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Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

ARBËRI COLLEGE

INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

JUNE, 2020; Ljubljana-Tbilisi-Bucharest



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: Date: 21nd of May 2020

Expert Team (ET) members:

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

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

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

Site Visit Program

Sources of information for the Report:

- *A Self-Evaluation Report (SER) submitted by the AC*
- *Information obtained during the online meetings conducted with the management of the institution, teaching and administrative staff, students, graduates, external stakeholders and employers of graduates;*
- *Web-site;*
- *Supplementary documents requested by the ET;*
- *Video presenting the campus of the college and checked by the KAA representatives.*

Criteria used for institutional and program evaluations

- KAA Accreditation Manual;
- Benchmarking of HEIs in Kosovo;



- European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (only for reference/triangulation).

1.2. Site visit schedule

Institutional Reaccreditation Procedure at Arberi College Date: 21nd of May 2020

21st May 2020

09.00 – 10.30	Meeting with the management of the institution (<i>no slide presentation is allowed, the meeting is intended as a free discussion</i>)
10.30 – 11.10	Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative services (Elene – will be missing)
11.10 – 12.00	Lunch break (<i>to be provided at the site visit place</i>)
12.10 – 13.00	Meeting with the heads of study programs
13.00 – 14.00	Meeting with teaching staff
14.00 – 14.40	Meeting with students
14.40 – 14.55	Short break
14.55 – 15.40	Meeting with graduates
15.40 – 16.20	Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders
16.20 – 16.30	Internal meeting – Expert Team and KAA
16.30 – 16.40	Closing meeting with the management of the institution

Other information

Overall instructions for HEIs

1. Each meeting should be attended by maximum 6 persons;
2. The students selected for the meeting should reflect a diversity in terms of fields of study, programme, study cycle, year of study, students with special needs if any, etc;
3. The teaching staff selected for the meeting should reflect a diversity in terms of faculties and programmes, full-time and part time, local and international, etc;



4. The students, graduates and employers of graduates should not be employed at the institution;
5. Anyone whose attendance won't be agreed in advance with KAA and the Expert Team will be asked to leave the interview session;
6. Nametags are to be provided for all people attending the meetings.

1.3. A brief overview of the institution under evaluation

ARBËRI College (hereafter - AC) was founded in 2006 as a private Higher Education Institution under No. 70372764 on 02.08.2006. Initially it was named College Ghiliani (the name of the city in which the university is established, and there are different spellings for this place in different sources of information, including the SER – Ghiliani, Gjilan or Gnjilane). At the beginning the AC launched the study programs with Bachelors & Master degrees (BSc/MSc) for the following fields and subjects:

Faculty of Economics:

- Banking, Finance and Accounting;
- Management and Informatics;

Faculty of Law with directions:

- General Law
- Criminology;

Faculty of Education with the directions:

- Pre-primary and
- Primary Education

Social Sciences Faculty with the directions:

- English
- Psychology.

In 2015 the institution was re-accredited for the period of 1 October 2015 - 30 September 2018 as a Private Bearer of Higher Education College "Gjilan" in Gjilan by the KAA no. 328/15 dt. 05.07.2015. During the ET discussion with the top-management of this institution (hereafter referred to as „online discussions”), the ET raised the question about the name of this institution, and it got the following explanation: that it was decided to change the name of College (“Ghiliani” or “Gjilan” – two names were used in the SER) to ARBËRI “in order to show the openness of the institution”. Arberi College also became the part of UBT Group from



October 1st, 2018. The AC has, therefore, become as it defines itself: “the part of the UBT Ecosystem” which has the main products and services related to higher education and research, executive academy, vocational training centre and various additional services. From the Strategic Plan (p. 5): UBT Group operates in several locations and branches, and its infrastructure houses one of the largest libraries in Kosovo and over 80 laboratories with offices, contact points in all regions of Kosovo and abroad.

As for 2019 the College had only one accredited study program and for that it needed only 3 PhD academic staff to fulfil the KAA standards referring to human resources (added based on the 22 doc. “*Explanation of the commitments against budget*”).

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. They are presented in the sections below – each of them including a presentation of the current status as resulted from the analysis of the ET based on the SER, the online discussion and the additional documents provided. Each section also includes a brief overview of the standards met and not met by the evaluated institution, a conclusion about the compliance level for each general area and a set of recommendations that the college could take into account in order to improve in the future. When compliance levels for sub-standards are presented, the ET used a grading scale like this: marked with 0 those criteria that are not fulfilled, with 1 those that are partially met and with 2 those which are fully met by the evaluated institution.

2.1. Public mission and institutional objectives

The College defined the following **mission statement** in its SER as:

ARBËRI offers an attractive and contemporary academic environment.

ARBËRI represents a chance/challenge environment for the students, faculty and staff in participatory and autonomous setting.

ARBËRI will be a leading institution to the growth, and strategic development of the Anamorava region.

It builds on a relation platform between students, faculty, stad and administration while being dedicated to continuously upgrade its role in the community and offer learning opportunities pushed by education, research, innovation and interaction.

ARBËRI College will be a leading institution to the growth, and strategic development of the Anamorava region.



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The SER does not make the direct reference when this mission statement was adopted, revised and discussed, nor who was involved in these processes. By the opinion of the ET, the mission looks like a very general, quite long and formal statement made in 5 sentences. The mission also contains the generic and broad phrases which are not usually used in the missions: “represents a chance/challenge environment. Eventually, there are some omissions (e.g.: “stad” instead of “staff”) in the text, but the ET could understand this might be generated during the translation of documents from Albanian to English. Thus, the mission does not meet the criteria of being clear and short mission.

In terms of its pillars, the ET thinks that the mission statement addresses the pillars’ criteria in **research** and **community** services:

- *and offer learning opportunities pushed by education, research, innovation and interaction*
- *while being dedicated to continuously upgrade its role in the community...Anamorava region*

As far as the **teaching** is concerned, the ET does not clearly see how the Arberi College mission refers to it in order to meet the criteria.

The Strategic Plan 2023 also contains the same omission (“stad” in its mission, with a “copy-paste text”). However, the ET checked other documents, and discovered that the mission in the Quality Manual Arbery (as of 16.10.2018) has (a) 4 sentences; (b) mission has a different text, and (c) text misses the region (Anamorava region) (Quality Manual, p.3 Arberi mission). The ET copies the beginning of each sentence just for comparison (with the previous mission statement)

ARBËRI offers a dynamic innovative 21st century academic environment...
ARBËRI provides a supporting and challenging...
Building on a tradition of teamwork...
ARBËRI is a preeminent center of intellectual and cultural activity in Kosovo...”

Regarding 1.2 standard, the ET did not initially find any direct confirmation in the SER how the external and internal stakeholders participated in its mission’s discussion. The ET also requested the additional documents and proof not included in the SER.

The feedback that was received from the AC – that there was a “proof to ET about the consultation we had with stakeholders”

Indeed, the ET has received the *non-official* document with the picture of the Dean of the Arberi College with two other representatives (not clearly assigned and without the names). If the ET understands it correctly, there are members of the Chamber of Commerce and Kosovo Manufacturing Club (because the text below says that there were two main bodies of the industry representatives who have been the main consulting parties for the mission and vision design). The ET was discussing this whether they can take it as a proof, but the picture is non-



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official document; and it has not been accompanied by any other signed official document – like Minutes of this meeting, emails or with any other document with the signatures.

There was one document attached, - the Memorandum of understanding between Arberi and one of those listed parties - Kosovo Manufacturing Club about various aspects of cooperation, but this document did not refer to the mission statements' discussion.

Arberi College became the part of UBT Group from October 1st 2018. The ET misses the detailed explanation about the relationship between the AC and the UBT Group in the SER, and whether the Arberi College became the part of the UBT after signing its agreement. The ET looked at the additional documents submitted and found the Agreement signed in October, 2018 (without the specified date) between the Arberi and UBT that says that Arberi College will represent the UBT group in Anamorava region.

The ET also managed to find more relevant information on the AC and UBT the web-site: <https://kolegjiarberi.ubt-uni.net/en/about-arberi-college/> as well as the explanation that refers to the leading employer in Kosovo: <https://kolegjiarberi.ubt-uni.net/en/ubt-group-is-the-leading-employer-in-kosovo-on-the-quality-of-private-provider-of-higher-education-concerning-the-mest-and-ksa-report/>

On the one hand, the ET understands which particular rational is laying behind this collaboration, as Arberi College explains: “*now we are reorganizing strategically in order to survive*”, “*more institutions consider it is important to merge in order to be in the better conditions*”). Merging HEIs and putting together resources is a trend all over Europe.

However, the ET is wondering why the Arberi College does not reflects this fact in its mission, vision as well as the values (also not listed in the SER), and present a clear view – what it meant to be the AC before and what it means now, and what are the future perspectives of cooperation between these two institutions in terms of the short and long-term planning. In some parts, the AC does not address to the UBT at all (e.g. mission), and in the other parts, when the ET clearly needs to see how the AC proceeds, it shows the UBT overall impact. While it would be advisable, for AC to be more transparent to its academic community regarding the type of collaboration with UBT Group: what is the formal status of this relationship, what resources are put together and how decisions are taken. The concern should be to protect the academic freedom and the patrimony of the AC, while also sharing and using shared resources in the benefit of the quality of the teaching, learning and research processes

The AC does not answer directly how the mission has been discussed in its internal academic circle, but it mentions that the external circles “*with other academic and research organizations and universities*” are important.

