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***UNIVERSITY “ISA BOLETINI” IN MITROVICA
FACULTY OF GEOSCIENCES***

GEOLOGY (BSc)

RE/ACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

March-April 2021, Kosovo



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | 2 |
| 1. INTRODUCTION | 3 |
| 1.1. Context | 3 |
| 1.2. Site visit schedule | 5 |
| 1.3. A brief overview of the institution and program under evaluation | 6 |
| 2. PROGRAM EVALUATION | 7 |
| 2.1. Mission, objectives and administration | 7 |
| 2.2. Quality management | 11 |
| 2.3. Academic staff | 17 |
| 2.4. Educational process content | 22 |
| 2.5. Students | 29 |
| 2.6. Research | 33 |
| 2.7. Infrastructure and resources | 39 |
| 3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET | 42 |
| 4. APPENDICES (<i>if available</i>) | 43 |

2



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Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: 25th February 2021

Expert Team (ET) members:

- *Dr. Bettie Higgs*
- *Marija Vasilevska, Student expert*

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- *Naim Gashi, KAA Director*
- *Shkelzen Gerxhaliu, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring*
- *Arianit Krasniqi, Senior Officer for Accreditation and Evaluation*
- *Ilirjane Ademaj Ahmeti, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring*
- *Leona Kovaci, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring*

Sources of information for the Report (including additional requested resources):

- *Self-Evaluation Report, Geology BSc*
- *Video submitted by the Faculty presenting its facilities*
- *Syllabuses*
- *Staff CVs*
- *Regulations of UIBM and FG:*
 - *Decision on the formation of the working team for the review of the SER*
 - *Statute, Strategic Plan and the Code of Ethics*
 - *Package of Quality Measurement Instruments*
 - *Summary report on questionnaire realized with Alumni*
 - *Summary report with external stakeholders*
 - *Form of self-assessment instrument completed*
 - *Summary report on the self-assessment of the academic staff 2020*



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Kosovo Accreditation Agency

- *Agenda of training sessions*
- *Regulation of the QA and evaluation at the University of Mitrovica*
- *Annual Report 2019-FG*
- *Strategic Plan of University of Mitrovica Isa Boletini 2019-2021*
- *Summary report from assessments*
- *Vacancy announcement for staff engagement 2020-2021*
- *Minutes of training sessions on methodology of teaching-first day*
- *National qualification framework handbook 2020*
- *European qualification framework*
- *ECTS user guide*
- *Training Agenda on drafting syllabus*
- *QA Office work plan 2020*
- *Minutes of meetings of quality officials*
- *Decision for the study commission in FG*
- *Regulation on the procedures and criteria of promotion and selection and appointment of academic staff UMIB*
- *Regulation on internal organization and systematization of jobs at UMIB*
- *UIBM Internal Regulations. Recruitment-appointment of candidates*
- *Human Resources Handbook*
- *Work Contract*
- *The list of cooperation agreements*
- *FG-Regulation for bachelor study*
- *Minutes of meetings with working group for drafting the SER*
- *Regulation on internalization and mobility*
- *Decision on approval of the regulation on the establishment of the institute*
- *Conference 2020- Proceedings IMGCC 2020*
- *Regulation on the UMIB Library*
- *Students` enrolment 2017-2019*
- *Sample of meeting of department*
- *Sample and meeting minutes*
- *Additional documents required by the ET*



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- 07.09.2020 Board Industrial meeting

Criteria used for program evaluation:

- Standards & performance indicators for external evaluation according to the Accreditation Manual of KAA, July 2018.

1.2. Site visit schedule

Site Visit Program

25th of February

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| 09.00 – 09.40 | Meeting with the management of the faculty where the programme is integrated (<i>no slide presentation is allowed, the meeting is intended as a free discussion and this applies for each session</i>) |
| 09.45 – 11.45 | Meeting with the heads of the study programme (Geology, BSc, and Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology, MSc) |
| 11.50 – 12.30 | Lunch break |
| 12.30 – 13.20 | Meeting with quality assurance representatives |
| 13.25 – 14.15 | Meeting with teaching staff |
| 14.20 – 15.00 | Meeting with students |
| 15.05 – 15.45 | Meeting with graduates (Alumni) |
| 15.50 – 16.30 | Meeting with employers of graduates |
| 16.30 – 16.40 | Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts |
| 16.40 – 16.50 | Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and program |



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1.3. A brief overview of the institution and program under evaluation

The foundations of higher education studies in Mitrovica began with the opening of the Technical High School in 1961. In 1974 the Faculty of Mining and Metallurgy was established with three departments: Mining, Technology, and Metallurgy, and in 1987 the Geology department was opened. Based on these faculties and based on over 50 years of experience in Higher Education in Mitrovica, the Government of Republic of Kosovo on 06.03.2013 decided on the establishment of Mitrovica University (decision no.01/118). The Kosovo Assembly ratified this decision on 31.05.2013.

The University "Isa Boletini" in Mitrovica (UIBM) is a public institution of higher education, which develops high quality academic education, scientific research, professional counselling and other fields of academic activity. It consists of 6 academic units, with 22 programs of bachelor and master studies: Faculty of Geosciences, Faculty of Food Technology, Faculty of Mechanical and Computer Engineering, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Education.

The Faculty of Geosciences aims to provide graduates who understand the processes that take place on Earth and have the ability to offer problem solving in interdisciplinary workplaces. They should communicate effectively with engineers, environmental scientists, and planners, while educating the public about the linkages between the solid part of the Earth and its hydrosphere, atmosphere and biosphere.

The Faculty of Geosciences is committed to provide educational programs and research for the benefit of students, science, society and the state of Kosovo. The Faculty of Geosciences is the only institution of higher education in Kosovo which educates competent experts and carries out scientific and professional research in the field of geology, mining, and material and metallurgy. With its activities, the Faculty continuously contributes to the prosperity of its professions in the area of geosciences.

The Faculty of Geosciences organizes two levels of study: Bachelor (three-year studies), and Master of Science (two-year studies). The Geology (BSc) program aims to meet the needs of the relevant sectors of the geological and mining industry in the country but also the global geological and mining industry.



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Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

2.1. Mission, objectives and administration

Standard 1.1.

The mission of the University of Mitrovica "Isa Boletini" is to provide relevant and high-quality higher education for the preparation of cadres in unique fields for the labor market in Kosovo, region and beyond, committed to developing research, professional projects, professional advising and to serve better on sustainable development, wellbeing, and social advancement. On the other side, the Faculty of Geoscience`s mission is to be the only institution of higher education in Kosovo which educates competent experts and carries out scientific and professional research in the field of geology, mining, and material & metallurgy. With its activities, the Faculty continuously contributes to the prosperity of its professions in the area of geosciences. The program`s mission is to be developed in accordance with the best practices and standards, applying scientific and professional research; Provide a stimulating environment to attract students to study in the field of Geology, through the provision of scholarships, financial support through their involvement in research projects; Commitment towards financial resources for supporting scientific research programs by working closely with the Rectorate, Government institutions, and Independent Regulators; Successfully realize the solution of problems from theory to practice related to the implementation of knowledge gained during the study.

In the missions of the University, Faculty and program the research and scientific work and prioritizing of the development of students can be identified as the main priorities. Finally, the mission of the program is aligned with the mission of the Faculty and the University.

Standard 1.2

The learning outcomes are in line with the Level VI of the National Qualification Framework and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, as reported in the SER.

The framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area describes the qualifications for BSc students to be awarded by Bachelor degree as the following:

- have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study;



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Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency

- can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study;
- have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;
- can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences and
- have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.

If we review the goals of the study program which is “to increase research activities in accordance with national and international interest in applying the principle of industrial and productive production in general, which reflects on general social development” we cannot conclude that the above-mentioned requirements of the Framework are entirely in line with the stated goals of the Geology Bachelor’s program.

On the other side, the learning outcomes have to be presented as the statements of what a student is expected to know, understand and be able to do at the end of a period of studies which is not the case with some of the modules in the Geology Bachelor’s program.

Having this in mind, the experts think that a more specific definition of the learning outcomes is needed, together with standard and consistent vocabulary when describing similar teaching and learning approaches in the syllabuses or in other educational contexts.

Standard 1.3.

From the SER, the submitted video from the Faculty, the additionally provided documents, and the information provided during the site visit it can be concluded that the study program has a limited didactic and research concept. The documents are showing willingness for a student-centered learning, but the experts are not sure that the Faculty when pointing out the student-centered learning is talking about the international concept of this type of learning.

The academic staff shared their attempts to introduce student-centered learning, and involve different practical tools when presenting the theoretical part of the program. Moreover, they are trying to include students in their research projects. The students confirmed this. This is to be commended. However, all of them pointed out that there is a need for more practical work as this had been one of the program’s weaknesses.



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency

In addition, the syllabuses are presenting the trend towards the usage of different teaching and evaluation methods such as lab and field exercises, independent assignments, class quizzes, discussion, and others. Moreover, the documents are showing the practice of involvement of students in the academic staff's research projects. This should be backed-up with examples of involvement and the impact on student learning.

There is no evidence in the SER of e-learning and digital media used in the study process. In the meetings and on the video submitted to the experts' team, the experts learned that several teachers use some e-learning tools. However, this is more surprising that this approach was not mentioned at all in the didactic concept.

Finally, the Faculty should take serious measures and actions to address the challenges related to the lack of a complete didactic concept of the programme. (Note that the term 'didactic' as used here refers to the 'teaching approach' and not to a transmission mode of 'preaching' definition as sometimes understood in western Europe).

Standard 1.4. & 1.5

The Faculty as part of the University is following all procedural documents, such as the Code of Ethics, the Strategic Plans, Regulation of the quality assurance and evaluation at the University of Mitrovica, and all other regulations. The University Management System is used as a tool for introducing online teaching and learning, as well as for information, communication and to make publicly available all policies, guidelines, and regulations dealing with recurring procedural or academic issues. Both, the students and the academic staff confirmed that they are using it and they are obtaining all the needed information through it. Finally, the Faculty's website contains all the needed information regarding the study program (syllabuses, lesson plans, and others).

The ethical conduct in research, teaching, assessment in all academic and administrative activities is regulated in the University's Code of Ethics.

Standard 1.6

The frequency of revision and required amendments of the policies, regulations, terms of reference, and statements of responsibility relating to the management and delivery of the program is annual. However, during the site visit no one pointed out what was specifically changed due to the annual review process. The Faculty and its management should find ways to address this and be motivated to change things based on the review procedures. Only in that way the quality culture is going to be built for the long term.



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
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| Standard | Compliance | |
|--|------------|----|
| | Yes | No |
| Standard 1.1. The study program mission is in compliance with the overall mission statement of the institution. | x | |
| Standard 1.2. Relevant academic and professional advice is considered when defining the intended learning outcomes which are consistent with the National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. | | x |
| Standard 1.3. The study program has a well-defined overarching didactic and research concept. | | x |
| Standard 1.4. There are formal policies, guidelines and regulations dealing with recurring procedural or academic issues. These are made publicly available to all staff and students. | x | |
| Standard 1.5. All staff and students comply with the internal regulations relating to ethical conduct in research, teaching, assessment in all academic and administrative activities. | x | |
| Standard 1.6. All policies, regulations, terms of reference and statements of responsibility relating to the management and delivery of the program are reviewed at least once every two years and amended as required in the light of changing circumstances. | | x |

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. A specific definition of the learning outcomes is needed, together with standard and consistent vocabulary when it is up for the same parts of the syllabuses or the education context.*
- 2. The Faculty management should take serious steps and actions when it is making changes based on the reviews of the policies, regulations, terms of reference and statements of responsibility relating to the management and delivery of the program.*



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Kosovo Accreditation Agency

2.2. Quality management

The SER and supporting documentation demonstrated that improvements had been made in quality assurance since 2017. This includes additional and more detailed surveys of all stakeholders including students.

The documentation has addressed some issues that were raised and recommendations made after the last site-visit and Expert Team (ET) report. Some of these issues will be highlighted under later sections of the current ET report.

The FG quality assurance coordinator, and Vice-Dean for QA must request the KAA to invite expert teams a minimum of 2 months before the site-visit. This will allow the expert teams more time to plan and prepare to do the sizable job necessitated by re-accreditations. The SER and supporting documentation must be provided to the ET a minimum of 3 weeks prior to the site-visit to allow time to study the documents. This may be the responsibility of KAA, but FG should insist as this will allow the maximum benefit to the FG, Dept. of Geology, from the quality assurance process.

More evidence is required in the SER and supporting documentation, alongside the claims made. For example, the actual number of students who have enrolled for each course, and the number who have engaged in Erasmus mobility initiatives should be included. Graphics, such as histograms, can be used to present the data that FG collects. Histograms illustrating student diversity, such as for gender, and proportion of international students, are recommended. An indication of staff gender diversity should be given.

It is good that quality assurance representatives have national and international engagement with other quality assurance officers via online meetings/conferences, in order to keep up to date with ideas, strategies and resources. It was evident at the site-visit that the QA representatives have a focus on quality enhancement as well as quality assurance.

The quality improvement process can be improved. The translator for the ET could have some background in geosciences. Some of the translated answers to the ET questions were not understandable geologically.

The process was more challenging due to being online rather than face-to-face. However, all involved did their best to mitigate the challenges.



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency

Standard 2.1.

All staff in the Faculty of Geosciences (FG) participate in annual surveys for the purpose of quality assurance (QA). This includes: 1) student assessment of their teachers and administrative staff, and 2) academic staff self-assessment. In addition, the Pro-Dean for Teaching, and the FG program lead, monitor the teaching and implementation of the Geology Bachelors program. Examples of this monitoring could be included in the SER.

The data generated by the questionnaires is processed by the Central Quality Office. The information generated is given to the Head of Department of Geology, and the QA coordinator in the FG. The latter generate reports and send to individual staff members to form the basis for discussion of performance and any recommended improvements.

The ET recommend that examples of QA reports, or a synthesis of the findings for the Dept. of Geology, could be included as evidence in the SER.

Standard 2.2.

The department engages in the review process which includes implementation of survey questionnaires, self-reflection, and a review of processes and plans for improvement. The Vice-Dean for Teaching and the QA coordinator monitor the implementation of the subsequent recommendations.

The ET recommends that to fully close the loop, the department should report to students what has been done to address their concerns and recommendations. This could be indicated in the SER.

Standard 2.3.

The QA questionnaires survey a wide range of stakeholders and recommendations can highlight the need for improvements in services and resources (including staff with appropriate expertise) provided by the University.

The ET recommend that examples of improvements resulting directly from this process are documented in the SER.

Standard 2.4.

