions, as opposed to final target.

Budgetary allocations are associated to each project/activity and, overall, the strategy is integrated with the institutional budget. For some areas it is clear how did the university plan to secure its funding (USAID, AKA, MEST, etc), while for other areas it is less clear as a simple „donors” is prefigured.

In order to monitor the implementation of the strategic plan, the Steering Council has appointed the *Commission for monitoring the implementation of the Development Strategy* (initially approved in May 2017, then amended in January 2019), with the following composition:

1. Prof. ass. dr. Agim Rysha;



2. Five Deans of HZU Academic Units;
3. Prof. ass. dr. Sabiha Shala;
4. A student representative (*the name has not been provided*);
5. Ass. Suada Ajdarpashiq – Representative of the Bosnian Community in HZU.

A representative of the labour market and external stakeholders has not been included in the group.

A *Regulation of the Commission for the Supervision of Implementation of the Strategic Plan*, has also been adopted in August 2nd 2018, according to which the group meets once a month (however, during the site visit, the representatives of the institution declared that the commission meets every 2-3 months; consistency and regularity is therefore highly recommended) and produces one annual implementation report. The university might wish to consider smaller reporting timeframes, especially in the light of such often meetings, so that to ensure timely intervention in case progress is not recorded as expected. In spite of the *Development* being adopted in May 2017, only one annual report has been produced since (in December 2018). The report, provided to the ET as supplementary document (see Annex 1 of the present report) shows the progress monitoring for each activity assigned for the achievement of the strategic objectives. However, the ET can observe that, where activities have not been completed, a reason is not being provided, nor is there an adjustment or an alternative solution, the activity is simply postponed for next year.

The university has a decision making system and internal operating regulations in conformity with current legal provisions.

The main governing authorities of HZU are the Steering Council, the Rector and the Senate. The Steering Council is the governing authority of the university and has overall strategic responsibilities for the effective institutional functioning of the university. The Council has 7 members: 3 of them appointed by the Ministry of Education, and 4 of them elected by the Senate of HZU (but these cannot be the Rector, Vice-rectors, Deans, Sales people, Members of the Senate, Secretary General or Faculty Secretary).

The Rector is the main managing authority responsible for the effective and regular work of the university and for its management, and has all the necessary authority to carry out these tasks. The Rector is elected by the Steering Council from the list of candidates proposed by the Professional Committee of 5 members formed by the Senate.

The Senate is the highest academic body of the university, which consists of the following members:

- Rector;
- Vice-Rectors;



- Deans of all academic units;
- A member selected by the academic staff of each academic unit;
- Two members from the Student Parliament;
- A member selected by non-academic staff;
- The Secretary of the University as permanent member, without the right to vote.

The Senate has also established a permanent advisory committee, the Study Commission, that has responsibilities for the development of the study programs, the organizational and technical issues, and the procedures for implementation. There is a corresponding Study Commissions at the Faculty level.

The current organisation chart is an incomplete mix of academic and administrative units, where some academic units such as the Study Commissions are being left out, in contradiction with the Statute.

The election criteria and processes of the decision makers and other elected positions are clear, transparent and published in the *University Statute, Rules of Procedure of the Governing Board of the University, Regulation on the Organization and Work of the Senate of the University*; the responsibilities of the decision making bodies 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.

The ET has observed a very high gender imbalance at all levels of governance and administration of the institution: the administration is highly dominated by females, while the governance is highly dominated by males.

Based on the information collected from the SER, University Statute and other internal regulations of HZU, the ET believes that the student representation mechanism is not completely democratic and there are discriminatory criteria that limit students' right to represent and to be represented. The mechanism for electing student representatives is clearly explained in the *UHZ Student Election Regulation*. Also, the university is quite involved in the process of electing student representatives.

Student representatives are not members of all decisional, executive and consultative bodies. According to the SER and as learned during the site visit, students are represented in the following structures:

- Two students in the Senate;
- Two students in each Faculty Council;
- The President of the Student Parliament can participate in Steering Council meetings (but is not a member and has no voting right);



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- The Central Quality Assurance Commission;
- One student in each Study Commission, both the institutional level, as well as the faculty level.

No student has been identified as member of the University Ethics Council, Disciplinary Committee or ZHU Development Strategy Committee.

As reflected in the SER and other internal provisions:

- The two students nominated by the Student Parliament for the Senate should be distinguished students with an average score of at least 8, and should not be repeaters of the academic year; their mandate shall be one year, with no right to reelection;
- The President of the Student Parliament can participate in Steering Council meetings without the right to vote and only in cases where students issues are being addressed;
- The student member of the Central Quality Assurance Commission has to have an average grade of 8 and good knowledge of English language;
- The student representative to the Faculty Council is elected by the students of the Faculty Council;
- The HZU Steering Council issues the working regulation for the Student Parliament, as well as announces and determines the dates for elections.

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; their membership should be permanent and not restricted to „only when dealing with matters pertaining to students” (as mentioned in the SER); there is no business of a higher education institution that does NOT eventually impact students. All matters pertain to students;
- Student representation and elections are to be organised independently - by the students themselves, without the involvement of the institution; HZU structures should not issue/draft/adopt any regulation on student councils/parliament, nor should it interfere in elections in any manner, directly or indirectly, even by announcing them;
- Elections should be organised openly - with all students having the right to vote and to 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; Moreover, the

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Statute of HZU itself includes and promotes principles for equal opportunities and non-discrimination, which should be respected;

- 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 Councils would be elected by all the students at faculty level and the same rule applies for all levels; at the moment, the ET found the student structures quite layered and the elections over-burdened, which is an obstacle to the „general and open” principle 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.

The ET believes that, even if the students are represented in some decisional structures at institutional level, regulations make their real engagement quite difficult. We are convinced that the university can only benefit from encouraging students to participate more actively in governance. This requires a more proactive approach from staff members side, as well as management of the institution. The ET feels that the role of students in governance and strategic planning could be strengthened.