It also includes the paragraph about the ARBËRI College being the part of UBT Group, with its impact in the society. However, the AC does not directly refer to the discussions of public



mission with the UBT or any other external stakeholders. During the online discussion of the ET and the representatives of the Arberi College, there were two questions addressed about the discussions of mission in its academic circle: Did you have the discussion of the mission statement within your academic community? What is the current mission and how it is different from the old one? There was no any clear answer, even if prompted by the ET members, the AC representatives did not offer a straight-forward answer to these – and other – questions.

Regarding the recognition of mission being an effective guide by the academic community (the ET was also wondering whether there is any confirmation about it). The ET provides the para. „Being part of the UBT Group, it means that the AC...”. Again, coming back to the mission statement, not all pillars are clearly addressed, and it does not refer to the UBT Group in its mission or explanation to the mission or in its strategic objectives, or at least, about the common strategics´ trends or directions. At the same time, it does writes about this step of joining to the UBT as *“the biggest differences is that staff members are now encouraged to provide their opinions and ideas about the institutions development”*. ...*We have joined the UBT Group management strategy, which communicates their objectives and targets to staff through annual performance management appraisal.*“

The ET was also trying to find the evidence what it means for UBT group to include Arberi, and vice versa. A small part of the information is available on its webs-site; <https://kolegjarberi.ubt-uni.net/en/ubt-group-is-the-leading-employer-in-kosovo-on-the-quality-of-private-provider-of-higher-education-concerning-the-mest-and-ksa-report/>

The SER mentions that Arberi *„joined the UBT Group management strategy, which communicates their objectives and targets to staff through annual performance management”*, (1.4 standard) and, again, the mission of Arberi does not refer to the UBT, and also does not clearly explore the objectives and targets of the UBT, its mission and how these two constituencies communicate between each other. The SER refers that Arberi *“already adopted UBT Group practices and standards to a certain level”*, but the ET cannot interpret what it means in terms of any measurable effects or impact under its “certain level”.

The ET also considered the Decision on approval the Strategy 2023 as of 31.03.2018 (under the number of 37/18) that says that Arberi College approves the Strategy 2023 with 9 areas of strategic planning on:

- Mission
- external environment
- industry analysis
- Strategic objectives
- Action plan
- risk assessment
- financial projections
- strategy metrics – performance indicators
- annual work plan



The ET is wondering to know whether the listed strategic objectives are the same as its institutional objectives? The ET checks the Strategic plan 2023 (p. 10), and sees that there are the following 5 strategic objectives:

- achieving academic excellence,
- the institution aspires excellent quality standards and consistent active learning approaches which offer authentic experiences and an inspiring,
- values-based learning environment to a diversity,
- developing research, innovation and social responsibility,
- creating a positive working and learning environment,
- maintaining and increasing internationalization and regional partnerships,
- partnering with the community

The ET notes that there are some deficiencies between the different documents as far as the mission, strategic objectives, institutional objectives with the missing values of the AC.

From the online discussion, the ET was asking additional questions about the UBT to better understand the essence of the changes, that was not clearly explored in the SER and got the additional information during the online meeting with the AC and documents:

First of all, some of the institutions have joined the UBT as well, because it is part of the regionalization strategy without recurring the efforts for members with creating efficiencies. As the ET understood, that it is one of the first private colleges and it is the biggest one out of the private institution with some interesting developments in the last 20 years.

Second, Arberi and the UBT are working on a corporate identity of the group.

Third, during the online meeting, the number – more than 400 (?) university partners & joint-degrees with some of them, there is a UBT office in Vienna and a center in Budapest. The ET was wondering to know which 400 University partners, or whether it was a mistake, because there are 30 HEIs in Kosovo.

If Arberi College decides to be closely integrated inside the UBT College, then there are a number of questions raised, where some of them are:

- it is about the status of Arberi College and status of the UBT College. Does it mean that the AC become the Faculties of the UBT? If it is, probably, it would be more encouraging to apply for accreditation process under the UBT status.
- If the AC is under the umbrella of the UBT right now, probably it should change and adopt its mission, vision and values of UBT. It is up to the AC to decide which degree of freedom it has – fully independent, partially or completely dependent (or any other ways) ?
- If the AC remains as the independent private entity, within the bigger private entity, how it is still reflected in the values, missions, strategy and other relevant documents?



Up to now it is not clear to the ET, whether the Arberi College is an independent institution, or it is the part of the UBT. From the answers that the ET has received, it is clear that it is an independent private institution. Third, if Arberi has become the part of the UBT, it is not clear from the SER and other documents, what has been exactly integrated and what is the future of this integration. The ET recommends to look at this current state and position (either as an independent or the one under the umbrella of the UBT) and being consistent when bringing these changes to the mission and institutional objectives.

Therefore, the situation of compliance presents itself like this:

- Standard 1.1. - 0
- Standard 1.2 - 1
- Standard 1.3 – 0
- Standard 1.4 – 0
- Standard 1.5 - 0

Compliance level: Non-compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Review and change its mission to meet all 3 listed pillars and to address its current state and position. Revision process should include consultations with internal and external stakeholders;
2. Revisit the mission statement making it shorter and clear so that it can guide the strategic planning of the institution;
3. Adjust the mission statement in all documents making it the same and make sure it is recognized by the entire academic community;
4. Check the institutional objectives and incorporate them clearly making sure they are correlated with the mission and strategy;
5. Include the part related to Arberi values (they are missing in the SER(and check how they are integrated into the mission and institutional objectives);
6. AC has to decide up to which level it would like to be incorporated to the UBT institution, but it should be clearly stated the formal status of the relationship;
7. If AC is integrated inside the UBT College, it should therefore adjust these changes within its mission, vision, values as well as the other documents, reflecting UBT presence in its internal documents;
8. The AC should provide more information about the UBT, and incorporate the values of UBT. The ET wonders whether the AC made the corrected adjustments in the standard 1 and standard 2 with institutional and strategic objectives of the UBT;



2.2. Strategic planning, governance and administration

The Arberi college has submitted the Strategic Plan 2023 (without date of publication or no date on this document). The ET would like to note that it is not clear whether it is the plan from 2019-2023 or from 2020-2023. The additional document with the Decision as of 31.03.2019 identifies that it includes 9 areas of strategic planning, but the institution in its SER has identified *five strategic* objectives (which are different from the strategic objectives identified in the previous 2.1. chapter):

1. Joining UBT College for Academic Excellence;
2. Promote Education, Research, Innovation and Interaction
3. Positive Working and Learning environment
4. Maintaining and increasing regional and national partnerships
5. Interacting with the community

The same 5 strategic objectives are provided in the Strategic plan 2023 (but it is not clear when it was developed, because it came over without the date, and looked as the draft form). The ET also notes that there are also some small omissions («Promoto») as well as some discrepancies inside these objectives.

The SER makes reference that the Strategic Plan till 2023 year was prepared under the direct guidance by the President together with the stakeholders. From the AC's Strategic plan 2023, the ET perceives that it is still a draft document, and should be finally revised, completed and approved by a certain date. The ET sees the defined five strategic objectives, and they are different from the objectives identified in its Public mission (in the SER), and *second*, it is not quite clear how and when the strategic plan has been drafted in close consultation with academic community, stakeholders from various industries, including private sectors. *Third*, it is not clear whether the strategic planning, governance and administration foresees that, for example, the Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Law of the AC and the faculty of Management, Business and Economics and Faculty of Law of the UBT are going to be merged. *Fourth*, the ET also see that the Statute signed as of 21.08.2019 does not reflect and does not mention any links to the UBT College.

During the online meeting of the ET and AC, the AC explains that the perspectives of planning are grounded into:

- promotion of the entrepreneurial and innovation trends, although “the innovation for us is being something new (being active in HE, interdisciplinarity approach, joint studies, involving technologies)”
- the image of the AC is presented as the “new type of institution who is not a typical”



- AC want to be differentiated from a typical institution of Kosovo
- “we created polyclinics, factories, 50 different spin-offs (experimental)

In the above, the ET thinks that the AC again refers to the UBT, where there are numerous other institutions, and at the same time, the SER does not evaluate the AC as “the new type of institution”, and differentiation that is mentioned is related to the new mechanisms of learning.

As far as the annual and longer-term budget, Arberi includes the annual and longer-term budget process, and description of its annual risk assessment process, but it lists, but does not measure risks or does not evaluate the drivers of factors that introduce the listed risk to its operating environment. Standard 2.3 refers to “*partial adoption*” of the UBT Group strategic plan for the ARBËRI. The ET cites that “*being an independent entity, ARBERI has taken into account a number of specific elements of the regional approach of the institution*”. The ET has to assess whether this “partial” strategic planning is integrated or not with the annual and longer-term budget. The ET should measure “partial adoption”, but the SER does not provide any measures which areas have been adopted, and how it was assessed before and after, and how much is left, from its explanation. The additional document provided for the Annual Report 2019 on Strategic Plan’s implementation provides only the formula for the indicators, but do not measure the status, and the notes’ graphs are also left empty. Basically, it is not a report, but the draft of the document which could be used as the basis for the Annual report.