The QA questionnaires are broad ranging and invite responses on inputs, teaching methods, outputs and resources related to the delivery of the Geology Bachelor's degree program. As part of this process, data is collected on the number of students who complete their degree within 3 years, and the number who withdraw before completion. These statistics are an important indicator of quality of the program and student support. The ET is aware that factors external to UIBM can affect these numbers.



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



Agjencia e Kosovës për Akreditim
Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
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Evidence of QA processes was sought during the site-visit. During the site-visit, both academic staff and students gave examples of the process of QA in relation to improvements. For example, students said they had completed questionnaires annually and had the opportunity to discuss the achievement of learning outcomes with their teachers, and suggest changes that could be made. The ET noted that considerable improvement has been made in the writing of learning outcomes for the benefit of students (as well as the staff themselves) following previous recommendations. This is evidence of the review process in action. However, further refinement of the learning outcomes (as stated) are required for some modules.

Standard 2.5.

The QA processes are thorough and act to ensure that standards are upheld or improvements are made. This has included some realignment of syllabi, some refocusing of course content, some adjustment in course ECTS awarded, improved infrastructure, and a more interactive approach to teaching and learning. All of these were recommendations of the ET in 2017. The improvements are evident in the course descriptions. Some confirmation of this was gained during the site visit.

Standard 2.6.

During the site-visit it was confirmed that survey data is collected from students, graduates (alumni) and employers. Alumni stated that they had kept close contact with the academic staff of FG and some had contributed expert advice, or given workshops/lectures, on the Geology Bachelors course. Information about the program and modules, and the expertise of staff, is publicly available on the UIBM website. It is not clear if the critique of the Geology BSc. is publicly available on the website.

Standard 2.7.

The SER highlights some improvements that have been made as a result of the internal QA system. Student attendance is monitored, and there is some mid-term evaluation to provide timely review allowing any issues to be addressed. A more student-centred approach is being taken in teaching. For example, there is increased student-teacher interaction in teaching sessions. Further examples were highlighted during the site visit of the ET. However some of the stated improvements are aspirational only.

The ET recommend that where improved academic success of students is claimed in the SER, there should be evidence eg. as numbers progressing and students achieving related employment.

The ET recommend that where a number of hours of lectures is specified in the course description, and includes student presentations and discussion, this is stated. This more detailed and



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favourable break-down should be apparent from the course description, and made publicly available.

The ET recommend that a list of the vocabulary used for teaching methods in course descriptions should be drawn up, and used to provide consistency across modules when writing these descriptions.

Standard 2.8.

The ET has received a detailed report (SER and additional documents) indicating the overall quality of the Geology Bachelor's degree program. This has been facilitated by the annual reviews of quality carried out within the FG.

The ET recommend that the reports contain suitable evidence for the claims that are made.

Standard 2.9.

The FG staff involved in QA coordination have engaged in peer-learning with other QA representatives, both nationally and internationally via online conferences. This is to be encouraged as it is one important way to regularly evaluate the QA arrangements within the FG. The survey instruments that have been put in place are an improvement on the QA measures used in 2017. In the coming year the staff of the FG intend to trial a 'peer-review' model of evaluation. The ET recommend that for the trial of the 'peer-review' model for staff evaluation, the FG put in place a plan to capture evidence of 'what worked' and 'what needs improvement' to inform the next review of QA.

The SWOT for Quality Management:

The SWOT for Quality Management includes many of the issues raised elsewhere in the SER eg. in the Academic staff, Students and Infrastructure sections. The SWOT for Quality management should include the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the management of quality in FG. For example, how are the questionnaires being administered, what is the return rate of employers completing the surveys, are the students informed of the responses to their requests; do these systems work well and can they be improved? In addition, the quality management SWOT should include the short timing of selection and invitation of the ET and availability of the SER (less than one week in this case). If the SWOT engages with these issues, then there are opportunities to maximise the benefit of all of the quality assurance process. The aim must be that it leads to quality enhancement.

The SWOT does indicate that one weakness is getting the staff engagement in the QA process. This is a concern. All staff have experience to offer to the process, and the purpose of the QA



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must be made clear to them. It may be necessary to spell-out to staff the benefits for them, of engaging in order to motivate them. The senior FG staff may have ideas for incentivising their team.

It is true that international collaboration, including visiting academics, and local collaborations with industry, have the potential to improve the quality of the Geology Bachelor's degree. A list of visiting lectures (in person or virtual) could be compiled to include as evidence of QA in the next SER. The establishment of the Alumni Association is a good initiative that also has the potential to improve QA.

The increased representation of students in UIBM and FG committees is a welcome development. Examples of how this has impacted on the Geology Bachelor's program would be a valuable addition to the SER.

The issues relating to access to e-libraries and student internships must be addressed urgently. Substantial use can be made of open access resources, and this would ease the situation. Re-focusing away from industry that is not at full capacity, towards environmental and conservation issues may produce new opportunities for internships.

| <i>Standard</i> | Compliance | |
|--|-------------------|----|
| | Yes | No |
| Standard 2.1. All staff participate in self-evaluations and cooperate with reporting and improvement processes in their sphere of activity. | X | |
| Standard 2.2. Evaluation processes and planning for improvement are integrated into normal planning processes. | X | |
| Standard 2.3. Quality assurance processes deal with all aspects of program planning and delivery, including services and resources provided by other parts of the institution. | X | |
| Standard 2.4. Quality evaluations provide an overview of quality issues for the overall program as well as of different components within it; the evaluations consider inputs, processes and outputs, with particular attention given to learning outcomes for students. | X | |
| Standard 2.5. Quality assurance processes ensure both that required standards are met and that there is continuing improvement in performance. | | X |



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency

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| Standard 2.6. Survey data is being collected from students, graduates and employers; the results of these evaluations are made publicly available. | | X |
| Standard 2.7. Results of the internal quality assurance system are taken into account for further development of the study program. This includes evaluation results, investigation of the student workload, academic success and employment of graduates. | | X |
| Standard 2.8. The institution ensures that reports on the overall quality of the program are prepared periodically (eg. every three years) for consideration within the institution indicating its strengths and weaknesses. | X | |
| Standard 2.9. The quality assurance arrangements for the program are themselves regularly evaluated and improved. | X | |

Compliance level: Substantially Compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Examples of QA reports, or a synthesis of the findings for the Dept. of Geology, could be included as evidence in the SER.*
2. *To fully close the QA loop, the Department of Geology should report to students what has been done to address their concerns and the recommendations that they made.*
3. *Examples of improvements in resources resulting directly from the QA process are documented in the SER.*
4. *Where improved academic success of students is claimed in the SER, there should be evidence eg. as numbers progressing and students achieving related employment.*
5. *Where a number of hours of lectures is specified in the course description, this may include student presentations and discussion. This more detailed and favourable break-down should be apparent from the course description, and made publicly available.*
6. *A list of the vocabulary used for teaching methods in course descriptions should be drawn up, and used to provide consistency across modules when writing these descriptions.*
7. *The SER report should contain suitable evidence for the claims that are made.*
8. *For the trial of the 'peer-review' model for staff evaluation, put in place a plan to capture evidence of 'what worked' and 'what needs improvement' to inform the next review of QA.*



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Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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Kosovo Accreditation Agency

2.3. Academic staff

Standard 3.1.

Candidates for employment are provided with full position descriptions and conditions of employment. Data is presented in tabular form and complies with MEST guidelines, Labor Law, UIBM Statutes and UIBM Internal regulations.