The institution has an administration that is generally effective in terms of organization, staffing levels and qualifications; however, there still are some confusions in terms of task division, as underlined in standard 5 and 8, so the ET cannot state that it functions rigorously. The roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and, generally, staff qualifications are appropriate for the positions they occupy. However, proficiency in English amongst administrative staff and management is still generally underdeveloped.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Ensure the participation of all internal and external stakeholders in the strategic planning processes (development, monitoring, reporting);
2. Revisit the structure of the development strategy so as to clarify what activity responds to which sub-objective;



3. Develop action/operational plans to provide more specific details on the achievement of sub-objectives, more specific timeframes of realization and more measurable indicators (and, potentially, intermediary KPIs);
4. Produce GANTT diagrams to reflect the prioritization of the strategic sub-objectives;
5. Ensure a more frequent reporting on the implementation of the strategic plan so that to secure timely intervention in case progress is not recorded as expected;
6. Revisit the format of the monitoring report so that to diagnose the obstacles in the realization of the activities and provide solutions or alternatives if need be;
7. Ensure that all structures that have a role in the decision making process, academic management and administration are actually reflected on the organisation chart, in line with the Statute and the current state of affairs;
8. 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 the Law on Gender Equality no. 05/L-020 in the Republic of Kosovo;
9. Increase, improve and formalise student representation at all institutional levels, as detailed above;
10. Ensure that the administration is effective in terms of organization and functions rigorously;
11. Increase the English language proficiency of administrative staff.

2.3. Financial planning and management

The institutional funds are allocated by the Ministry of Finance in accordance with the Law on Public Financial Management and Accountability Budget Law. According to the SER, the university budget is planned for 3 years (2019-2021), with 2019 year being approved, while the other two years are evaluations based on the strategic plan.

The university has a real annual budget that „regulates admissions and expenditures for a particular fiscal year, estimates for following two years which are to be reviewed for the period 2020-2021, financial policies addressing financial sustainability considering these priorities: maintaining a financial discipline from academic units and relevant units, allocations consistent with HZU priorities, promoting efficiency in service delivery, efficient implementation and problem solving during budget implementation in macroeconomic environment”.

In terms of financial management, the institution has set for itself the following priorities, as reflected in the SER:



- Switching to an independent budget unit;
- Planning and growing budget stability;
- Creating alternative budget resources;
- Accountability and transparency of the use of public money and property of the university.

The institutional budget is administered by the Rector and sub-accounts are established for each academic and organizational unit available, and under the responsibility of the Dean and Vice-rector for Finance or the Director of Finance. Academic units are decentralized, and decision are made to determine the commitment of expenditure or to influence revenue collection. There is an accurate monitoring of expenditure and commitments against budgets; an annual report is produced with contributions from the academic units and the Department of Budget and Finance. Additionally, the Director of Finance submits reports to the Vice-rector for Finance every week, month and three months.

According to the SER, „the Ministry of Finance should provide proper funding for the University to fulfill its obligations and responsibilities arising for the provisions of the University statute”. However, the ET believes that the university could also do its part by increasing its efforts to diversify the funding sources and invest in its institutional capacity to attract research funds nationally and internationally.

It is the view of the ET that one of the first conditions in securing additional funding is to provide more information and analysis of future projections, in particular for areas such as staff development and research budgets, scholarships and other financial supports for students, among others.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Increase institutional efforts towards the diversification of funding sources;
2. Increase the institutional capacity in attracting research funds.

2.4. Academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability

The institution has adopted a *Code of Ethics* which aims, according to the SER, to establish rules for professional conduct for university members, including academic, scientific, administrative staff and students, in accordance with the spirit of the academic, professional



and moral ethics of the university and academic freedom. The Code is made publicly available on the institutional website.

The Code requires that all internal stakeholders act consistently with high standards of ethical conduct, avoid plagiarism and conflicts of interest. In the case of both plagiarism and conflict of interest, general principles are defined; in the case of plagiarism, specific examples are given to illustrate what exactly is considered intellectual theft (including a separate section on intellectual wealth); however, this is not the case for conflict of interest, where the institution does not define specifically what does it mean with „a situation in which a staff member of the University has a personal interest that affects or may affect the impartiality or objectivity of performing hi/her duty”. The ET thinks this should therefore be detailed and exemplified as exhaustively as possible.

The document provides the specific sanctions applicable for breaches in the Code provisions. However, as observed during the site visit, the management of the university is not at all familiar with the contents of the Code and they were unable to address even general questions, not the mention specific sanctions. Also, as observed in the meeting minutes from the previous cases handled by the Council of Ethics, the processes and mechanisms dedicated for the enforcement of the Code are not clear even for the Council itself: the Council seems to be lacking guidance on what procedures apply in terms of timelines for resolution, in what cases an audience of the accused is required, in what cases evidence is required and what that evidence is. These should therefore be clarified.

The institutional structures designated to oversee the implementation of the Code of Ethics, as well as for the analysis and resolution of any potential breaches in the Code of Ethics are as follows:

- Ethics Council for cases when academic staff violates the Code of Ethics;
- Disciplinary Committee within each academic unit, for cases when Code of Ethics is violated by students.

No reference is being made to an institutional structure that addresses an ethical breach by an administrative staff.

Students are not represented in any of these structures.

There is evidence that the institution is applying the code of ethics and its associated processes and mechanisms on all activities related to management, administration, teaching and research. The results of its application are not yet made public.

There is no anti-plagiarism software. For the time being, the institution is relying that it will be the teachers themselves that will 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 large amount of references in the world and the accessibility of information online.

Students are required to sign a declaration confirming the originality of their work. However, supervisors and teachers do not have any procedural obligation to check the originality of the submitted work through one of the anti-plagiarism software available online free of charge. Also, teachers are not accountable in any way in case the submitted work is found plagiarised. The ET believes these two matters should be addressed, as part of the institutional efforts to promote ethical norms and values across the academic community.

According to the SER, all internal regulation, procedures, self-assessment reports and decision of governing bodies are made public on the website of the university. However, the SER lists more than 40 internal regulations, out of which the ET has identified on the website only 6 of these documents (in Albanian, while the information provision in English is very reduced).

The ET tried to identify on the website the typology and volume of information the institution is publishing about its study programs, but for some programs the links do not contain anything (Juridiko Penal – Master, Administrativ Kushtetues – Master).

Generally, there is insufficient information published about academic staff, research and academic activities, the programmes offered, the number of students enrolled, the intended learning outcomes of programmes, the qualifications they award, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to its students, graduate employment information, scholarship opportunities, as well as tuition and administrative fees.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Revise the Code of Ethics so as to define specifically the institutional understanding of conflict of interest;
2. Increase the dissemination of the Code of Ethics provisions and take more proactive measures to raise awareness around academic honesty;
3. Ensure that the Code of Ethics is enforced through clear processes and mechanisms;
4. Assign an ethics structure for the analysis and resolution of any potential breaches in the Code of Ethics by administrative staff;
5. Ensure student representation in all organisational structures dedicated to ethics;



6. Regulate the formal obligation of teachers to process students submitted work through one of the anti-plagiarism software available online free of charge;
7. Regulate the common responsibility and sanctioning of the supervisor for the originality of work submitted by students;
8. Ensure that all internal regulation, procedures, self-assessment reports and decision of governing bodies are made public on the website of the institution;
9. Substantially improve the publishing of clear, accurate, objective, relevant, accessible and detailed information regarding the academic staff, research and academic activities, the study programmes, the number of students enrolled, the intended learning outcomes of its programmes, the qualifications awarded, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to students, graduate employment information, scholarship opportunities, as well as tuition and administrative fees.