For 2.5 standard (2.4 is missing one), the AC provides some set of indicators. The indicators 2020-2023 start from the AC customer results.

- There is no provided explanation, for instance, why there is a growth in the students’ number – from 150 to 250 (from 2019 to 2020), and by 2023 - by 350 students while the correspondent growth in teachers are only from 12 to 15 for the same time (2019 to 2020). Thus, the provided the ratio of students per professor is increasing – from 12 students (12.5) to 17 students (16.7) per professor.
- The drop-out rate has a decreasing optimistic trend - from 31.2% till 22.4% (in this 2020), and then - 15.0% (2023). The ET is missing the explanation - it would be great to have the explained trend in the SER especially when the number of students (above) is sharply raised (for example, within 2019-2020 year).
- The ET would like to know whether the AC plans to incorporate some students from the similar faculties of the UBT group, but it does not mention it.
- As far as research and research citations are concerned, the AC adds the input of the UBT (the ET is not aware of how many professors in total)
- There are listed numbers that do not look realistic (e.g.: with the number of citations for consecutive 2019, and 2020, and 2023 years – 1860, 4876, 9752 showing the sums of all institutions, - as it was



mentioned during online meeting, - 400 HEIs). The ET thinks that it is confusing, and it cannot separate the real impact of the ET for the AC's 12 members of staff, and therefore, it thinks that it is counterproductive to join the impact of all institutions together, because there is a process of accreditation of the single college of the AC, even if the AC is in the process of merging to its UBT umbrella. The ET thinks that the SER should integrate strategic plan of the AC institution only. The ET thinks if the AC is included to the UBT Group (merger or acquisition, or any other processes), it should change therefore its status, or mission, vision and adjust the whole set of documents.

- For its internal business results, the AC shows the non-legitimate calculations – for its number of its professors – 12, 15, 25 (in 2019, 2020, 2023 consecutive years), it shows the cumulative research of the whole academic staff of the UBT (without indicating the number of professors) thus, providing the number of staff publications – from 253 (which is resulted for 21 publications in average per 12 professors in 2019, if the ET follows this wrong logic) - 422 (28 publications in 2020) – 987 (40 publications in 2023) as well as their citation rates: 1860 - 4876 - 9752 for 2019-2020-2023 planning years. This calculation – how many professors produce this number of citations, and for which time is not shown).

The ET makes conclusion that these numbers taken from the AC indicators' framework 2020-2023 (p. 22) need some explanation to understand the trends, and some indicators - are not quite legitimate here, because it provides the number of publications/citations of all professors of the UBT staff (with the numerous number of colleges) for the single college of the AC (with its 12 professors).

There is an observation made during the online discussion that the number of the AC's full-time professors have been mentioned 3 times - 12 professors, then 9 and then 6 full-time's professors, and another 3 or 6 professors are working on a part-time basis. It makes the above-mentioned numbers even more unreliable.

The decision-making and election's sections with responsibilities in the AC (standards 2.6, 2.7 and 2.8) are explained in the SER by the availability of a bodies – Steering Council (governing Board – in the SER), Academic Council, and the Dean of College with the functions determined by its Statute (in its article 31, p. 8). There are some deficiencies in their titles (Steering Council – in the Statute) and in the SER (Governing Board).

There are the discrepancies between the Self-Assessment Report and the Statute of “Arbëri College”. As far as the standard 2.6 is concerned, for instance, there are the following illustrated discrepancies:

In the Statute (31 article), it is indicated that the Steering Council is the main governing bodies, which includes 7 members:

2 members – elected by founders, 3 – by Academic Council, 1 – by Students' Union, and 1 – by the Commission of Research.



In the SER (p. 24), it is pointed out that the Governing Board that is the principal policy maker, and it consists of 5 members:

- Founder
- 3 staff members
- Student representatives

The AC does not include any members of the UBT yet, and therefore the ET has uncertainties about the process of the decision making from the sides of two constituencies when there is possible conflict of interests. As far as the publication in institutional regulations, the AC provided the additional documentation requested.

As far as the student representatives are concerned, (2.9), the SER provides the information, that the institution is not involved in the process of electing students, and the other relevant information. It has some deficiencies in the information about the differences between decisional, executive and consultative bodies for students. During the online discussions the ET also made observation:

- there were majority of students- representatives mainly from the law faculty, thus, providing the homogeneous environment. In the notes of the ET, we observed 6 students of law – two of them are from the 4th year of study, one – from the 2016 year (entrance), and the fourth is also a law student, the 5th student is from Economics, and the 6th one from Management tracks. (According to the list of the present students, there are 3 students of Law according to the information provided by the AC).

Standard 2.10 and 2.11 related to administration, - the Statute provides the description for the position of the Dean. It is defined in the Statute and it also clearly defined on the submitted document as of 01.10.2018 for the Dean vacancy.

Therefore, the level of compliance per sub-standards is like this:

Standard 2.1 – 1 (2023, draft, but the ET thinks that it is in the drafted form, and not in the form of the final version approved; discrepancies with other documents)

Standard 2.2 - 1 (in consultation, but there is no evidence in the SER, who directly participated in it)

Standard 2.3 – 1 (partial adoption”, risks are listed but not evaluated, the SER does not provide any measures which areas have been adopted).

Standard 2.4 – 0 (It is missing)

Standard 2.5 - 0 (non-legitimate calculations)

Standard 2.6 – 1 (information is provided, discrepancies between the Statute and SER)

Standard 2.7 - 1 (information is provided, discrepancies between the Statute and SER)

Standard 2.8 – 1 (information is provided, discrepancies between the Statute and SER)

Standard 2.9 – 1 (students´representation)

Standard 2.10 – 2 (information is provided)

Standard 2.11 – 2 (information is provided)



Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Ensure that a final version of the strategic plan includes the correspondent changes either with 5 or nine key changes, the reflection of the EBT in its planning, governance and administration;*
2. *Revisit again the strategic planning checking the correspondence of all relevant documents including annual and longer-term budget. Each time the strategic plan is reviewed make sure that the relevant stakeholders are involved in the process;*
3. *Facilitate discussions inside the AC and outside (with the relevant stakeholders, including the UBT);*
4. *Provide measures for the areas of strategic planning that have been adopted, and how it was assessed before and after, in terms of measurable indicators and explanation;*
5. *Provide clear explanations for the indicators and their projections ensuring that they are appropriate for monitoring short-, medium- and long-term targets;*
6. *Draft the Annual report for the implementation of strategic plan as a working document with the notes and analysis;*
7. *Adjust the deficiencies in the documents in terms of the same titles;*
8. *Provide the clear indication of the AC without the UBT, or provide the clear perspectives for integration, measurable data and more explanation;*
9. *Clear up how these two constituencies the AC and the UBT will exist in the medium and long-term frame;*
10. *Make sure the election process for the members of the decision bodies are clear, transparent and published in institutional regulations;*
11. *Consider periodically checking the efficiency and effectiveness of the administrative staff, beyond the satisfaction surveys that are part of the QA system;*
12. *Explore strategic plan for the short-term and long-term time frame. The present Strategic plan mentions the long-term objective once (referring to the clusters with centres of research).*

2.3. Financial planning and management

The SER provides the ARBËRI Financial Outlook and Plan 2019-2023 with the projections from 2019 and 2020 till 2023 year.

The planning financial rise from 60.000 euro (2019) to 260.000 euro (2020) look quite optimistic, especially under the present circumstances.



The ET thinks that probably the AC used the optimistic scenario:

The ET looks at the 2019's numbers with 150 students (p. 23) and students' fees for the same 2019 in the amount of 60,000 Euro (p. 28) for 2019 and it is **400 euro** per student (according to calculation of the ET). Therefore, 250 students for 2020, should bring roughly 100.000 Euro, but ARBËRI's Plan is targeted for 260.000 Euro. The ET was wondering, first of all, whether the projections for growth + **100 students** is realistic for 2020, and second, if it is realistic, probably it means that the fee will be raised from 400 till **1040** euro per student for all 250 students in 2020.

The ET thinks that the same logic was used for 2023 year for 430,000 euro for 350 students. The ET praises the efforts in support of students with disabilities, but it does not clearly see what are the particular actions have been organized by the AC to be able to attract those students to AC (e.g.: Plan to attract the students with special needs; by categories, etc.). The ET considered that some adjustments should be made for three types of scenario to have the realistic picture in mind.

Later on, the ET should note that it got the additional documents for its consideration, and in its Annual Financial and Business plan 2019-2023, the figure submitted for 2020 was more realistic – 200 students

The ET got the additional documents for its consideration (e.g.: 22 doc. "Expectation of the commitments of budget"), partly clarified also the situation:

the AC planned to have 2 study programmes in 2020 and the needed academic full time PhD staff would be increased) with 6 PhDs of the full-time academic staff. Also, the figure of 12 people of the teaching staff, was clarified: together with the part time and MSc staff the total number of teachers. However, the fee rates were still not explained.

The additional document – the Agreement between the UBT and the AC shows that the UBT brings its financial resources, infrastructure and involvement into the projects which provide more optimism in the matter of the financial sustainability of the AC.