Standard 3.2.

The teaching staff comply with the legal requirements concerning the occupation of teaching positions and accreditation requirements.

Standard 3.3.

The academic staff are not allowed more than two teaching positions, one full-time and one part-time. This is carefully monitored by UIBM Human Resources Department.

Standard 3.4

Academic staff in the geology program are full-time employees and make up the largest percentage of the study program. Some staff exercise the right to have another job (part-time). This should be carefully monitored to ensure it is complementary to the work in FG, or does not detract from necessary duties in FG.

Standard 3.5.

There are three staff named as coordinators for the Geology program. They each hold a Ph.D and are full-time employees. This corresponds to 180 ECTS for this 3-year Bachelor's program.

Standard 3.6.

It was noted that the SER provided evidence, shown by the reference to a range of teaching approaches, of staff engagement in developmental courses with the aim of improving teaching and learning. This was a major recommendation for the FG in the past. The current SER stated that all staff must engage in two introductory modules in teaching and learning delivered by the Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE). During the site visit, academic staff were asked about the courses. Staff had begun to engage in these courses, but have not yet completed both modules. The staff were able to give examples of the learning from the first module, and how this had impacted their teaching, for example by increasing the interactivity with their students during the face-to-face classroom sessions. The staff development modules are organised by the University of Pristina.



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Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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Kosovo Accreditation Agency

The ET recommend that the UIBM develop and facilitate their own staff development opportunities for academic staff. This could be a small centre that facilitates sharing of the expertise of UIBM staff who are involved in teaching. Development of teaching is an ongoing career-long process, and cannot be considered completed after one or two courses. Continuous development can be achieved through informal peer-learning opportunities within FG and/or UIBM. The FG and Dept. of Geology should move from a ‘training’ model (this is how to teach) to a ‘staff development’ model (discussion of what works and what needs improvement - and how to progress).

The staff are encouraged by FG to avail of mobility opportunities through various programs. However, not all staff have done this. The FG management is flexible in organizing the schedule to enable professional development of teachers, for example, by encouraging them to be more active in research activities. However, ‘staff engaging in research’ is documented as both a strength of the FG and also a weakness. These views are contradictory, and discussion is needed to clarify the situation. Staff are encouraged to write grant proposals for research, in particular for Erasmus+ exchanges. Success in gaining grants has been limited as noted in the SWOT. Research-led teaching is to be encouraged.

The ET recommend that a list of grant applications, with successes noted, is included in the SER.

Standard 3.7.

The responsibilities of all teaching staff, especially full-time, include the engagement in the academic community, availability for consultations with students and community service.

Academic staff are involved in FG or departmental committees, and some are involved in university-wide committees. Apart from 6 hours of face-to-face teaching per week, the academic staff have a minimum number of regular hours for students to consult them on a one-to-one basis. A range of student supervisions and assessments are carried out. Engagement in the local community consists mainly of research collaborations and advising with local industry and government agencies. Engagement with schools to promote geosciences is beginning to take place.

The ET recommend that community engagement, and school visits, is increased to attract students into the Geology Bachelors program.



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

Standard 3.8.

There has been an improvement in the organisation of academic staff evaluation since the last site-visit. Questionnaires are used for student evaluation, staff self-evaluation, peer-evaluation, and evaluation by line-managers. This should give a detailed picture from which the staff member can assess what is working well, and what should be improved in their contribution to the Geology Bachelor's program. Reports are generated and conversations are held with the Head of Department. This is done annually, with the exception that student evaluation of teachers is done after each semester. Some student feedback is given mid-semester, which is to be commended, so that students can benefit from any adjustments that are made to facilitate students. The SER contains links to the questionnaires available for staff evaluations.

The ET recommend that the SER and supporting material should contain examples of completed questionnaires, and in particular a summary analysis of the findings of completed questionnaires. If data management is fully digitised, then a sample of a report generated should be provided to the ET.

Evaluation of students' achievements by teachers is carried out in the form of on-going assessments during each semester. Student progress is submitted monthly to the University Management System, where the Vice Dean and the Head of the Geology Department can view it.

Standard 3.9.

Not all academic staff teaching on the Geology Bachelors Program have completed 2 modules of staff development in Teaching and learning. Excellence in teaching and learning is a process of ongoing continuous development. FG/UIBM must facilitate this ongoing professional development.

The quality of teaching materials has improved since 2017. The module descriptions have improved. The writing of the learning outcomes has improved for most modules. This is to be commended. There is now a need for further refinement of the learning outcomes for most modules. For example, a module should not contain mainly 'describe' as the action verb. Even first year modules should include a range of action verbs from Bloom's taxonomy. All students should be challenged to summarise, explain, apply etc. Refinement should also include ensuring constructive alignment between the learning outcome and the assessment tasks. Giving students a choice of how they might demonstrate achievement of a learning outcome should be encouraged (for example, choice of report or oral presentation or practical demonstration).



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

The recommended texts in the module descriptions are more up-to-date. This could be further improved. Where important texts are not available in the Albanian language, FG should consider translating short extracts for teaching purposes. The e-library resources are noted as a weakness. Plans to improve this should be made urgently. Equipment for laboratory practical classes should now be in place on the new campus. It was not possible to confirm this during the virtual site-visit.

The ET recommends that plans are put in place urgently to improve e-resources. This should maximise the opportunity afforded by Open Access publications.

Standard 3.10.

Teachers retire at 65 years of age. If deemed necessary, teachers can continue working until the age of 70 years old.

The SWOT for Academic staff:

The SER and the site-visit show that a strength of the programme is the enthusiasm of staff who are involved in teaching. Both the SER and site-visit indicated that the strengths and the weaknesses are contradictory in relation to the amount of research and international cooperation carried out by academic staff. Although international research collaboration is encouraged, the shortage of grants and the need for visas is a barrier for some staff. The availability of online international conferences during the past 12 months has opened up opportunities for academic staff to participate. This format is likely to continue into the future to some extent and should be seen as an opportunity going forward. This will have benefits for the Geology Bachelor's program.

All teachers have taken 2 modules of Staff development in teaching is listed as a strength, but on the site-visit it was reported that the staff are waiting for the second module. These are contradictory statements.

Evaluation of teaching by an external body is seen as a threat in the SWOT. The ET agree that this may not be the best approach for the continual development of teaching and learning for the Geology Bachelors program. Formal and Informal peer-learning, within UIBM should be developed as effective forms of staff development and evaluation. External experts could be invited as guest speakers/facilitators, perhaps once per semester.