2.5. Quality management

According to the SER, „*Quality is at the center of all University activities by adapting the quality as a culture and developing the overall quality management system*”. However, during the visit the ET identified a large misunderstanding of the concept of *quality culture* within the academic community of HZU. At the moment, the level of development of 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.

According to the SER, the quality assurance system at HZU is regulated by the *Regulation on Quality Assurance and Evaluation*, and the *Quality Assurance Strategy*. These not documents have not been found on the institutional website.

The Quality Assurance Strategy of UHZ approved in 2016 was developed within the TEMPUS project: “Strategic Support on the Establishment and Development of Sustainable Structures on Quality Assurance, International Relations and Student Support Services at the newly founded Public University of “Haxhi Zeka” in Kosovo”. The document is based on the Strategic Plan 2013-2018 of UHZ and it claims to address „the need to define measures and



instruments that UHZ should undertake to ensure the quality at all university levels, in order to meet the following objectives:

1. To promote learning and teaching experiences, in line with the European standards and expectations;
2. To develop processes and instruments in supporting national and international cooperation;
3. To develop mechanisms in assuring qualitative research;
4. To encourage and support active involvement of students in QA processes;
5. To promote equal opportunities for all students;
6. To develop effective, transparent and sustainable governance, management and administration for QA.”

However, it is the impression of the ET that the document is rather another general strategy of the institution, considering that most of its content is not referring to the quality management system, but to general measures aimed at increasing the quality of the institutional delivery and practice, such as: the establishment of an academic centre for the development and support of the innovation in learning and teaching, improving the employability of students by promoting links between teaching and the industry, identifying the options and processes for supporting the exchange programs, promoting a research culture at the university, the improvement of research infrastructure, etc. Even so, many of the expected results foreseen for the period 2016-2018 have not been achieved, nor have they been collected in the new Development Strategy approved in 2017 so that to ensure a coherent connection and continuity between the two.

The document only has 3 measures aimed at the development of the quality assurance system:

- Increasing the office capacity to ensure quality in academic units;
- Supporting the QA Offices at UHZ;
- Encourage and support active involvement of students in quality assurance processes.

The expected results for these measures have not been achieved either and the ET has not identified any mechanism to monitor the implementation of the so-called QA Strategy, nor has it identified these elements included in the new development strategy or in the regulation for quality assurance.

The *Regulation on Quality Assurance and Evaluation*, adopted by the HZU Senate on February 12 2019, is copied in its entirety from another public institution in Kosovo and formally brought to the university right in time for the institutional accreditation process



which, same as copying the mission statement, is another ethical concern the EI is appalled by.

The regulation describes processes, mechanisms, instruments, reporting, data collection, timeframes, responsibilities and units involved in the processes. However, most of these are not yet implemented, as described in the upcoming paragraphs.

The regulation defines the goals of the quality assurance and evaluation system as:

1. To identify and promote good practices;
2. To identify the elements that require intervention to improve the existing situation;
3. To ensure the continuous improvement of the quality of the University's activity;
4. To meet the requirements of the accreditation system in Kosovo, which have been strengthened by the Accreditation Agency in Kosovo.

While the regulation 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 any engagement with the principles or standards of the ESG.

The 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 sufficient examples of changes operated based on the data collected (quality assurance data used to guide enhancement and as a base for improvement). When asked, during the site visit, for a few examples of decision and actions the management has taken based on data from the quality system, one of the answers provided by the university representatives was that they had not received any specific aspect to be improved (!).

According to the *Regulation on quality assurance and evaluation* 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 performance improvement and for academic promotion of the staff according the statute requirements.

However, none of these practices were confirmed during the site visit.



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; for example, when asked during the site visit how realistic the Development Strategy is, the QA representatives have declared that it is very realistic, considering that „everything planned for the previous year has been achieved”, which is not the case and indicates that the systems for strategic planning and QA do not communicate to each other.

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.

The annual overall results of student course satisfaction are compiled at institutional level into the overall university report (activity report of the rector). 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.

It is difficult for the ET to identify the organisation chart in respect to quality assurance considering that 3 different versions have been presented to us: one in the Regulation, one in the text of the SER and one in the pictures illustrated in the SER - contradictions are recurrent between the three.

Overall, we could distinguish that there is a central quality assurance commission and a central quality assurance office, both of which are accountable to the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance; additionally, there is a quality coordinator at the level of each faculty.

According to the *Regulation of the quality assurance and evaluation*, 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 to the course evaluation by students (that has evidence of being regularly conducted once per year). Other three templates were presented, as follows:

- One survey for graduates but there is no evidence of this being conducted so far; on one hand, the alumni the ET has met during the site visit have no knowledge of the instrument and, secondly, there is no evidence of the centralised and analysed data from the previous academic year;
- The line manager review form used for the evaluation of administrative staff is not an internal instrument developed by the institution, but an instrument derived from the Law on Civil Service;
- The survey for the evaluation of the administrative registrars and use of library resources and premises by students - was a one-time project that, as it results from the template used, was led by the Student Council and is therefore not an institutional process conducted regularly.

No other stakeholder has confirmed the existence of other data collection instruments (alumni, employers, academic and 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 survey templates provided are not very fit for purpose:

- The planned survey for graduates does not explore all the areas the university should be investigating in its graduates - what level are they working at, what skills were they missing when entering employment, what would they improve about the study program to match the labour market needs, etc
- The survey for the evaluation of the administrative registrars and use of library resources and premises by students should cover the whole range of student services and administration, infrastructure and facilities. 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 „How satisfied are you with the services in the library?“, if one cannot know if a potential low satisfaction refers to the opening hours, loans system, training of library staff, individual and group spaces, etc.



Also, the ET believes that conducting the student survey only once per year is insufficient and does not provide a full picture of the teacher performance, who is changing the disciplines and the groups of students every semester.

There is no integrated data management system or an integrated administration system. The course evaluation surveys are currently conducted in hard copy, 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 not have the ability to act as an early warning system in detecting irregularities and provide potential causes and solutions for them.

There is no coordinated process for the surveys to be themselves regularly evaluated and improved.

With the exception of academic staff evaluation, students are not engaged in the design and implementation of quality assurance processes, mechanisms and instruments, in spite of this being one of the measures proposed in the so-called *Quality Assurance Strategy*. When asked, during the site visit, how do they see students' participation in QA processes and in decision making processes in general, the representatives of the institution declared that this is reflected by student „learning better and by showing better results”. The institution should consider engaging students in all quality processes, such as developing surveys or data analysis and solution finding to respond to challenges.