For the financial planning, there are still some deviations in numbers for 2023 between the SER and Financial & Business plan 2019-2023 that can be traced. The financial office carries out the necessary projections and planning (standard 3.3), but the ET advices to check the financial documents before its submission that all correspond to each other. In terms of the oversight and monitoring the budget reports are based on certain indicators (3.4). The strategy, metrics and timeframe for 2020 is defined in one document, but in the document provided in



its exl. format – it remains empty. The SER plans expenditures (p. 30), and regarding its monitoring and its commitments (standard 3.4), there are deviations and small differences in numbers between other financial documents (Financial and Business plan 2019-2023).

The Accounting system should comply with accepted professional accounting standards, because it is the subject of external and internal audit and other regular examinations (3.5 standard).

The ET also got the response to the first version of this document from the Arberi College:

“when we have provided to ET additional documents with the explanatory document we have corrected and revised the deviation which was a result of technical issues (typo) in the document provided to ET when the year 2022 was erased which consequently deteriorated financial planning in SER. We have made the necessary corrections. Having corrected this technical issue resulted that Standard 3.1;3.2;3.3;3.4;3.5 are fully compliant”

The response of Arberi College on Financial and business plan was the following:

“We agree with recommendation and importance harmonizing all the documents in regard financial & business plan. With revised version we consider that have removed inconsistencies from SER and Financial & Business plan 2019-2023 and other financial documents”.

Therefore, the compliance level for each of the sub-standards of this general area look like this:
Standard 3.1 – 1 (sufficiency of financial resources);

Standard 3.2 – 1 (it provides budget and 3 years budget, some numbers are different – for financial sustainability – for its number of students (2020: differences 250 and 200 students – in the documents mentioned above)

Standard 3.3 – 1 (deviations in numbers for 2023 between the SER and Financial & Business plan 2019-2023)

Standard 3.4 – 1 (some traceable differences between documents)

Standard 3.5 – 1 (still some insignificant differences in numbers and projections remain).

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Provide clear evidence or adequate analysis for the projections of growth in no. of students, fees, etc. making sure that there are sufficient resources to carry out the objectives;*



2. *Project the sustainability of the institution budget based on the realistic figures constantly projecting a three-years budget. Consider securing risk assessment policies and alternative sources of funding;*
3. *Remove deviations and inconsistencies in numbers for the year of 2023 between the SER and Financial & Business plan 2019-2023 and other financial documents. Consider improving the monitoring system of the expenditures of the college;*
4. *Provide the evidence that some special planning or particular actions have been organized by the AC to be able to attract the students with special needs to AC (e.g.: Plan to attract the students with special needs; by categories, etc.);*
5. *Budget planning should include priorities in line with the strategic objectives of the institution and be discussed with the academic community. Consider the potential implications over the budget planning of the collaboration with the UBT Group.*

2.4. Academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability

The university has adopted a Code of Ethics in November, 2019. And in concerns “academic staff, students and contractors” (Code of Ethics, p. 2) – all referred to as academic community. ET assumes that the ‘contractors’ are administrative staff of the College. The document defines main principles of ethics behavior and provides few examples for each. These principles are integrity, cooperation, responsibility (over ones actions), promoting knowledge as a value, and academic freedom. The matters of anticorruption are addressed under the principle of integrity, and respect to diversity – under the principle of academic freedom. The document does not distinguish the differences on how these principles may apply to academic, administrative and student body of the College (perhaps only at one occasion, p. 3). Principles such as plagiarism is not mentioned in the Code of *ethics*. *ET recommends to address plagiarism in the Code of Ethics and distinguish different ways in which each principle applies to administrative staff, academic staff and students, respectively.*

It is hard to discuss whether academic community acts in accordance with the Code of Ethics of the College, as the report of the Ethics Commission is not yet available. The interviews clarified that staff members had some understanding of the ethic’s principles. There is no evidence that some effort is made to disseminate information about these principles among the academic community. For instance, students have not had much of awareness building on anti-plagiarism or other matters.

The code of ethics determines the Ethics Commission to be the decision-making body, which comprises of five members – three teaching staff, one administrative staff and one student. It is worth mentioning that the SER provides inaccurate information in this regard and refers to the 6-member committee, instead of a 5-member committee, with 3 academic staff



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representatives, 2 of administrative staff and 1 student representative (SER, p.31). The Ethics Commission has a two-year term. Code of Ethics also mentions Faculty Ethics Sub-commissions. Those are created by the Commission. Sub-commissions have three members, including a student. It is unclear, how are the members selected.

According to the Code of Ethics, the Ethics Commission can propose amendments to the Code of Ethics. However, it is unclear, whom does it propose these amendments to and also, it is not transparent, how does the Commission collect the evidence that could lead to amendments. The document only states that the Sub-committees make suggestions to the Commission. But then, again, what are these supposed changes based on, is unclear. *ET advises that the procedures for this kind of decision making is formalized, made transparent and easily accessible.*

The Commission also discusses the reported cases of violations, which is submitted to them by the Sub-commission at the Faculty level. However, it is unclear, how those violations are reported at the faculty level, at the first place, or what is the time-limit of reacting on the reported violation, etc. In other words, there is no procedure for reporting and processing the violation of ethical norms. *ET advises that the procedure is put in place.*

It is mentioned in the Ethics Code that the Commission solicits the annual report for the Academic Council. In the same manner, it is stated that it is the Sub-commission that solicits the report to the Academic Council. *ET recommends that the chain of reporting is streamlined, formalized and made transparent.*

It is worth highlighting that according to the Code of Ethics of the university, unanimous reports on violations of ethical conduct are not taken into consideration. However, the reporter may request to stay unanimous, in which case the Commission will consider this request. This is a good way not to discourage reporting of ethical violations, however, in the small community like the College, for the reporter to remain unanimous after requesting the anonymity, might be extremely difficult (given the fact that the reporting goes through sub-commission of three members and then is submitted to the Commission of 5 members. For instance, with the full-time academic staff of 6, 3 of them will be part of these commissions. If the reporting is not anonymous, this a priori prevents academic staff to report any misconduct of their colleagues. This is also sensitive for the students). *Therefore, ET suggests that the College re-visits this regulation.*

There is no evidence that the Code of Ethics is being practiced in any manner in the College. During the interviews, academic staff representatives mentioned that there have been several



cases of student's misconduct, which was taken to the Ethics Commission. However, the reports or decisions for the corresponding cases are not available, also, the information was not confirmed by the student representatives. *Hence standards 4.5 is also not met.*

Arberi College's operation is not fully transparent or accessible to its stakeholders. The web-site, higher education institution's most efficient communication medium is hardly operational. Key information, whether those are governing regulations, procedures or QA reports, are unavailable. Information about their programs is also hard to find. Information about academic staff (only the list of their names is provided on the web-site), academic schedule are also hard to locate. Same goes for the information about research collaboration. ET needs to highlight here, that the College management's claim that the institution is now part of the common UBT umbrella, hence most of the rules, regulations and other key information is "shared" by the college, is considered irrelevant, as Arberi College represents a legally independent entity. And as an independent entity, which is also something that the College representatives have claimed repeatedly, it does not meet the standard 4.6.

Therefore, the compliance level per sub-standards looks like this

Standard 4.1. – 1

Standard 4.2. – 1

Standard 4.3. – 1

Standard 4.4. – 2

Standard 4.5 – 0

Standard 4.6. – 0

Compliance level for general area 4: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. ET recommends to address plagiarism in the Code of Ethics and distinguish different ways in which each principle applies to administrative staff, academic staff and students, respectively;*
- 2. ET advises that the procedures for this kind of decision making is formalized, made transparent and easily accessible;*
- 3. The chain of reporting between the sub-commission, ethics commission, academic council, needs to be streamlined, formalized and made transparent;*
- 4. Relevant procedures to guide the ethical misconduct has to be put in place;*
- 5. Keep record of the decision/making processes with regards to the ethical misconduct;*
- 6. Create effective accountability system and make College's work transparent, let the web-site contain all up-to-date, relevant information for all stakeholders.*



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2.5. Quality management

The College claims that it strives at creating quality culture. QA documents are not publicly available. In SER, it is mentioned that after joining the UBT group, the College gained special interest towards quality of education and operation. It is highlighted that the UBT itself has ISO 9001 and is a member of EFQM and the college mentioned that their main focus for the last two years was to harmonise their regulations with those of the UBT Group. However, the evidence of ongoing process of harmonisation of the Arberi College operations with that of the UBT, was hard to identify. During the virtual site-visit, college management and QA representatives explained that the cooperation with the UBT larger family has just started, justifying by this the lack of evidence. In addition, QA plan of 2020 that was later presented to the ET lays out extensive work ahead of the College to establish the QA mechanisms in the College, and everything – 1 specific objective with 6 broad activities – to be completed by October 2020. ET is sceptical that the College is on its way to accomplish these plans, as officially, it joined the UBT in 2018, hence there would have been enough time for the College to accumulate some evidence with regards to the QA in learning or other areas, which would correspond to their bold statements about harmonisation.