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

| <i>Standard</i> | <i>Compliance</i> | |
|--|-------------------|----|
| | Yes | No |
| Standard 3.1. Candidates for employment are provided with full position descriptions and conditions of employment. To be presented in tabular form data about full time (FT) and part time (PT) academic/ artistic staff, such as: name, qualification, academic title, duration of official (valid) contract, workload for teaching, exams, consulting, administrative activities, research, etc. for the study program under evaluation. | X | |
| Standard 3.2. The teaching staff must comply with the legal requirements concerning the occupation of teaching positions included in the Administrative instruction on Accreditation. | X | |
| Standard 3.3. Academic staff do not cover, within an academic year, more than two teaching positions (one full-time, one part-time), regardless of the educational institution where they carry out their activity | X | |
| Standard 3.4. At least 50% of the academic staff in the study program are full time employees, and account for at least 50% of the classes of the study program. | X | |
| Standard 3.5. For each student group (defined by the statute of the institution) and for every 60 ECTS credits in the study program, the institution has employed at least one full time staff with PhD title or equivalent title in the case of artistic/applied science institutions. | X | |
| Standard 3.6. Opportunities are provided for additional professional development of teaching staff, with special assistance given to any who are facing difficulties. | | X |
| Standard 3.7. The responsibilities of all teaching staff, especially full-time, include the engagement in the academic community, availability for consultations with students and community service. | X | |
| Standard 3.8. Academic staff evaluation is conducted regularly at least through self-evaluation, students, peer and superiors' evaluations, and occur on a formal basis at least once each year. The results of the evaluation are made publicly available. | X | |
| Standard 3.9. Strategies for quality enhancement include improving the teaching strategies and quality of learning materials. | | X |



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

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|--|---|--|
| Standard 3.10. Teachers retired at age limit or for other reasons lose the status of full-time teachers and are considered part-time teachers. | X | |
|--|---|--|

Compliance level: Substantially Compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *The SER and supporting material should contain examples of completed questionnaires, and in particular a summary analysis of the findings of completed questionnaires. If data management is fully digitised, then a sample of a report generated should be provided to the ET.*
2. *The ET recommend that a list of grant applications, with successes noted, is included in the SER*
3. *The ET recommend that community engagement, and school visits, is increased to attract students into the Geology Bachelors program*
4. *UIBM should develop institutional expertise to facilitate staff development in teaching and learning making good use of peer-learning. Formal and Informal peer-learning, within UIBM can be effective forms of staff development and evaluation. External experts could be invited as guest speakers/facilitators, perhaps once per semester.*
5. *The ET recommends that plans are put in place urgently to improve e-resources. This should maximise the opportunity afforded by Open Access publications.*
6. *SER should indicate where statements are aspirational, and where statements are reporting something that has been delivered or completed.*

2.4. Educational process content

Standard 4.1.

The Geology Dept. state that the study program prepares students for the mining industry. Elsewhere in the SER the Geology Dept. indicate that the mining industry is reducing. The program should reflect a changing world and the broader range of opportunities in the Geosciences. This will increase the attractiveness of the Geology Bachelor’s program. This re-focusing has begun, since the recommendation of the last ET report, but needs to go further. The FG should consider varying their bench-marking partners, to learn from other institutions, to add to their learning from the University of Zagreb.

Geoscience is central to many present day issues of global concern, and the Geology Bachelor’s program should reflect this. The SER claims that interdisciplinary teaching and learning are



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

included in the program. There are multiple disciplines involved in the program, especially in first year, for example physics and mathematics, but this does not ensure interdisciplinary learning.

The ET see that there is little focus on palaeontology in the Bachelor's degree. This is regrettable, since palaeontology is a fundamental branch of Geology and there has been a recent resurgence in the need for detailed palaeontological knowledge, for example in the interpretation of deep sea cores with their implications for past and predicted climate change.

Standard 4.2.

The program complies with the stated ECTS requirements outlined in the Bologna protocol.

This Standard requests assurance that specified qualification objectives are achieved and that the forms of teaching and learning are achieved according to the NQF and Framework of qualifications of the EHEA. This Standard requires more than stating the number of ECTS credits and hours of work.

Standard 4.3.

It is commendable that the Dept. of Geology has devised program-level learning outcomes that are compatible with the module learning outcomes. These program-level learning outcomes now require some review. The FG should consider what are the attributes all graduates should have acquired during undergraduate study of the Geology B.Sc., for example 'an ethical approach to addressing geoscience issues'. The program learning outcomes should be at a higher 'umbrella' level, and include the approach that all of the modules are addressing. They need not be so specific about the content of courses. Items 9, 11 and 12 in the learning outcomes list for the Geology B.Sc. program are closer to appropriate program learning outcomes.

For this review of program learning outcomes, the Dept. of Geology should align with the mission/strategic plan of the FG. For example:

“The Faculty of Geosciences aims to provide graduates who understand the processes that take place on Earth and have the ability to offer problem solving in interdisciplinary workplaces. They should communicate effectively with engineers, environmental scientists, and planners, while educating the public about the linkages between the solid part of the Earth and its hydrosphere, atmosphere and biosphere”.

and take note of the BSc. qualifications framework of the EHEA



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

- *have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study;*
- *can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study;*
- *have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;*
- *can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences;*
- *have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.*

Standard 4.4.

The syllabus of each course was attached in an Appendix to the SER. The course descriptions have improved significantly since the last ET report and recommendations. Consistency in approach has increased. The Dept. of Geology should identify the courses that are out of line and address these at the earliest opportunity.

The writing of the learning outcomes has improved for many courses. This is to be commended. However, there is further refinement needed for the majority and this should be carried out at the earliest opportunity. Module coordinators should strive to have one action verb as the focus in each learning outcome. Learning outcomes for each module should cover a range of action verbs from Bloom's taxonomy (including all first year modules). Students should be challenged to synthesise, explain, classify, interpret, etc. at the appropriate level in every module.

Ongoing continuous assessment is to be welcomed. The reduction in a heavy reliance on terminal exams is to be welcomed. The assessment methods appear to align with the learning outcomes, but it was difficult for the ET to be certain. However, several course descriptions suggest that 45 hours of lectures are delivered within one module. This is excessive. This teaching method does not align with learning outcomes and assessment methods. It is essential to reduce passive lecturing, and increase opportunities for students to engage in their own learning to give them the opportunity to achieve the learning outcomes. If the 45 hours of lectures actually include other forms of teaching, this should be stated clearly. The ET recommend that a list of vocabulary is



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

drawn-up that includes all teaching methods and assessment methods. This ‘dictionary’ can then be used to write the course descriptions more accurately and consistently.

Standard 4.5.

The SER states that all teaching is in Albanian. The SER also informs that there are not enough up-to-date texts available for students in the Albanian language. For the career development of the students, and for access to a wider range of course materials, the ET recommends a greater inclusion of the English or German languages in the program. The students have the option of English language classes. These classes should be part of the course, rather than electives. It is not clear how many students come from abroad to take the Geology BSc program, or how they are accommodated in English (as stated in the SER).

Standard 4.6.

The SER states that the achievement of the learning outcomes is the responsibility of the students in consultation with the teachers. During the site-visit the students confirmed that they have the opportunity to discuss the progress with learning outcomes with the teacher.

Standard 4.7.

The teaching strategies have included more interactivity and discussion since the last SER and ET report. This is to be welcomed and is partly a result of staff development in teaching and learning.

The teaching strategies should be under continual review, with the question ‘Do the teaching strategies allow the students to achieve the learning outcomes?’ The course descriptions should give a detailed breakdown of teaching strategies according to a ‘dictionary’ of appropriate vocabulary.

Standard 4.8.

The ongoing continuous assessment, and reduced reliance on terminal examination is welcomed. The assessment methods should be under continual review and the question asked ‘Does the assessment allow the student to demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes?’. It is recommended that where possible a choice of assignment be given, so that students can choose how they will demonstrate achievement of the learning outcome (for example, a report, a presentation, a practical activity, a literature synthesis).

Standard 4.9.



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

The SER states that the student achievement standard is consistent for each subject of this program and by each teacher. according to assessment policies defined by the UIBM Statute (Article 101 and Article 102).

This includes clear assessment criteria and good quality feedback for students. The ET recommends that examples of these criteria are given in the SER as evidence.

Standard 4.10.