The same TEMPUS project supported the university with trainings for staff in the field of quality management and organization of lectures by external experts.

The ET has not found any evidence that the university develops its own quality assurance system in order to maintain the quality of its operations. The internal quality assurance system in HZU is not integrated into the day-to-day activities of the university, but rather it seems to function in order to meet KAA's standards. From the perspective of the ET, therefore, if the university is to work towards building a quality culture and developing a greater degree of self-regulation, there is more work to be done by university authorities in achieving a better balance between external and internal quality assurance. The ET believes that the current system does not have the potential to achieve the university's goal of quality enhancement and the creation of a quality culture. The current system does not provide enough space for self-analysis and self-criticism, the opportunity for a department, or whatever entity, to present its unique features and to internalise the process.

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: Non-compliant

ET recommendations:

1. 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;
2. Develop a university OWN *Regulation on Quality Assurance and Evaluation* which reflects its own institutional structures, processes and challenges; publish the regulation on the institutional website and better enforce its implementation;
3. Should the institution wish to keep a quality assurance strategy, ensure this is communicating to the previous one and to the current overall development strategy of the university;
4. 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;
5. Improve the role of the QA system in the processes for planning and development and its use in the daily strategic and operations management;
6. 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;
7. Clarify the organisation chart in respect to quality assurance task division;
8. 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);
9. Re-organise the student course evaluation surveys so as to be conducted every semester;
10. Publish the results of all satisfaction surveys, while safeguarding the anonymity of the respondents, so that to increase the transparency and trust in these instruments, which can support the institution in preserving its response rates;



11. 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;
12. 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;
13. Increase student participation in quality assurance processes.

2.6. Learning and teaching

The university has developed and adopted policies and procedures applicable to all accredited programs at both Bachelor and Master levels, in all academic units faculties and in both languages (Albanian and Bosnian language at the Faculty of Business and Faculty of Faculty of Management in Tourism, Hospitality and Environment). However, it is not clear how does the institution monitor the extent to which those policies and procedures are effectively implemented.

There is an effective system for initial approval and regular changes in the programs, prepared by the academic unit council based on suggestions of the study commission and approved by the Senate. The monitoring of performance, however, is an area in need of improvement; as learned during the site visit, the university is using two indicators to monitor the quality of its programs: student assessment outcomes and student course evaluation survey results. There are isolated examples where these indicators have supported actions for improvement but generally there is no consistent process of defining KPIs, identifying and investigating differences in quality between programs, and a coherent cycle closed with taking action required to ensure that all programs meet required performance standards. There is no evidence of data from alumni or employers being using in the quality monitoring of the study programs, nor is there any evidence of alumni or employers being engaged in program development.

The ET analysed the course description for each module/subject presented in the programmes reports; each of them is provided with the ECTS credit number taking into account the weight of the subject, and each subject syllabus includes learning outcomes, curricula, evaluation methods etc. At the beginning of the semester, teachers present the subject syllabus to students; this contains a brief description of the subject, the goals and the learning outcomes of the course, as well as the assessment methods. Student assessment and evaluation criteria are set out in the Senate's approved regulations for organizing basic studies as well as the



dispositions of the Statute. All student assessments are made in the electronic student data management system (SEMS). Grades are determined by the teacher based on the assessment of a student's achievement in the classroom and achievements in homework and exams. The student's assessment is done in two parts: continuous assessment during the semester for the elements defined in the discipline program and evaluation on the final exam. The final grade of the student for the given subject is based on the overall work throughout the semester and is not determined by the final exam exclusively. Student learning outcomes are consistent with the National Qualifications Framework.

Teaching staff are generally appropriately qualified and experienced for their particular teaching responsibilities, and students are satisfied with the teaching strategies employed. The ET has learned during the site visit that for career promotion, it is an official requirement for all academic staff to participate in didactical trainings. However, when the ET asked for the *List of professional development activities for staff organized by the institution in the 2017/2018 academic year* (see annex 1 of the present report), no activities dedicated to improve academic staff teaching effectiveness were included; in fact, there were only two activities listed for academic staff during the whole year - two conferences.

The university intends to provide student-centred education. However, a definition of student-centred education was not made explicit in terms of the whole educational process. According with the SER, the teaching methods answer to the students' needs in order to achieve the intended learning outcomes: teaching and learning by distributing teaching-research tasks to group work.

Discussions with staff and students indicated that teaching approaches are moving in the direction of a less teacher-centred approach, and that emphasis is beginning to be placed on more interactive forms of teaching. The ET viewed this as an encouraging sign of effort being made to bring about pedagogical change.

The academic staff to student ratio doesn't provide guaranties, considering the full implementation of student centred learning, teaching and evaluation methods. This aspect was also highlighted in the report of the previous accreditation process, but the situation has not improved.

When addressing the areas in need of improvement in the institutional offerings, the external stakeholders the ET has met indicated the diversification of study programmes to meet market needs. Further, they expressed the view that they need students with the ability to apply knowledge; therefore, any efforts on the part of the university to enhance practical skills and competences and to intensify work-based and work-related learning would be welcomed.



Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Revisit the system for monitoring of performance at the level of study programs: define and monitor KPIs, analyse, identify and investigate differences in quality between programs, and take action required to ensure that all programs meet required performance standards;
2. Ensure that the data collection instruments feeding into program quality monitoring include feedback from alumni and employers;
3. Ensure the engagement of alumni and employers in program management and development;
4. Increase the academic staff development by adding activities dedicated to improve teaching effectiveness;
5. Improve the full academic staff to student ratio so as to ensure the student-centred education the institution aspires to conduct;
6. Consider the diversification of study programmes to meet current market needs;
7. Improve the practical skills and competences component within study programs, intensify work-based and work-related learning.

2.7. Research

The university did not adopt a Research Development Plan.

The research objective the institution has defined for itself is included in the Development Strategy 2017-2022 and is quite ambitious:

Advancing research and orientation towards innovation, through the following sub-objectives:

- *Rising reputation and further progress at international level;*
- *Each academic unit should have a magazine of the respective profile;*
- *Establishment of research institutes;*
- *Organization of multidisciplinary international conferences;*
- *Support of academic staff for participation in international scientific conferences; publications and joint research and artistic projects at the international level;*
- *Involvement and participation of students in research projects.*



Specific activities/projects and measuring indicators have been associated to these sub-objectives, as well as a process of progress monitoring and reporting, as detailed under standard 2.