There is a slight confusion in terms of quality procedures and documents connected with the QA system. From what the ET understood: the quality manual of the College was adopted in late 2018. Quality Policy is a separate document, but it is also part of the Manual. In fact, apart from the first few pages, QA Manual largely repeats the Quality Policy document. The document in its entirety covers certain principles of the QA, in general, however it is not always linked with the College and its operations. QA processes and their corresponding procedures are not part of the Manual, at least, the information that is provided is inconsistent, hard to follow and does not provide guidance for action. QA instruments are not identified, perhaps only one method of data collection is proposed, which is student surveys. These are actually student satisfaction surveys, which are supposed to happen on the semester bases (QA manual, p. 15). Interestingly, the Manual mentions that all academic units are free to choose the assessment mechanism according to their specifics. The statement is confusing, as the College runs only two programs in Management, Business and Economics, which is run by just one academic unit. ET assumes that the document is again referring to the UBT academic units rather than the Arberi College units and has yet to be adapted to the AC context. The Manual also identifies teaching assessment questionnaires, however it is unclear, and whom are QA representatives gathering the information from? (QA Manual, p. 16), Self-Assessment is also identified as one of the QA instruments, however it is unclear, to whom are these self-assessment reports presented to?

The document labelled “Quality manual procedures and evaluation mechanisms” does not provide QA procedures, but only reiterates main QA bodies in the College and lists the types of documents/reports/assessments that need to be produced if and when the QA cycle works. The document is incoherent, the information it contains hardly corresponds to the titles of the chapters in the document. For instance, Chapter 6.3. Follow-up procedures and use of evaluation results simply reiterated the importance of assessment processes in the higher education institution.



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Given the analysis above, *the 5.1. is not met*. And given the fact that there is hardly any procedures that the academic or administrative staff can follow to ensure quality in the institution, it is hardly feasible that the QA matters are integrated in the everyday operation of the institution. *Hence, 5.4. is also not met*.

ET recommends that the College develops coherent documents for the QA, followed up with relevant instructions, procedures, QA mechanisms, reporting chain, and alike and enforce it diligently.

The QA manual identifies several units that are designated specifically for the QA. Such as Commission for Quality Assurance – a decision making body, its supporting units are QA teams from faculties and institutions (however, it is unclear which institutions does the documents refer to) (QA Manual, p. 10). The QA commission has five members, one of them being a student. However, ET could not locate formal documents to confirm the establishment of any of these abovementioned QA units. Page 6 of the same document mentions the establishment of the QA Office as well. It is unclear how QA Commission, QA teams and the QA unit are interrelated. It should also be mentioned, that the SER provides a different kind of information, where it identifies only two units for the QA – QA Officer and the QA Committee, however there is not mention of the QA teams (SER, p. 35). So far, the evidence that the ET was provided with, it is a Quality Officer that manages the QA matters. As it was discussed above extensively, the QA processes have not become operational yet. It is unclear, where the QA units – QA Office, Commission and QA teams have had official meetings over the course of the past years. There is no evidence to support this. There is no evidence of assessment reports, or the evidence that the assessment results were used for improvement in any manner. Hence standards 5.3, 5.5, 5.12 and 5.13 are not met. *ET recommends to put the QA mechanisms in practice and start collecting evidence, produce analytical reports based on the collected evidence and devise strategies/plans on how to incorporate the results into the next years of improvement.*

In the SER, the college lists several QA instruments, which cover different aspects of the institution's operation. This is done in an attempt to provide information on inputs, process and outputs assessment within the framework of the internal QA. SER lists 9 instruments, starting with the “procedures for design and approval of the programmes, subjects and modules” (SER, p.36), all the way to the “procedures for evaluation of public information” (SER, p. 39). ET could locate only two out of these 9 mechanisms – procedures for the design and approval for the programs and procedures for programme evaluation (even these are not separate procedures but descriptions are provided in the QA Manual). Again, evidence that even these two procedures are put in practice is hard to find. Also, there is no provision to ensure regular assessment of the QA mechanisms and no evidence that this type of assessment has yet taken place. Hence standard 5.14 is also not met.

Finally, one mention is due: though the discussions during the online site-visit were informative, the ET rarely got clear-cut answers to our questions. Nevertheless, it is the duty of the ET to check that the formally adopted documents of the evaluated institution are reflecting the practices and understanding



of principles by the community, and as shown above had the unpleasant surprise to see that the formal documents of the college did not reflect the QA process as well as they seemed to be understood by the representative of the QA management structure present at the discussion.

Therefore, *the ET recommends to completely review and re-establish the QA system in the college. What is evident now, the QA system exists only virtually, and still with visible discrepancies. The QA system has to serve the College, hence it has to be feasible and not create unnecessary organizational units, paperwork, and unnecessary amount of data.*

Therefore, the compliance level per substandards of general area no. 5 looks like this:

- Standard 5.1. – 0
- Standard 5.2. – 1
- Standard 5.3. – 0
- Standard 5.4. – 0
- Standard 5.5. – 0
- Standard 5.6. – 0
- Standard 5.7. – no evidence to base the assessment on
- Standard 5.8. – 2
- Standard 5.9. – 2
- Standard 5.10. – 1
- Standard 5.12 – 0
- Standard 5.13 – 0
- Standard 5.14 – 0

Compliance level: not compliant

ET recommendations:

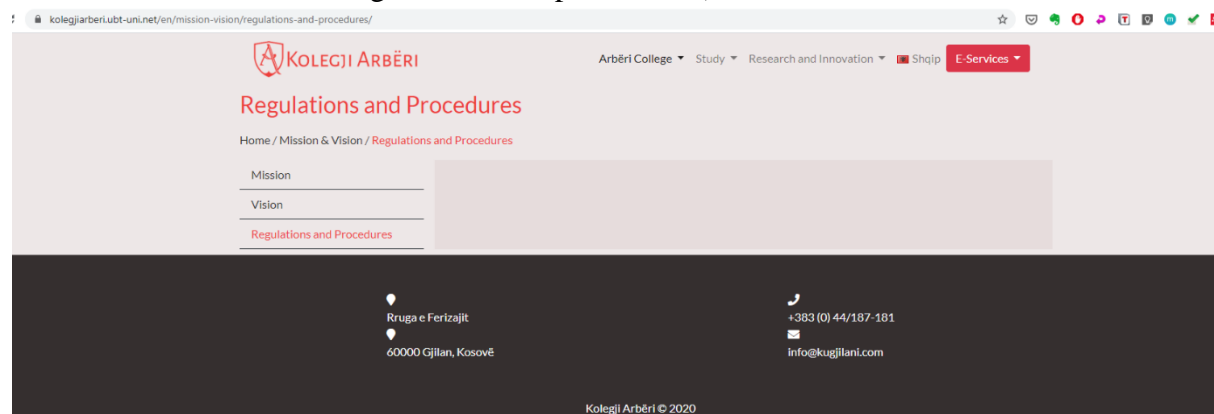
The ET recommends to completely review and re-establish the QA system in the college going through all the KAA manual standards of the section 5. What is evident now, the QA system exists only virtually, and still with visible discrepancies. The QA system has to serve the College, hence it has to be feasible and not create unnecessary organizational units, paperwork, and unnecessary amount data. The revision should follow each point of section 2.5 of the KAA manual (dedicated to the QA), involve all members of the community and include clear procedures for monitoring and evaluating every aspect of the college life (including the activity of the QA structures). Once the instruments are developed, the elaborated reports should be published online (making sure that the personal data are adequately protected). The instruments mentioned here could comprise of satisfaction/feedback surveys but also other types of data collected from the administrative services.



2.6. Learning and teaching

Arberi College offers two Bachelors and one Masters Programmes. These are degrees in Management, Banking, Finance and Accounting (both, Bachelor and Master levels) and in General Law (BS). The SER states that those correspond with the Higher Educating Law of Kosovo and National Qualifications Framework. Previous program accreditation are the proof that system-wide regulations are followed (p. 6).

The SER mentions that the College has adopted the University level Regulation on Bachelor and Master Studies but these documents were not provided to the ET to evaluate them. Moreover, they are not yet accessible on the College's web-site in the dedicated section. Though the description in the SER and the one offered during the online discussion are valuable, the institution needs to have a formally adopted document (for standard 6.1). If the college already has them, as mentioned, they should make them publicly available. They are not yet accessible on the College's web-site in the dedicated section (<https://kolegjiarberi.ubt-uni.net/en/mission-vision/regulations-and-procedures/>). The ET includes this evidence.



There is some information about the study programs in the Statute. For instance, the Statute states that the curriculum describes requisites for completion of a program (article 73), article 74 mentions 3 criteria, which should be met by each program:

1. Contemporary and oriented on students' opportunities;
2. Comparable to other higher education institutions' (programs) abroad
3. Comply with the standards set by the Ministry of Education and in accordance to the intentional standards.



Firstly, these are broad and even vague criteria to guide program development or assessment, for that matter. Secondly, it is unclear, whether these are the criteria for development or assessment of the study programmes. Lastly, no mechanisms of developing or assessing the program are provided in the same document. The ET understands the political context of Kosovo and how the statute is a document approved by MEST, thus more difficult to periodically review and change, but feels that the aspects mentioned above could be better reflected in the documents subsequent to the Statute.

During the interviews, academic staff explained that the program development process consists of several milestones: first is the signal from the market, that there is a need for a certain type of expertise. According to this external impulse, faculty discusses the possibility to develop a program. Then the programmes developed and presented to the academic council for approval. The ET was not able to verify this as there is no procedure that corresponds to this information only a description of the process in SER 2.6.2 – since the SER is not a document to be followed by the entire community, it cannot substitute a formally adopted procedure/regulation.