The Faculty of Geosciences has regulations that have been approved in order to deal with cases where students may have been inconsistently or unfairly graded, as students have the right to file a complaint, which will then be reviewed by the relevant committee. The final decision in each case will be made by a commission composed of professors in the field of the given subject. The ET recommend that consideration be given to the inclusion of a student representative in the commission.

The SER and Appendix 4.2 state that in the case where the student has not achieved adequate knowledge during lectures and exercises, he/she has the right to participate in additional consultations and exercises, which are organized during the consultation hours by professors and course assistants. Based on the regulations in force, there are also criteria on the minimum number of exams that a student must pass from the first to the second year (regulation of bachelor studies).

Standard 4.11.

The FG and Dept.of Geology have a rigorous procedure for the internship initiation and completion. The procedures are in line with international good practice. The ET suggest that an opportunity to award more ECTS is missed. Awarding only 4 ECTS is not making the most of the opportunity for learning. If the student is asked to do more than keep a journal, then there is an opportunity to award 5 or more ECTS for this 21-day teaching and learning approach. The ET recommends that new opportunities for internships are sought in the newly emerging geoscience fields.

Standard 4.12.

The SER and Appendix 4.3 state that to facilitate internships (practice stages) UIBM signs cooperation agreements, contracts and other documents with public institutions/organizations, mining companies and other employers.

The SWOT for Educational process content :



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

The Dept of Geology has identified the weaknesses that must be addressed urgently, including enrollment, exam success and attractiveness of the program. The recommendations above may assist with this. The Dept. of Geology correctly identifies the opportunities, including those that can create partnerships with industry for the benefit of students' research projects. Up-to-date literature is essential for the Geology BSc. program, and the language of science issues must be addressed. All of these measures will improve the attractiveness of the program, and mitigate against competition from external factors.

| <i>Standard</i> | <i>Compliance</i> | |
|--|-------------------|----|
| | Yes | No |
| Standard 4.1. The study program is modelled on qualification objectives. These include subject-related and interdisciplinary aspects as well as the acquisition of disciplinary, methodological and generic skills and competencies. The aspects refer especially to academic or artistic competencies, to the capability of taking up adequate employment, contributing to the civil society and of developing the students' personality. | X | |
| Standard 4.2. The study program complies with the National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. The individual components of the program are combined in a way to best achieve the specified qualification objectives and provide for adequate forms of teaching and learning. | | X |
| Standard 4.3. The disciplines within the curriculum are provided in a logical flow and meet the definition and precise determination of the general and specific competencies, as well as the compatibility with the study programs and curricula delivered in the EHEA. To be listed at least 7 learning outcomes for the study program under evaluation. | X | |
| Standard 4.4. The disciplines within the curriculum have analytical syllabuses which comprise at least the following: the discipline's objectives, the basic thematic content, learning outcomes, the distribution of classes, seminars and applicative activities, students' assessment system, the minimal bibliography, etc. The full course description/ syllabuses of each subject/ module should be attached only in electronic form to the self-assessment report for the study program under evaluation. | X | |



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

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| Standard 4.5. If the language of instruction is other than Albanian, actions are taken to ensure that language skills of both students and academic staff are adequate for instruction in that language when students begin their studies. This may be done through language training prior to the commencement of the program. | n.a. | |
| Standard 4.6. The student-teacher relationship is a partnership in which each assumes the responsibility of reaching the learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are explained and discussed with students from the perspective of their relevance to the students' development. | X | |
| Standard 4.7. Teaching strategies are fit for the different types of learning outcomes programs are intended to develop. Strategies of teaching and assessment set out in program and course specifications are followed with flexibility to meet the needs of different groups of students. | X | |
| Standard 4.8. Student assessment mechanisms are conducted fairly and objectively, are appropriate for the different forms of learning sought and are clearly communicated to students at the beginning of courses. | X | |
| Standard 4.9. Appropriate, valid and reliable mechanisms are used for verifying standards of student achievement. The standard of work required for different grades is consistent over time, comparable in courses offered within a program, and in comparison with other study programs at highly regarded institutions. | X | |
| Standard 4.10. Policies and procedures include actions to be taken in to dealing with situations where standards of student achievement are inadequate or inconsistently assessed. | X | |
| Standard 4.11. If the study program includes practice stages, the intended student learning outcomes are clearly specified and effective processes are followed to ensure that those learning outcomes and the strategies to develop that learning are understood by students. The practice stages are allocated ETCS credits and the work of the students at the practical training organisations is monitored through activity reports; students during practice stages have assigned tutors among the academic staff in the study program. | X | |
| Standard 4.12. In order to facilitate the practice stages, the higher education institution signs cooperation agreements, contracts or other documents with institutions/organisations/practical training units. | x | |

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

1. *The FG should consider varying their bench-marking partners, to add to their learning already gained from the University of Zagreb..*
2. *The standard 4.2 requires more consideration than stating the number of ECTS credits and hours of work.*
3. *The program learning outcomes should be at a higher ‘umbrella’ level, and include the approach that all of the modules are addressing. They need not be so specific about the content of courses. Items 9, 11 and 12 in the learning outcomes list for the Geology B.Sc. program are closer to appropriate program-level learning outcomes.*
4. *The Dept. of Geology should identify the course descriptions that are out of line and address these at the earliest opportunity.*
5. *Learning outcomes should include a range of action verbs from Bloom’s taxonomy in each module (including all first year modules). Students should be challenged to synthesise, explain, classify, interpret, etc. at the appropriate level in every module.*
6. *It is essential to reduce passive lecturing, and increase opportunities for students to engage in their own learning to give them the opportunity to achieve the learning outcomes. If 45 hours of lectures (in some modules) actually include other forms of teaching, this should be stated clearly. A list of vocabulary should be drawn-up that includes all teaching methods and assessment methods. This ‘dictionary’ can then be used to write the course descriptions more accurately and consistently.*
7. *The students have the option of English language classes. These classes should be part of the Geology BSc program, rather than electives.*
8. *The program should reflect a changing world and the broader range of opportunities in the Geosciences. This will increase the attractiveness of the Geology Bachelor’s program.*
9. *The Dept of Geology should consider awarding more ECTS to 21-day internships.*

2.5. Students

Students are equal members in the governing processes of the Faculty of Geosciences. As reported in the SER and the additional documents, on the Faculty level there is a Students Council, which represents all faculty students. In the Faculty’s governing bodies the students are represented by one member.

Standard 5.1. & 5.2

The SER and the additionally provided documents are showing that the Faculty of Geosciences has formally adopted admission procedures at the institutional level for the students’ recruitment. The procedure involves the Senate and the Rectorate of the University of Mitrovica, who are deciding the quotas based on the proposal that they are receiving from the Faculty’s dean and the



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

head of the study program. Currently, this number is 60. After the decision of the number, the application process is announced. The young people that have a high school diploma or another valid document according to the MEST can enroll in the Faculty. Having in mind the fact that this University and Faculty are a public institution, they are obliged to follow the MEST's regulations and requirements, which is also confirmed in their Statute.

The students' interest in the Geology Bachelor's program is decreasing. The documents provided to the experts' team are showing that there is a tendency of a very large decrease in the number of enrolled students, from 42 enrolled students in 2017/18, to 18 in 2018/19, 0 in 2019/20 (with the explanation that in that year the program was not accredited) and 20 students in the last year. The management is aware of this challenge and will try to undertake different actions for addressing this. Examples shared by the management are the promotion of the Faculty in high schools and the regular update of the study program so that they can be attractive to the student. These actions are also included in the Action plan, part of the Strategic Plan of the FG.