In spite of these ambitious aspirations, the ET believes that scientific and technological research activity has to be developed first, with the aim of integrating the university in the international scientific community, while also addressing local and regional demands and specificity. This way, the university has the opportunity to attract additional funding from local businesses.

During the meeting conducted by the ET, the representatives of the university could not provide details of how are the research priorities in the institution determined, and reflected that area is now exclusively driven by individual initiatives of teachers.

For the achievement of the objectives stated above, the university has allocated the amount of 73.700 Euro. Taking into account the resources of the university, the priority the university formally gives to research through its mission statement, as well as the objectives of higher education defined by the Law on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo, the ET considers this amount far from being sufficient. In fact, the limited budget for research has been acknowledged by the institution as a weakness of this standard in its SER SWOT analysis; the ET believes it is in HZU own hands to supplement this through various mechanisms.

According to the statistical data for research presented to the ET as part of the supplementary documents requested during the site visit, the number of scientific publications delivered by the academic staff during 2018-2019 to date is 75. There is no evidence that each academic staff member and researcher has produced at least an average of one scientific/applied research publication/product per year for the past three years.

Expectations for teaching staff involvement in research activities is specified in their work contracts and, theoretically, performance in relation to these expectations is considered in the promotion criteria. As a consequence, many of the staff whom the ET has met declared that they are conducting research in order to meet the requirements of their current appointment status or potential future promotion. However, once the highest academic title has been achieved, there is no measure of incentivising staff to continue their research activity. Also, according to the SER, „the HZU Statute specifies in that the academic staff of the University is obliged to carry out scientific research in accordance with their professional abilities and obligations arising from the Senate's strategic guidelines”. However, it was not clarified whether specific KPIs are set for this purpose in order to determine the specific expectations the institution has.



The university had put in place some measures to encourage research including support for international mobility and conference participation; however, even there, staff sometimes had to support such opportunities from their own pockets. The ET did not identify the university's strategic approach to support and encourage engagement of staff in research. Concrete actions should be promoted in this sense, such as developing the research institutes as also proposed by the Development Strategy, offering different work arrangements in favour of research (sabbatical year, reduce teaching workload, etc), encouraging staff to improve their English language abilities, organizing trainings of scientific skills etc.

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 external stakeholders the ET has met during the site visit expressed high appreciation of the value of the university to business and industry in the region. The ET concluded, however, that the university needs to extend its collaboration with industry in the short term, once its research facilities are fully developed on the new campus. Knowledge transfer with direct outcomes in job creation is, the ET believes, a realistic prospect. The potential opportunities for knowledge transfer and applied research links with regional businesses, to support innovation, have not yet been fully recognised or exploited by the university.

The ET didn't identify an active participation of students in the research processes, even though this has been defined as a sub-objective of the Development Strategy. 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. HZU 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 HZU could try to organize such conferences.

The Code of Ethics provides a general policy for plagiarism and intellectual wealth. However, it does not have clear ethical regulations for research activities. The university should draft and adopt formal procedures regarding the ethics in research and ensure that all its internal stakeholders conduct their activities in line with these (such as signed consent forms for all human subjects, ensuring confidentiality of research data, use of animals in research, etc.). Also, 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 the basic ethical principles in research.



Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Draft and adopt a research development strategy/plan that is consistent with the nature and mission of the institution and the economic and cultural development needs of the region;
2. Ensure that the research development strategy/plan includes clearly specified indicators and benchmarks for performance targets, and is made publicly available;
3. Allocate more financial, logistic and human resources for achieving the proposed research objectives;
4. Improve the connections with local/regional businesses in order to facilitate opportunities for knowledge transfer and applied research;
5. Set specific KPIs for research production that include at least an average of one scientific/applied research publication per year, for all categories of academic staff;
6. Continue working towards reaching the Development Strategy sub-objective of increasing the involvement and participation of students in research projects, and better promote research among students;
7. Increase institutional efforts and provide relevant support to staff so that research, together with other significant research developments in the field, are more integrated in the teaching process;
8. Draft and formally adopt clear regulations for ethical principles in research, as detailed above;
9. Encourage staff to improve their English language competence so as to extend the range of publications and international cooperation opportunities;
10. Seek and formalise different kinds of incentives to encourage research (sabbatical year, reduce teaching workload, etc);
11. Organize trainings of scientific skills and relevant scientific research methods;
12. Continue working towards the Development Strategy sub-objective of establishing the research institutes.

2.8. Staff, employment processes and professional development

The rights and responsibilities, recruitment processes, promotion criteria and general principles of performance evaluation of teaching staff are spread across different internal documents: the Statute of the University, the Code of Ethics, and the regulation on Evaluation



Procedure for the Election and Advancement of Academic Personnel. Detailed provisions relating to performance review, support processes, and professional development could not be located in any specific regulation.

Staff related policies and procedures are not centralised in the form of an employment handbook made available for staff at the beginning of their employment.

The recruitment processes ensure that staff have the specific areas of expertise, qualification and experience for the positions they occupy: the selection of academic staff is based on the public competition according with the Statute of HZU, the Law of Higher Education and the Regulation on Evaluation Procedure for the Election and Advancement of Academic Personnel. The recruitment and status of administrative staff is regulated by the Law on Civil Service. Generally, the staff employed in the institution (academic and administrative) hold the relevant qualifications so that they are able to effectively manage educational, scientific, research, creative activities and administrative processes. However, as underlined in other areas of the reports, the English language proficiency remains a generalised problem across the entire institution.

Conditions for appointment and promotion to all grades of academic staff are clearly described in the University Statute. Conditions of employment for administrative staff appear in the competition announcement in accordance with the Systematization of job positions. The university ensures that candidates for employment are provided with full position descriptions reflecting their duties and responsibilities prior to employment. There is no evidence that staff are given specific KPIs to reflect measurable expectations they have to meet.

There is no evidence that new staff is given an effective orientation to ensure familiarity with the institution and its services, programs and student development strategies, and institutional priorities for development.

The teacher to student ratio is reflected in the table below for each faculty:

Faculty	Students/full time academic staff	Students/all academic staff
Faculty of Business	232	114
MTHM Faculty	169	109
Law Faculty	466	143



Agribusiness Faculty	36	16
Faculty of Arts	25	7

The ET considers that the level of provision of teaching staff (the ratio of students per full time staff member) is not adequate for the programs offered and are not taking into account the nature of teaching requirements in different fields of study. This has also been acknowledged as a shortcoming by the representatives of the institution during the site visit, but the ET underlines that it is in HZU own hands to address this matter.