ET recommends that the college further develops the Bachelor and Master Degree regulations so that all the details of study program development, implementation and assessment will be spelled out there. Respective procedures should also be elaborated, in order to ensure smooth execution of the principles laid out in the abovementioned regulations. The next step, would be for the college to monitor the implementation of these regulations (as requested by standard 6.1)

QA instruments were discussed in section 5 of this report, but the ET underlines the importance of considering a comparison between the study programmes, when this is relevant (standard 6.2).

Academic degrees that are offered in the College are Science degrees, i.e. Bachelor of Science and Master of Science. College management was not able to clearly explain, what was their reason, as Business and Law are not the areas where scientific degrees are granted simply because of the nature of these disciplines. Rather the contrary, usually it is the degree in arts – bachelors and masters of Arts – that are granted in social sciences, such as economics and law. *ET recommends, the College puts more effort in identifying, what is the accurate and more professional way of structuring and then labeling their degree programmes.*

ET was not able to examine concrete course syllabi or program curriculums, as those were not available online and were not provided by the College. Two documents that were provided – Teaching and Learning plan and Schedule of Students – are identical and provide an academic schedule for the students. However, even in this case, it is unclear, which program and which



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courses are offered and when. The documents are incomplete, without labels. This leads to the conclusion that the learning delivery is not very well organized, nor on paper neither in reality. *ET advises that necessary documents are developed and made easily accessible for students and other stakeholders.*

According to the national legal framework, each study programme is designed in correlation with the National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area and, thus, they are defined in terms of learning outcomes. However, as mentioned before, the ET did not see a full-package of documents linked to a study programme - besides the syllabus they are not available on the college website. The college has an ECTS system implemented and each discipline has a number of credits allocated, based on the workload corresponding to the successful promotion of the exam.

Exams are regulated in the internal regulations of the college. The ET recommends the college to develop mechanisms to ensure that the assessment methods used by the faculty for student evaluation measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes (standard 6.6) and that they are used transparently, and uniformly to all students. This way, the college can ensure that the assessment methods are coherent within the study program.

Teaching staff are selected and hired based on a transparent open competition and they benefit from an introduction workshop dedicated to new staff. The students declared during the online discussions that they were satisfied with their relationship with their teachers. However, more can be done to ensure that the teaching staff receive the continuous training they need in order to constantly improve their teaching strategies and competencies. The college provided a „Staff training plan” but this seemed more like a list of the trainings already provided by the college and not a plan for the future. Creating Staff Development Plans is listed as one of the activities under the Annual Development Plan 2020, Component III, Goal 1, Activity 3.6. the ‘metrics’ (indicator) for this activity is identified as – “40% (of academic staff) hold doctoral preparation” (p. 3), timeframe – January 2020. This can be considered as the institution’s attempt to institutionalise faculty development processes, which ET is taking into account. However, the evidence whether the College has reached the 40% threshold or what were the measure to reach this result, were not found. The ET praises the collaboration with external institutions like the European Commission for providing these trainings, and underlines the importance of continuing these efforts. Since „Academic excellence” is a strategic goal for the institution, creating / permanently updating a staff development plan based on the needs of the faculty and allocating the appropriate resources can ensure the college that the teaching strategies are adapted to the different learning needs of students, thus a student-centered approach to teaching and learning (standards 6.7 and 6.8). Such a plan should include SMART



objectives with specific targets as well as a calendar of the activities operationalizing these targets. Instruments for the evaluation of the quality of teaching were discussed within the section 5 of this report.

Therefore, the compliance level per sub-criteria looks like this:

Standard 6.1. - 1
Standard 6.2. - 0
Standard 6.3. - 0
Standard 6.4 - 1
Standard 6.5. - 1
Standard 6.6. - 1
Standard 6.7. - 2
Standard 6.8. - 1
Standard 6.9 - 1

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Report the extent to which the regulations on the organization of studies is implemented and followed by the academic community (by publishing on the website);*
- 2. Monitor and report on the way in which the procedures for proposing a new study program and for reviewing the existing study programmes are being respected.*
- 3. Continue the efforts of measuring the quality of the study programmes including by comparing them to one –another (when the college will offer more than one study programme);*
- 4. Monitor whether the exams are measuring the achievement of learning outcomes and whether they are implemented fairly for all students.*

2.7. Research

In its strategy, Arberi College identifies Development of research, innovation and business center's as one of its strategic goals with its corresponding activity of 'increasing research activity'. It is unclear, what does this entail. In terms of research funding, in its Annual financial and business plan, the institution planned to spend a bit over 10000 Euros of research in 2019, a considerable increase was projected for 2020, raising research funding to 61000 Euros. The projected amount increases to 89, 320 Euros in 2021, 126,250 Euros – in 2022 and 138,871 –



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in 2023. However, without a detailed explanation on what kind of activities will be covered by these funds, allocated sums over the course of the years remains abstract.

Arberi College identifies its research areas as management, technology, business, law and social sciences (SER, p. 53). With 6 (or 9. Different numbers have been provided during the interviews) permanent academic staff with the specialization mainly in management, economics and law. It is unclear, what kind of research do College representatives intend to peruse under the generic term of ‘technology’. In the SER, the research capacity of the UGT is presented as a research capacity of the College (SER, P. 53), which cannot be considered as an accurate information by the ET, as the College is an independent entity and is to be evaluated based on its capacity only.

The College has a research plan, although, it is not indicated, when was the document created. He document is rather a statement of the College about what it considers to be research, how research capacity of UBT is potentially helpful for the Arberi College and, lastly, it provides a list of possible titles for the research in the College. While this is somewhat informative document, this is not a research plan of the institution, as it does not provide the timeline, resource allocation possibilities, and other key elements, which would allow the research plan to be a working document fort the College.

Overall, it remains vague, how does the College approach research activity, what are its support strategies to the academic staff to be able to produce quality research output. Academic staff has to produce one research article per semester. However, there is no mechanism which monitores and takes relevant action if this requirement is not met. It has to be underlined that the benchmark of one academic paper per semester is highly optimistic calculation even for a large, well-funded and well established university. For a small college, this becomes an unrealistic task. As it was clarified during the interviews, academic staff is expected to devote 10 hours to research. However, it is not evident, how of the UBT and its Knowledge Centre to support research.

According to the Statute, the college has a Research and development office. The Office advises academic council on strategic issue with regard to research and also administers performance-based Research Fund. The evidence of Office’s operation was hard to identify as there is no report of its activities or no paperwork on how the Research Funds are being allocated.



Given all the above mentioned, ET recommends that a realistic and comprehensive document on the research has to be developed to guide institution's work in this area. Priorities need to be identified and resources specifically allocated. Progress has to be motored and academic staff support system developed accordingly.

Therefore, the compliance level per sub-criteria looks like this:

Standard 7.1. - 1

Standard 7.2. - 0

Standard 7.3 - 1

Standard 7.4. -0

Standard 7.5.- 0

Standard 7.6 - unclear, no sufficient evidence provided

Standard 7.7. - 0

Compliance level: not compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. ET recommends that a realistic and comprehensive document on the research has to be developed to guide institution's work in this area. Priorities need to be identified and resources specifically allocated. Progress has to be motored and academic staff support system developed accordingly*

2.8. Staff, employment processes and professional development

The Arberi College has also addressed the challenges of Kosovo society, including the high unemployment's issues, in particular, the unemployment rate among women, promoting policy reforms. The SER (p. 69) addresses the challenge:

«Unemployment levels among women are in the margin of 80 % while unemployment among youth is 63%. ARBËRI has attempted to address this challenge by instituting a number of initiatives: promote policy reforms to incentivise women employment, awareness raising and increase the women workforce at ARBËRI. The female participation rate in the labour market is only 12.7 % (KAS, 2019). The female participation rate in the government sector is with a quota at 30 %».

As the ET considers that the AC is addressing these challenges under a positive impact of the UBT Group's staff community, which embraces 730 teachers, researchers and administrative support staff and address Kosovo social and society's changes.



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In addition to the SER, there are the additional policies and regulations of the AC provided. At this stage, there is no the document that would refer to the Employment handbook or Manual.

The AC made the reference to the “Regulation on Labor relations and responsibilities for working duties”, but the ET refers to the Employment handbook or Manual, and it does not refer to the Regulations, which are the rules authorized by the legislation.

Under the Employment handbook, the ET means the internal document that all employees of the AC should receive on their first day, which usually includes not only responsibilities and obligations (like in the Regulations), but the recruitment, supervision, performance evaluation, processes, support, and the issues of the professional development, criteria for appointments, election of candidates (with the number of points for each criteria, and so on.) and many others.

The Statute and the document „Quality Manual and evaluation mechanism” formally address the issues of professional development and evaluation, but they are not really addressed properly (please, check the QA section for more details and recommendations).

As far 8.3 standard, in addition to the SER; there is also additional document “*Job description procedures and samples*” that includes the samples job description for academic and non-academic staff, and the example of the Dean position’s description is provided. The AC provides two strategies for recruitment - with the best profile of the new staff at the entry, and upgrading skills and competencies through the job analysis. There is a good ground for well-planned functional, individual plans and the Staff Development Plan. The Staff Development Plan describes the skills of each staff member, and the additional document - Staff Training Plan includes the various 11 types of trainings from 6 up to 120 training hours distributed for each individual staff members. It is written that the staff has a positive feedback for the programme. However, it is a list of the trainings already provided by the college , but it is not a Plan for the future.