The students that the experts' team met shared that they chose the particular Faculty and program because of its good positioning in the region, the students' awareness that the program will be requested in the labor market in the near future, and the overall Faculty's value. The Faculty can use the students as ambassadors for the Faculty's promotion.

Standard 5.3

The SER, the video submitted by the Faculty and the information shared with the experts during the site visit, are showing that the study program is organized in both smaller and bigger groups depending on whether it is the theoretical or the practical part of the study program.

The University Management System is used as an information tool for the regulations, sharing students' feedback, informing the students of the exams' results and its recording and data from the students' performances. Moreover, this system is perceived as a tool for facilitation of the communication of professors with students and providing faster access to information and various materials from the study program.

Standard 5.4 & 5.5 & 5.6 & 5.7

Nevertheless, the students that the expert's team met shared that they are working together with the academic staff. This is also confirmed through the Faculty's commitment to ensure continuous student-teacher communication for the best learning outcomes; students' encouragement to be an active part of learning and to be a factor in the necessary process changes within UIBM and FG and to organize students' thematic workshops in order to link the teaching, as reported in the SER. In addition, the teachers have consultation hours through which the students can request additional feedback for their performance. Specifically, every professor has at least twice a week,

30



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

two hours of consultation hours for the students` seminar, diploma and bachelor papers, consultations after each colloquium, and exams. Moreover, the SER specifies that the students have an option to request consultations from the academic staff on colloquia and exams at least three days after the announcement of the results for each subject. The consultation hours are included as a teaching methodology in syllabuses. Finally, the ET was informed that there is a practice of involving students in research projects. However, no information or evidence is given to show if the feedback to students on their performance and results of assessments is given promptly and accompanied by mechanisms for assistance if needed.

The additionally requested documents are providing an explanation for one research project “Gold Project” in which only one student is included.

Standard 5.8

The University does not have software for ensuring originality of the students` work. The SER states that the Faculty is planning to procure such a system in the future. The anti-plagiarism is regulated in the University`s documents. The Code of Ethics in article number 14 declares that the students must refrain from copying of any type during the performance of their obligations, learning processes as well as on the occasion when they are subjected to assessment of knowledge. The Code of Ethics points out that all members of the University should be aware of and not support or assist copying. In addition, the Code declares plagiarism as the greatest form of injury.

Standard 5.10. & 5.11

There is no specific information that the students` transfer between higher education institutions, faculties and study programs is clearly regulated in formal internal documents. In addition, neither the SER or the additional documents provide information about the existence of tutorial assistance.

An Alumni Network is established on the University level for sharing their experiences and ideas for further development of the program. The Alumni Network should be used for the promotion of the Faculty and the program.

Career guidance and student internship services are provided by the Career Development Center that is functioning on a University level. However, it must be underlined that the students during the site visit highlighted the need for more practice work and e-learning.



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

Finally, the experts` team can conclude that the Faculty is taking care of the position of the students and ensuring the quality and effectiveness of their studies. However, the numbers of students are a serious threat to the program and urgent actions must be undertaken in that regard.

| <i>Standard</i> | <i>Compliance</i> | |
|--|-------------------|----|
| | Yes | No |
| Standard 5.1. There is a clear and formally adopted admission procedure at institutional level that the study program respects when organising students' recruitment. Admission requirements are consistently and fairly applied for all students. | x | |
| Standard 5.2. All students enrolled in the study program possess a high school graduation diploma or other equivalent document of study, according to MEST requirements. | x | |
| Standard 5.3. The study groups are dimensioned so as to ensure an effective and interactive teaching and learning process. | x | |
| Standard 5.4. Feedback to students on their performance and results of assessments is given promptly and accompanied by mechanisms for assistance if needed. | x | |
| Standard 5.5. The results obtained by the students throughout the study cycles are certified by the academic record. | x | |
| Standard 5.6. Flexible treatment of students in special situations is ensured with respect to deadlines and formal requirements in the program and to all examinations. | | x |
| Standard 5.7. Records of student completion rates are kept for all courses and for the program as a whole and included among quality indicators. | x | |
| Standard 5.8. Effective procedures are being used to ensure that work submitted by students is original. | | x |
| Standard 5.9. Students' rights and obligations are made publicly available, promoted to all those concerned and enforced equitably; these will include the right to academic appeals. | x | |



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

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|---|---|---|
| Standard 5.10. The students' transfer between higher education institutions, faculties and study programs is clearly regulated in formal internal documents. | | x |
| Standard 5.11. Academic staff is available at sufficient scheduled times for consultation and advice to students. Adequate tutorial assistance is provided to ensure understanding and ability to apply learning. | x | |

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. The Faculty should take some serious and urgent measures to detect the issue with the decreasing number of students and develop a mitigation strategy for this problem. A promotional and communication strategy is needed for disseminating the program's value among future students. The current students and the Alumni network might be used as one tool for promotion.*
- 2. The Faculty should procure an anti-plagiarism software.*
- 3. The Faculty should ensure more places for practical work for the students.*
- 4. There is a need for development of a tutor system that will support the students in their further development.*

2.6. Research

Standard 6.1.

It is indicated in the SER that the Faculty of Geosciences in its Research Strategy, in line with the UIBM Strategic Research Plan 2021 - 2025, has clearly defined the strategic research objectives of the study programs to foster a disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research culture and productivity in their focus areas. A definition and plan for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary culture is not visible.

It was recommended in the previous ET report that an operational plan for research should be produced, to carry out the strategic plan for research. The FG has sufficient academic staff to carry out substantial research, but funding and initiatives are lacking. This must be addressed. Research-led teaching benefits students and should be further encouraged for the Geology

33



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

Bachelor's program. Students report their appreciation in particular of practical laboratory classes and internships that involve research projects for their learning. However the students report they would like more of this approach to teaching and learning at undergraduate level. This teaching and learning research-focused approach should begin in the first year of the Geology Bachelor's program, and increase in subsequent years.

Opportunities such as those through the Erasmus program can lead to research collaborations for staff as well as teaching collaborations. The uptake of these opportunities must be increased. This could form part of the requirement for academic staff. All academic staff should be actively engaged in current research, and demonstrate how this impacts on undergraduate student learning.

Standard 6.2.

The basic criteria for promoting and advancing academic staff in relation to research are clearly set out, and are in line with MEST regulations. The performance of staff in this regard is discussed in staff evaluations. The number of publications in indexed scientific journals is defined.

The criteria consider only first authorship in staff promotion and advancement. This would appear to be restrictive as science research is increasingly carried out as part of a team. The criteria may inhibit collaborative research team-building which would be counter-productive. In addition, not all impactful research is published in indexed journals. Consideration should be given to the appropriate journal, or other dissemination channel, according to the intended audience (in some cases undergraduate students on the Geology Bachelor's program). New forms of research dissemination should be considered, such as online publishing on the Department of Geology website. This should be in Albanian and another European language, such as English or German. The SER states that Open access publications are targeted. This is welcomed as it should have maximum benefit for the undergraduate students on the Geology Bachelor's program.