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 has on the overall annual score and their impact on promotions, contract-related decisions, incremental pay, etc. This has also been identified as a shortcoming by the institution representatives the ET has met. Also, as observed during the meetings conducted by the ET, there is no consistent task division between the HR and QA offices on who does what, as there is a mix division between roles and responsibilities in the performance review of academic and administrative staff.

According to the University Statute, the evaluation of the academic staff is done based on:

- Assessment of management measures at all organizational levels in relation to:
- Establishment and adaption of teaching programs;
- Changing study programs;
- Organizational measures such as the establishment and and melting of institutional units;
- Achieving social goals;
- Evaluation of study programs and organization of studies;
- Assessment of the quality of teaching;
- Evaluation of research activities;
- Appreciation of artistic work.

An additional article in the Statutes mentions that the evaluation of the work of the teachers, scientific research and artistic work is done through:

- Internal assessment through self-assessment;
- Questionnaires and self-evaluation by academic staff;
- Anonymous questionnaires from students;
- Parameter analysis based on work report and performance;
- External evaluations by international colleagues;



- Presence in time;
- Expert reports.

There is no evidence that any of these processes are implemented; the institution does not have templates or data to demonstrate their implementation, nor score calculations to demonstrate how the overall score is impacted by each instrument. 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, peer or line manager evaluation, expert/international colleagues reports (a self-assessment report practice has been identified in the Faculty of Arts during the site visit, but this is not a standardised/generalised process across the institution, nor is there evidence of how is that being used to drive improvement considering that it is not used for any developmental discussion and the teachers do not receive any feedback on the submitted form). In fact, when asked about the specific process of having staff evaluated by expert/international colleagues, the university has clarified that it refers to KAA accreditation experts; the ET wishes to underline that it is not within the scope or nature of the external accreditation processes to provide judgements on individual performance of staff and this should therefore not be considered as an internal indicator.

According to the SER, „the head of each study commission is obliged to discuss with the teacher the ten percent (10%) of the lowest annual results by the students and jointly decide on the measures to be taken to improve the quality of the lesson”. Other than such reactive measures, there is no process of discussing the evaluation results with academic staff for professional development purposes or otherwise. Even in the reactive situations, there is no improvement plan for academic staff that assigns the actions recommended and assumed by the staff member in the case of deficiencies identified through the evaluation; the interviewees the ET has met have declared that „this process is only something informal”.

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.

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 provided by the Law on Civil Service, which includes the assessment based on job objectives, as well as evaluation of management skills, and personal abilities and skills. 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 ET did refer to the survey about the administrative registrars, but we do not consider it a



legitimate tool since it was a project conducted only once by the student councils and it did not include all administrative staff).

The institution did not develop a clear plan for all staff professional development. However, the ET has identified in the Development Strategy 2017-2022 three sub-objectives in this area:

- Support of academic staff for participation in international scientific conferences; publications and joint research and artistic projects at the international level;
- Increase the mobility of staff and students;
- Capacity building and continuous training of administrative staff.

The ET finds these priorities gravely insufficient and incomplete in covering all areas identified as challenging: improve the foreign language competencies of staff, improve academic staff teaching effectiveness, provide support on gaining competencies in project writing and attraction of funds, among others.

Since funds in the Development Strategy are allocated to activities, and not sub-objectives, the ET could not identify the resources the university has dedicated to these three priorities.

When asked where do they see areas in the Development Strategy that should be prioritised, the representatives of the university the ET has met during the site visit referred to „investing in staff (quality and quantity, mobility, staff development), as well as increasing research capacity. However, the ET believes that this is not supported by consistent planning in this direction, or appropriate resources allocation.

There is no structured approach of the institution in identifying staff development needs, and the ET finds that there is insufficient prioritisation of this area.

Some staff believe they are given appropriate and fair opportunities for personal and career development. However, this could not be a generalised impression as not all staff are satisfied with the opportunities for development provided by the institution since they are insufficient; others believe that this aspect is reliant on their personal contacts rather than a systematic process of the institution.

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. Provide benchmarks and KPIs for all staff and the work completed by them in order to effectively manage the institution's activities;
3. Organise an induction process for all staff 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 also be made available during induction;
4. Ensure that the level of provision of teaching staff (the ratio of students per full time staff member) is adequate for the programs offered and is taking into account the nature of teaching requirements in different fields of study, especially arts;
5. 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.
6. Ensure that criteria and processes for performance evaluation are made known in advance to all staff so that they are aware of what is expected of them;
7. 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;
8. 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;
9. 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;
10. Monitor the improvements in staff activity, especially in the segments underlined as challenging during the performance review reports;
11. Develop a staff development plan for both academic and administrative staff that includes a coherent strategy for identifying training needs and associate measurable indicators for the defined objectives;
12. Allocate appropriate resources for the implementation of the staff development plan;
13. Revisit and improve the overall management of the performance review system for all staff – assigned responsables, design and conduct instruments, data collection, data aggregation and analysis, decision making, monitoring – in a transparent and predictable manner;



14. Revisit and improve the overall management of the staff development system for all personnel – assigned responsables, identify training needs, budget allocated, training provided, impact assessed, monitoring – in a transparent manner;
15. Provide more opportunities for personal and career development to all staff, with special assistance given to any who are facing difficulties.

2.9. Student administration and support services

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 HZU. These national criteria are consistently and fairly applied at HZU. For specific fields of study, the university organizes additional examinations for certain subjects; these are included in the student admission procedure, which must be approved by MEST. Students admission requirements are specified in advertisements and published on the website of the university.

According to the SER, „students and interested parties can find full information on study programs, semester fees, other administrative fees and scholarship opportunities published on university’s website”. Other relevant information such as infrastructure, facilities and the services available for students are not made publicly available prior to application for admission, so that to properly inform the decisions of prospective students and parents. Also, the institution should improve the information it offers about its staff members; currently, the information is insufficient as it does not include any information about the individual (CV), its contact information, office location, consultation hours, etc

The Guidebook for Young Students presents important information for the first years students such as study programs, lecture development, exercises and professional practice, assessment method, conditions for enrolment on the following year, completion of studies, policies and procedures at the institution, rights and responsibilities, disciplinary measures and student organizations.

There is no evidence of an orientation program being organised for starting students to ensure thorough understanding of the range of services and facilities available to them as well as general presentation of the Guidebook for Young Students.

The institution offers two kinds of scholarships:

1. Academic/performance scholarships offered to students who:
 - Are regular student to the University "Haxhi Zeka";
 - Passed all the exams of the relevant year of studies in September term;



- Have a GPA at least 9:00 at Bachelor level (Exception: student of the Faculty of Arts: 9:50);
- Have a GPA at least 9:50 at Master level;
- Have not repeated the year of study.

The amount of the scholarship is determined by the Steering Council on an annual basis depending on the budget and the number of eligible students.