The vacancies’ description are provided with the conditions of employment. An orientation programme for the new staff includes the so-called «induction session» delivered by Dean. The new staff receive general and programme-specific information during this session with a timetable. The SER does not specify the ratio of students per full time staff member, it just makes reference that it „is equitable, reasonable and safe”. The Dean ensures that mechanisms for the allocation of workloads are approved and implemented by each Faculty.

Quality Policy (as of 16.10.2018) formally includes how to assess, self-evaluation, as well as peer-assessment, students’ assessment and assessment by former students (articles of 4 and 5 of Quality policy includes what and how should be assessed, and article 10 includes the self-assessment), but the ET recommended to re-establish the QA system in the college - the QA



system exists only virtually, and still with visible discrepancies (please, see 2.5 Quality Management). The ET thinks that research is going to be assessed under the Academic information sources, but it is not sure about it.

The ET agrees that the staff is provided with the opportunities for the personal and career development based on the additionally submitted documents to the ET, but they all have some fragmented pieces, and not united into the comprehensive policy. However, the ET is uncertain about the publicly available documents, because the provided web-site reflect the joined sessions between the AC and UBT, but not the regulation documents. In the case of complaints about staff skills, the SER refers to Individual Improvement Plans focusing on didactics, research and technical skills that provide the areas of improvement. The Individual Improvement Plans should be included into the general Employment Manual which is recommended to be developed as a one document with the references on didactics, research and technical skills' improvement.

The AC provided CV of the teaching staff (8.6) and those involved into the online meeting, the ET consider the staff is professional one and meet all requirements, and it has a satisfactory opinion about the staff development as well. The AC provides the Questionnaire samples used for the evaluation procedures. The web-site does not provide the evaluation results which could be publicly available. The ET also refers to the section 2.5 on Quality Management, that "Quality manual procedures and evaluation mechanisms" does not provide QA procedures, but only reiterates main QA bodies. The document is incoherent, the information it contains hardly corresponds to the titles of the chapters in the document (use of evaluation results simply reiterated the importance of assessment processes).

As far as the 8.9-8.11, the AC provides the plan for its staff professional development, and provide the fair opportunities for professional development.

The ET would like to note, *first, it recommends* to include the Employment Manual. In addition, the regulations *do not quite reflect the current processes* of the incorporation with the UBT, and the set of documents looks like the independent set of regulations of the AC – there is no any future perspectives described what would happen to staff, employment and the AC development under the UBT umbrella. Third, the SER *advises to include* the ratio of students per full staff member. Fourth, the ET recommend to include the final versions of the approved documents and regulations on its web-site making it publicly available. Fifth, it recommends to explore the part related to the areas of improvement and the part related to the research qualification in the Employment Manual. The training part reflects the evidence that corresponding skills in research are on the way to improvement (e.g.: in SPSS programme).



- Standard 8.1 – 1 (Employment manual is not developed, but other docs. are provided)
- Standard 8.2 - 1
- Standard 8.3 – 1
- Standard 8.4 – 1
- Standard 8.5 – 1 (ratio is not provided, but the present ration is reasonable with 12 teachers of academic staff)
- Standard 8.6 – 2
- Standard 8.7 – 1 (Staff Employment)
- Standard 8.8 – 1 (evaluation is not publicly available)
- Standard 8.9 – 1 (doc. – provided for evidence)
- Standard 8.10 -2
- Standard 8.11 -2

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Include the necessary documents into one Employment Manual and explore the part related to the areas of improvement;*
2. *Provide some future prospective for staff under the UBT umbrella;*
3. *Provide the ratio of students per full staff member;*
4. *Include the final versions of the approved documents and regulations on its web-site making it publicly available;*
5. *Explore and the part related to the research qualification in the Employment Manual*

2.9. Student administration and support services

The college has an Academic Council Regulation on Undergraduate and Graduate Admission that regulates admission which includes an entrance examination. Admissions requirements are specified and appropriate for the institution, but it is difficult to assess whether they are applied consistently and fairly to all potential students since the ET could not check it on the website of the college. The ET recommends that the criteria for admission and the general admission requirements should be published online, on the college website in due time before the admission exam takes place so that interested potential future students can prepare for this. For example, Arberi college could publish these details in spring – some six months in advance



of the admission procedure – even if the exact calendar and number of available places can only be announced after the KAA accreditation announcement.

The SER mentions some contradictory information at page 78: „Matura exam certificate (that they have passed the exam) have the right to enroll in the programme. Only students that have completed at least two years of prior education at upper secondary school level will be considered for admission” but this was cleared during the online interviews: only those highschool graduates with a Matura diplome can enroll in the programs offered by Arberi College.

The college does not have a stand – alone webpage. There is a section dedicated to the college on the UBT group page, but with little reference to the Arberi college. The ET recommends the college to develop a website of their own that would present details about the programmes and courses offered, programmes requirements, services, scholarships, tuition fees etc.

An orientation session is organized before the beginning of the year. During this session the Dean presents general information about the college, its programmes and the library facilities. The orientation session is completed by a Student Handbook that it is offered in the online version to students through the Student Portal – according to the SER. The ET reviewed the student handbook and it is comprehensive and seems to have relevant information. The handbook is annually reviewed in order to update its content. We recommend the college to also constantly improve and update the content presented during the orientation session, in close connection with the student organizations, so that it best responds to new students needs. The college offers student learning support, a tutoring system

A range of scholarships and financial support is offered by the college both based on performance criteria and as a financial support to social cases – for example: „*Students with limited economic means but that have demonstrated high success during their studies will profit from partial exemption from tuition payment*” (SER, p. 83). Student fee discounts are offered to civil servants, students with remarkable results in highschool etc.

The college mentions that it collects and analyses information supportive of the continuous improvement of the programmes, as part of the QA processes. (SER, p.83) However, it is not very clear what type of information is collected and how often, nor does the SER refer to the way the collected data is protected – for example the personal data. More about the QA system of the college is detailed in section 5 of this report. The ET recommends that the college collects data about the profile of the student population, student progression, success and drop-out rates, learning resources and student support available, career paths of graduates etc. on a regular basis and uses this in the QA processes for constantly improving the programmes



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offered by the college. They should complement the student perception surveys already planned through the QA procedures.

The college has an appeal procedure in place. But it mentions that „The student can object to the grade awarded if he/she considers that the examination is not carried out in accordance with the Regulations and ARBËRI Statute.” (SER, p. 84). It should allow the student to also contest unfair grades and be published on the colleges’ website. During the online discussions, both students and academic staff members mentioned its existence, but when asked if there were any cases of students using this right very few could be remembered.

The college mentioned that they adopted a Code of Ethics and a Code of student conduct and there is an Ethics committee in place, but the latter was not provided as an annex to the SER. They both deal with „disruption of the academic and administrative activities of the institution, obstruction of other students and staff, use of violent and offensive behaviour, deception of dishonesty in relation to teaching staff, actions likely to cause injury or impair the safety of the College premises, sexual, religious or racial harassment and bullying.” (SER, p. 84), but not plagiarism. The SER mentions that students can face penalties like reprimand, suspension from studies and exclusion from the study programme in case of misconduct. More about these are detailed in section 4 of this report.

The college provides a series of student services, like a canteen (cafeteria) or tutoring system, but does not have a dormitory yet. The college provided to the ET a document entitled „student services plan” which was the student handbook instead of a vision on how student services will be developed on the short and long term. The current facilities and student services are periodically evaluated through the QA instruments, and the results of these perception surveys could be a good starting point for developing and constantly improving the current student services. At this point however it is not clear for the ET if the college offers academic counselling besides the tutoring system described in the SER, p. 86. The college has a Career office that is supposed to offer career planning services as well as guidance for employment, however it seemed to be rather unpopular among students, who mentioned they did not access its services. The Career Center provides weekly various professional trainings in soft skills for students. The ET recommends the college to develop such a plan and correlate it with the rest of the strategic plan of the college and thus allocate proper resources for its accomplishment. The plan could include actions for improving students access to these services.



Given the international epidemiologic context linked to the CoVid-19 pandemic and the decision of the KAA to organize the study visits online, there was a common understanding with the evaluated institutions that they provide a presentation video of the campus, in due time for the KAA representatives to be able to check it before submitting it for revision to the ET. The college has provided the ET with a video presenting the premises of the college which seemed clean, appropriate for teaching and learning and well-cared for. The ET members also found some photos on the website of the college, which seem to correspond to the submitted video. However, the video confusingly presented a section dedicated to what seemed to be medical training rooms. It is not clear for the ET how is this relevant for the study programmes that the college is offering.

The college mentioned a series of extracurricular activities that the students can access. However, students did not mention that most of their studying takes place at the end of the week or during weekdays evenings, thus one can estimate they don't have much time left for such activities. The college could transparentize the resources they make available to support such opportunities. The ET recommends that the college takes into account organizing curricular activities from Monday to Friday for the Bachelor programmes so that they encourage students to spend more time on campus and thus get more involved in the life of the institution. Students can be active reliable partners of the HEI if they are encouraged to do so.