The criteria, conditions and procedures are provided in the *Regulation for Scholarships*.

2. Fee waivers (semester payment release), applicable for:

- Students in social assistance;
- Students with disabilities;
- Invalid war students;
- Students who have remained without a parent as a result of war;
- Students from veteran parents;
- If they study two or more brothers in a public University.

The criteria, conditions and procedures are provided in the *Regulation for semester payment release*.

These two categories and their criteria are operated separately, the scholarships and semester payment release can be cumulated.

According to the information provided by the programmes self-evaluation reports, there are processes in place to collect and analyse data referring to the student progression and drop-out rates.

The ET finds the number of students who don't pass the exams worryingly high and the university tried to find a solution. The tutorial system developed at the university is intended to help students who encounter problems in a subject by organizing additional classes and by orienting them to relevant material that makes students easily overcome their difficulties.

As explained under standard 5, the institution collects data on students' satisfaction with their programmes, but not on the learning resources administration and support services; there is no coherent usage of the data neither to support decision making, nor for quality assurance purposes. At the moment, there is no quality assurance instrument aimed at collecting teachers' satisfaction with administration and support services.

The student appeal procedure is specified in the University Statute, published and made widely known within the institution, as well as included in the Guidebook for Young Students. The regulations make clear the grounds on which academic appeals may be based. The Regulation of Disciplinary Procedures also underlines that the appeals procedure is intended to protect the person and student from unfair decisions. 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.

The Code of Ethics details the policy and procedures in place to deal with improper behavior, academic misconduct, including plagiarism and other forms of cheating. The specific mechanisms have been detailed under standard 4.

Even if the management of HZU declares that is important to look into the factors affecting satisfaction among students, the effectiveness and relevance of student services is not regularly monitored through satisfaction surveys. No formal plans are developed for the provision and improvement of student services. A survey to analyse student satisfaction with the quality of the learning environment, quality of administration, quality of campus infrastructure and facilities, availability of library and learning resources could help the university to plan future policies and improvements to services and the overall quality of education.

The university has a Career Development Office that deals with career planning and employment counselling. The main responsibilities of the office are:

- Work on the development of skills, knowledge and dexterities that are key to the process of employing students and graduates;
- Providing assistance to UHZ students and graduates to find out about the opportunities for additional education, opportunities for practical work and various activities;
- Organizing trainings for students, conferences, conversations and presentations of employers in order to understand better the labour market and to possess the dexterities that are necessary for successful organization and planning of personal career;
- Cooperation with the faculties of in disseminating information for students and organizing joint activities;
- Providing services to companies, such as the presentation of their offers for work and practical work to students and graduates and conversation with these bidders.

The ET has analysed the activities conducted by the Office in the academic year 2017-2018 and we can state that it successfully meets the role it was assigned. During the discussions conducted by the ET, students mentioned the Career Development Office only in connection to internships.

The university does not provide specialised academic and psychological counselling, but the SER mentions that professors, through the tutorial system, offer student advice about the study program, as well as student counselling in case of emotional, financial or family



problems. The ET learned during the site visit that academic staff are accessible and open when a student seeks advice and guidance on academic matters.

The university doesn't have common areas for students meetings, recreational spaces, cafeteria, sports facilities, medical services and doesn't offer accommodation in a student dormitory. For special events, the university can use the hall and the sports ground of the municipality based on a partnership signed for this purpose

Student engagement in, and the opportunities for extracurricular activities are limited. The institution does quite little to support and encourage this aspect.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Increase the level of publicly available information for students on the institutional and faculties website, as detailed above, in particular in relation to its staff members;
2. Organise orientation programs for starting students to ensure thorough understanding of the range of services and facilities available to them, policies and procedures at the institution as well as a general presentation of the Guidebook for Young Students;
3. Ensure that the effectiveness and relevance of student administration and support services is regularly monitored through processes that include satisfaction surveys; ensure the statistical data is used for quality assurance purposes, as well as to support decision making and that services are modified in response to evaluation and feedback;
4. Design and periodically conduct a survey to evaluate teachers' satisfaction with administration and support services, as they are also a beneficiary of the administration;
5. Provide common areas for students meetings, recreational spaces, cafeteria, sports facilities and accommodation for students;
6. Provide better support and encourage student extracurricular activities.

2.10. Learning resources and facilities

The university is currently conducting its activities in two campuses, at a short distance from each other and the ET visited both of them during the site visit. The new campus plans to offer a lot of space for extension. The ET visited amphitheatres, classrooms, laboratories, the



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two libraries, administrative offices, students offices etc. A new building for the Faculty of Arts is under construction.

The ET found large differences between the facilities for teaching, research and administration processes: some modern spaces, properly equipped, but others rooms in serious need of renovation and equipment. We found that the institution does not provide an adequate, clean, attractive and well maintained physical environment for all its buildings and grounds. This is not only applicable for students, but also for teachers and administration; for example, the Faculty of Law does not have sufficient offices to accommodate its teachers. The situation of the laboratories is not much better: some of them are new and still need to be properly equipped (Entrepreneurial), some of them are not there yet, but much needed (Criminology). Some of the facilities are unsuitable for an effective teaching and learning process, such as a seminar room that has a pole in the middle of the class, even preventing students to see the board.

The bachelor programme *Film Direction and TV Director* still functions in the university with just a few students; the university doesn't provide any special room or equipment for this programme. Likewise, students in music do not have sufficient rehearsal rooms which makes the learning process very difficult in an over-crowded environment. Insufficient or old and over-used musical instruments is also an area in need of improvement in the Faculty of Arts. The ET expresses concerns that the students in the faculty of arts are not able to acquire even the minimum expected competencies unless investments are urgently made in this area.

The number of volumes in the library is relatively small and there is no access to online databases, research and journal materials, which was also considered problematic by the interviewees the ET has met. According to the Development Strategy, the university aims to increase the library's information resources. However, according to the Progress Report on the Development Strategy Monitoring „regarding the Project for Access to Electronic Libraries, lists of databases and contacts have been compiled, but payment membership is difficult to achieve due to the limited possibilities of membership budgeting”. Some open source newsletters are listed in this database, so payment cannot be claimed as an obstacle.

As expressed during the site visit, one temporary solution could be to sign a cooperation agreement with the library in Pristina for resource sharing, especially considering the high level of digitalisation they recently went through.

According to the SER, the library is open six day per week to ensure access when required by users beyond normal class time.

There are no mechanisms to prevent plagiarism, as further detailed under standard 4.

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The university doesn't have common areas for student meetings, recreational spaces, vending machines, cafeteria, sports facilities, medical services and doesn't offer accommodation to student. All these are provided in the development plan of the new campus and are expected with interest by students. For special events, the university can use the hall and the sports ground of the municipality.

The range of services provided and the resources devoted to students do not reflect all requirements of the student population; not all the buildings of the university are suitably adapted for students with physical disabilities. Even the new campus has no provisions for students with special needs (physical and learning).

As detailed under standard 5, there are no quality assurance processes conducted regularly to collect feedback from students and staff about the adequacy and quality of facilities and resources.

Considering the objectives of the strategic plan and also the large number of students, the university needs to focus its efforts on the development of infrastructure, to ensure the conditions of a modern and competitive university.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Continue working towards the development plan of the campus so that to provide areas for students meetings, recreational spaces, vending machines, cafeteria, sports facilities, medical services and accommodation to students;
2. Increase institutional efforts to provide an adequate, clean, attractive and well maintained physical environment for all university buildings and facilities;
3. Ensure suitable conditions in terms of rooms, equipment, musical instruments, as well as an adequate teacher student ratio in the study programs at the Faculty of Arts;
4. Increase the number of library physical resources in both Albanian and English language, as well as the online access to databases, research and journal materials;
5. Explore the possibility of signing a cooperation agreement with the library in Pristina, seeking access to its digital learning resources;
6. Ensure suitable arrangements are made for the infrastructure and facilities to accommodate students and staff with special physical and learning difficulties;
7. Design and periodically conduct a survey to evaluate students and teachers satisfaction with the learning resources and facilities.



2.11. Institutional cooperation

The university did not develop an institutional cooperation and/or internationalization strategy/policy that guides the institutional decisions and resource allocation in this area.

One of the objectives in the Development Strategy 2017-2022 is „*to establish mutually beneficial partnerships between citizens and institutions of the country, as well as the Peja region, so that our communities are actively engaged in the work of the institution*”.

In order to achieve this, the university proposed the following sub-objectives:

- Advancing cooperation in joint projects;
- Organization of joint programs;
- Increase the mobility of staff and students;
- Organization of conferences and joint activities with relevant partners;
- Creating new opportunities for our students (internship, study, etc.);
- Continuous increase in academic and financial benefits.

Additionally, across the other three objectives of the Development Strategy 2017-2022 we can identify the following sub-objectives:

- Expansion of units and improvement of programs in accordance with labor market requirements;
- Support and counselling of current students and creation of UHZ alumni network;
- Rising reputation and further progress at international level;
- Organization of multidisciplinary international conferences;
- Support of academic staff for participation in international scientific conferences; publications and joint research and artistic projects at the international level.

The ET would like to underline that the resources allocated to this area are insufficient.

The institution has created and assigned this portfolio to the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance, that is directly mandated and accountable for the initiatives and results in this area.

HZU has developed collaborative partnerships with different stakeholders from local institutions over the years for internship placements or organisation of cultural or scientific events. The external stakeholders, whom the ET met, expressed high appreciation of the value of the university to business and industry in the region.

The institution has 39 cooperation agreements with universities and 15 cooperation agreements with other institutions. According to the SER, the agreements are intended to:



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exchange of students, exchange staff, joint projects, joint conferences and other activities of common interest.

However, the ET 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 ET has observed during the site visit a major need of the HZU academic community for more interaction with European Faculties, the ET believes that memorandums should be more targeted and beneficial.

The university is also a member of the Balkan Universities Association which tries to determine a leading vision for the future through the universities, the libraries, the research centres in Balkan region on the base of common global values by considering the necessities of the time.

Taking into account 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.

The institution has taken part in international projects, but little progress has been recorded since the last accreditation process. Most of the projects listed in the SER have already finished and for others the university does not provide the specific duration; it is therefore difficult for the ET to assess the projects the institution is currently engaged in.

The institution organises events of international visibility and outreach, but their number is very low (only 2 international conferences during 2018).

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. Also, staff are not sufficiently encouraged to participate in forums in which significant community issues are discussed and plans for community development are considered.

The ET has observed during the site visit that there are sufficient testimonies of staff being financially supported (totally or partially) in different international conferences, study mobility, forums, events, internships, summer schools, seminars. However, the number of incoming and outgoing staff and students on study mobilities (minimum one semester spent at another higher education institution abroad) is very low.

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, in particular through the Industrial Boards of the university; according to the meetings conducted by the ET, two



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industrial boards have already been set up last year and two more are planned. However, there is no regularity in the Industrial Boards meetings, as the ET learned during the site visit, they meet whenever necessary. Considering the urging need expressed by the interviewees in regards to the collaboration between the university and the outside world so as the training better addresses labour market needs, this relationship should be strengthened; in particular, there were views of the interviewees the ET has met that, in order to meet employers needs, more programs in other fields as well as a bigger diversity in master programs offerings are required.

Based on the meetings it has conducted, the ET 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. 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 HZU graduates (which the ET learned that it refers to better connection between theory and practice, as well as increased focus on maths, computer sciences and foreign languages), as well as to get insight on the profiles currently in demand; the institution should have more direction in responding to the current local and regional needs.

The institution has formally established an Alumni Association (first ceremony "Reunion of Graduate Students" was organised on May 12, 2017); also, the graduates the ET has met during the site visit confirmed the meetings of the association where each of them is sharing their post-graduation experiences. However, the relationship with the graduates is not systematic; the institution drafted a survey (that is not fit for purpose), but that has not been conducted yet, as further detailed under standard 5.

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

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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. Provide more incentives for the development of language competence of staff and students;
3. 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;
4. Increase the cooperations with European Faculties;
5. Ensure that staff engagement in international cooperation and contributions to the community are included in the staff performance review system;
6. Increase institutional efforts and funding in order to increase students and staff international mobility;
7. 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;
8. 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);
9. Give a close attention to employers demands by ensuring a better connection between theory and practice, as well as giving a better focus on mathematics, computer sciences and foreign languages;
10. Increase the role of the Industrial Boards of the University so as to ensure a better connection between the higher education offerings and the labour market needs; ensure a regularity in their meetings;
11. Increase the visibility of the Alumni Association by keeping them informed about institutional developments, inviting their participation in activities, and encouraging their support for new developments, as well as systematically using them to promote university's services to society;
12. Ensure a more systematic communication with the graduates, including the usage of formal satisfaction survey;



13. 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, the SER is not structured in line with the KAA Accreditation Manual and 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 has been completely taken to extreme; the ET has concluded that most 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). The institution was too preoccupied to present institutional practices in a positive light that has completely 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 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.



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Overall, the institution has many challenges ahead, same as any other higher education institution. 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.

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that „Haxhi Zeka” University in Peja 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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