In the end, the ET would like to mention that if the cooperation of the college with the UBT group intensifies, the institution should analyse and consider the potential ways in which the student administration and support services will be impacted. This collaboration offered the administrative staff of the AC the opportunity to participate free of charge in the UBT Professional school program for administrative assistance - which is appreciated as an opportunity for staff development. Such opportunities should be offered in the future also. The role of the college would be, in such a situation, to ensure that students are not negatively influenced by the collaboration, that their personal data is protected in the process and that there is little to no discontinuity in providing student services in case of a merge between the management systems used within the UBT group or transitioning to a common student services provision strategy.

Therefore, the compliance level per sub-criteria looks like this:

Standard 9.1 – 1

Standard 9.2 - 0



Standard 9.3 – 1
Standard 9.4 – 2
Standard 9.5 – 1
Standard 9.6 – 1
Standard 9.7 – 1
Standard 9.8 – 1
Standard 9.9 – 1
Standard 9.10 – 2
Standard 9.11 – 2
Standard 9.12 – 2

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Consider adopting a student services development plan that includes targets, a schedule and adequate resources;*
2. *Continue efforts – by becoming even more creative – to Increase popularity – and access to - of the student services available;*
3. *Increase transparency on the allocated resources for the extracurricular activities/opportunities for students (e.g. funds for voluntary work, different student clubs etc.) and the ways to access it;*
4. *Clarify the impact of the relationship with the UBT group upon the student administration and support services in terms of institutional procedures and services offered etc.*

2.10. Learning resources and facilities

„Due to the CoVid-19 situation and the KAA decision to organize the site-visit part of the external evaluation as a series of online interviews, the agreement with the evaluated institutions is that they provide a presentation video showing the premises of the campus. AC submitted such a video and after the verification of the KAA, it was forwarded to the ET which considered it, along with the mentions in the SER, for this section.” The provisions about the financial resources allocated for investments – including those for the acquisition of equipment relevant to the learning process – is discussed in the section 3 of this report. The ET considers important that the college allocates appropriate financial resources for these kind of



investments so that they support the meeting of the institutional strategic objectives – e.g. ensuring the quality of the teaching-learning process.

The college does have a library that provides books and learning materials in both Albanian and English during an extended schedule (Mo-Fri: 9.00 – 19.30 and on Saturdays from 9.00 – 14.00). Extra learning materials are provided to students online/electronically and students can also access all the UBT group libraries. The library and its connected facilities are annually reviewed to ensure that the library has adequate physical and online resources in accordance with the Library Development Plan (SER, p. 89) – however the ET was not presented with this plan. Therefore it is not clear whether the plan is internal or external – imposed by MEST or generated from the collaboration with the UBT Group members. The college should clarify this. The SER mentions that the facilities of the library meet the MEST requirements for adequate, clean and attractive learning space and the library uses an electronic system for managing the loans and returns.

The college provides access to electronic databases due to the collaboration with UBT Group – EBSCO, SAGE Library and JSTOE Journals were mentioned in the SER. However, they did not seem very popular among students or staff members. The ET recommends the college to intensify its efforts of encouraging its academic community to use these resources and to monitor how often they are used. For example, students could be encouraged to use them for fulfilling their duties (paper, thesis etc.). In order to increase access to these libraries – and indirectly to up-to-date, state-of-the-art research – the college should consider granting access from home via the institutional emails of all its students and faculty.

Therefore the compliance level per sub-criteria looks like this:

- Standard 10.1 – 1
- Standard 10.2 – 2
- Standard 10.3 – 2
- Standard 10.4 – 1
- Standard 10.5 – 1
- Standard 10.6 – 2
- Standard 10.7 – 2
- Standard 10.8 – 1
- Standard 10.9 – 0
- Standard 10.10 – 1
- Standard 10.11 – 1



Standard 10.12 – 1

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

3. *We recommend the college allocates adequate resources to the investments in facilities and learning materials in order to support the reach of the institutional strategical objectives of the institutions, linked to improving the Quality of the teaching and learning processes;*
4. *Provide access to online libraries/databasis of international journals via VPN and institutional email from home, to students and teachers;*
5. *Monitor and report on the usage of the college equipment in order to verify that it is used at its best;*
6. *Include in the staff development plan training opportunities developed with the IT structures of the college to continue to help the faculty to use the online instruments offered by the college.*

2.11 Institutional cooperation

Internationalization is very important for Arberi College as it is mentioned both in the SER, and during the online discussions with the management of the college. The institution is putting up efforts to support mobility of its students and staff, but also targets internationalization at home – for example by adapting its curriculum to the international relevant themes. The objectives in this area of activity are reflected in the College Strategy 2023 that makes the link between the intentions of the college in terms of internationalization and institutional cooperation, and improving the quality of the offered programmes. The appropriate resources should be allocated to actions lined to these strategic areas in order to meet the objectives. The college however does not mention in the SER having a Vice-rector / senior management responsible of this area, while from the online discussions it seemed like this area of responsibility is taken up and split between the president of the college, the dean and the QA responsible. Assigning an upper management responsible for this area – including monitoring the achievements in the field – would help the college easily follow its pre-set objectives.

The college already has different agreements and Memorandums of understanding with its international partners, but also with its local collaborators – the SER lists a total of 33 such



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agreements (p. 101). Some of them were operationalized in common projects with Arberi's college partners, but there is little information about the types of projects implemented and the role of the college in writing and implementing them.

As part of its internationalization efforts, Arberi College together with the UBT Group organized some international events – summer schools and conferences. However, a more transparent way of showing the role played by the college in organizing this, the share of costs between the two institutions and the way it benefited both parties. Nine such summer events were listed in the SER at page 102 with very diverse thematics ranging from Architecture to Nursing. In the opinion of the ET, the College should prioritize organising international events with relevance for the subject /research area of interest for the academic community of the college.

Organizing these events as well as signing agreements to organize mobility opportunities are proof of the college efforts to support and encourage their academic community members to become international visible and have an international experience. Some examples of mobilities with institutions from Canada are listed in the SER at page 102. However, more should be done to make more transparent the way in which resources for such experiences is allocated among faculty and students. Should this – participating in an international experience - be part of the performance evaluation of the staff and promotion criteria, this should be mentioned in the college's regulations and be clear for all the potential beneficiaries. The ET recommends that both engagement in international cooperations and contributions to the community should be included in promotion criteria and, thus, in staff performance evaluations.

Moreover, mechanisms established for supporting cooperation with international HEIs should be promoted so that they are known by all faculty members.

Besides the international cooperations, the college also encourages its staff to establish and be part of partnerships with local institutions and participate in forums in which community issues and plans for the community are discussed. The forms of encouragement that the college is practicing, should be institutionalised so that they are transparent and well-known to the academic community. This way they might become even more efficient. Moreover, the college should start inviting local employers and representatives of the local industries to be part of consultative bodies of the college, discuss future plans with them and review existing study programmes so that they become more and more relevant to the the labour market. Local professionals could be involved in teaching/lecturing – even for short term or as invited guests



– in order to even better improve the connection between theory and practice – which is something desired by the students and recommended by the alumni.

The online discussions with the alumni revealed that they have a good relation with the college and especially some faculty members, but that there is no institutional procedure of keeping in touch with alumni. Developing an Alumni association can help create the framework for maintaining a close connection with the college graduates and involve them in the future development of the institution and its programs, beyond the feedback surveys they already implemented. Such examples of involving graduates would be: involving them in fund-raising activities or in recruitment processes for potential new students or faculty members.

In conclusion, the efforts of the college are appreciated but they have to be intensified in the future. More transparency both regarding the already achieved objectives and the supporting mechanisms is required. And, last but not least, it is important for the college to clarify its relation with the UBT Group and the share of rights and responsibilities in terms of the efforts put towards internationalising the college, as the accreditation process has to be able to evaluate the resources allocated by the college and the returns it gets from this.

Therefore the compliance level per sub-criteria looks like this:

- Standard 11.1 – 2
- Standard 11.2 – 0
- Standard 11.3 – 2
- Standard 11.4 – 1
- Standard 11.5 – 1
- Standard 11.6 – 1
- Standard 11.7 – 1
- Standard 11.8 – 1
- Standard 11.9 – 2
- Standard 11.10 – 2
- Standard 11.11 – 0
- Standard 11.12 – 1

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:



1. *Develop institutional procedures for all the support mechanisms directed at developing international and local cooperation;*
2. *Increase transparency – both to the internal and external stakeholders- regarding the relation with the UBT group and the share of rights and responsibilities regarding the internationalisation efforts of the group members;*
3. *Consider rewarding staff members who get involved in international cooperations or at the level of the community by including this among the promotion criteria and thus among the performance evaluation criteria. Adequate financial support should be provided;*
4. *Both local industry representatives and graduates should be involved – formally invited to be part - in consultative bodies of the college and become part of the study program revision procedures.*

3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND JUDGEMENTS OF THE ET

The ET would like to note that the process of accreditation was carried out in the conditions of externalities of COVID-19, which went smoothly during the 21st of May, 2020 with no technical problems. The University organised all processes effectively, and also responded to the needs of the ET providing it with the additionally requested documentation.

The ET noticed the team's motivation and commitment to improving the college and offering qualitative educational processes in the region. However, the ET believes that the college should focus towards clarifying its status within the UBT group formally (if it is part of the UBT or just a collaborator) before submitting another request for evaluation.

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the Arberi College is *Partially compliant* with the standards included in the *KAA Accreditation manual* and, therefore, recommends *not to accredit* the institution.

4. APPENDICES (if available) – NA



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