Co-organizing the International Multidisciplinary Conference of Geosciences IMGC 2020 "Geosciences and its impact on sustainable development" together with the Independent Commission on Mines and Minerals and the Ministry of Economy and Environment is an excellent initiative. Holding the conference online facilitates the involvement of more international experts. This should be encouraged and supported, and has great potential to increase research collaborations. This initiative should give students on the Geology Bachelor's program the opportunity to present their research work through short oral presentations or e-posters. This will build confidence and will help prepare students for postgraduate work or employment.



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

Establishing a journal within the Department of Geology for the publication of scientific research papers in the field of Geology and other relevant fields is a big undertaking, and care must be taken to carry out strict peer-review of contributions. A section in this journal should encourage short undergraduate research papers, particularly from year 3 of the Bachelor's program, as part of student career development.

Standard 6.3.

Clear policies and descriptors are available, defining the levels at which a researcher is placed, in line with international descriptors.

Standard 6.4.

Research-led teaching is recognised by teaching staff on the Geology Bachelor's program. However, at undergraduate level, not all topics may be research-led. This allows a broad range of topics to be included in the program. Where staff have research expertise, this should facilitate students carrying out research-based learning through practical projects. During the site-visit, students expressed to the ET that this was their most beneficial learning experience. This form of teaching also requires good e-resources. Where students can see the purpose of the research for the community, this is of particular benefit, and can increase motivation.

Standard 6.5.

The aspirations of the FG for all publications to be in indexed journals is a good one. However, this must not be at the expense of appropriate dissemination channels, according to the purpose of the research and the audience. Consider what is appropriate for the study program. Also, consider involving the undergraduate students in publishable research projects with the teacher. At least one staff member should be collecting and analysing data on the impact of new teaching interventions and publishing in journals related to the scholarship of teaching and learning. This research would be of benefit to the Geology Bachelor's program and inform future development of the program.

Standard 6.6.

The academic staff involved in the Geology Bachelor's program contribute expertise to mining companies and other organisations, by sitting on the Board, or through other activities. This is to be commended. This contribution should lead to collaborations that benefit the Geology Bachelor's program, and the students enrolled. All opportunities for this type of collaboration



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency

should be availed of. The FG should encourage and support increased cooperation of this type, with the benefit to the program as an objective.

Staff members who are on the editorial boards of journals should give tutorials to peers and students as to the criteria and success factors for publishing in those journals.

Standard 6.7.

The small increase in academic publishing by the academic staff is to be welcomed. It is not clear whether staff have published 1 paper in three years, or 1 paper per year for three years.

The FG should follow through on the establishment of the Geology Research Institute, and reap the benefits outlined in the SER.

Standard 6.8.

The full-time staff of the Geology Department, publish their scientific and professional work under the faculty name, as required by the University policies, and the Kosovo Agency for Accreditation.

Standard 6.9.

There are internal Geology department policies, as well as legal policies, relating to ownership of intellectual property and clear procedures are set out for commercialization of ideas developed by staff and students.

Standard 6.10.

In the Geology program, two research projects, with the cooperation of industry, engaged five students in undergraduate projects. Given the predominance of FG in the region and nationally in Kosovo, this number should be much higher. The Department of Geology must give serious thought as to how to increase this number. This issue was highlighted in the last accreditation review. New developments in the geosciences, such as in environmental, conservation and sustainability issues should have a large potential for student project work.

Student international mobility, for project research work, should be encouraged. During the site-visit, none of the students had availed of Erasmus mobility opportunities.



The ET believe ‘other activities’, as specified in the standard is vague. This may relate to excursions led by industry experts. During the site-visit the ET heard from employers of their inputs to the program. This is to be welcomed, and should lead to additional research projects for students.

| <i>Standard</i> | Compliance | |
|--|-------------------|-----------|
| | Yes | No |
| Standard 6.1. The study program has defined scientific/applied research objectives (on its own or as part of a research centre or interdisciplinary program), which are also reflected in the research development plan of the institution; sufficient financial, logistic and human resources are allocated for achieving the proposed research objectives. | | X |
| Standard 6.2. Expectations for teaching staff involvement in research and scholarly activities are clearly specified, and performance in relation to these expectations is considered in staff evaluation and promotion criteria. | X | |
| Standard 6.3. Clear policies are established for defining what is recognized as research, consistent with international standards and established norms in the field of study of the program. | X | |
| Standard 6.4. The academic staff has a proven track record of research results on the same topics as their teaching activity. | X | |
| Standard 6.5. The academic and research staff publish their work in speciality magazines or publishing houses, scientific/applied/artistic products are presented at conferences, sessions, symposiums, seminars etc. and contracts, expertise, consultancy, conventions, etc. are provided to partners inside the country and/or abroad. | X | |
| Standard 6.6. Research is validated through: scientific and applied research publications, artistic products, technological transfer through consultancy centres, scientific parks and other structures for validation. | X | |
| Standard 6.7. Each academic staff member and researcher has produced at least an average of one scientific/applied research publication or artistic outcome/product per year for the past three years. | | X |



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

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| Standard 6.8. Academic and research staff publish under the name of the institution in Kosovo they are affiliated to as full-time staff. | X | |
| Standard 6.8. Academic staff are encouraged to include in their teaching information about their research and scholarly activities that are relevant to courses they teach, together with other significant research developments in the field. | X | |
| Standard 6.9. Policies are established for ownership of intellectual property and clear procedures set out for commercialization of ideas developed by staff and students. | X | |
| Standard 6.10. Students are engaged in research projects and other activities | X | |

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *An operational plan for research should be produced, including where appropriate reference to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research.*
2. *Research-based learning should begin in the first year of the Geology Bachelor's program, and increase in subsequent years. This can begin with activities such as literature review, formulating a research question, and methods of analysis.*
3. *Consideration should be given to the appropriate journal, or other dissemination channel, according to the intended audience*
4. *Co-hosting international research conferences should be encouraged and supported. This has great potential to increase research collaborations. Such initiatives should give students on the Geology Bachelor's program the opportunity to present their research work through short oral presentations or e-posters.*
5. *Where staff have research expertise, this should facilitate students carrying out research-based learning through practical projects. Also, consider involving the undergraduate students in publishable research projects with the teacher.*
6. *At least one staff member should be collecting and analysing data on the impact of new teaching interventions and publishing in journals related to the scholarship of teaching and learning. This research would be of benefit to the Geology Bachelor's program and inform future development of the program.*
7. *Staff members who are on the editorial boards of journals should give tutorials to peers and students as to the criteria and success factors for publishing in those journals.*



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

8. *The FG should follow through on the establishment of the Geology Research Institute, and reap the benefits outlined in the SER, as was discussed in a previous SER and ET report.*
9. *The Dept.of Geology must give serious thought to increasing research-based opportunities for students. New developments in the geosciences, such as in environmental, conservation and sustainability issues should have a large potential for student project work.*

2.7. Infrastructure and resources

Standard 7.1

The Faculty of Geosciences, as an entity of the Campus of the UIBM, operates in the University's new campus. The usable area for the FG is 3980.37 m², or 45.23 m² per student (during the site visit we learned that the Faculty has 88 students in total). The SER, the appendices, and the submitted video from the Faculty are showing that the Faculty has sufficient equipped infrastructural places for conducting its activities. Specifically, the Faculty has 1 large amphitheater, 2 small amphitheatres, 4 libraries, 6 labs (chemistry, physics, geomechanical, and other labs). The academic staff have their own offices where they can prepare their lectures and organize their research work and are equipped with computers, and the internet.

Standard 7.2.

The Faculty is receiving its funds from the Ministry through the University. The Faculty is not an independent financial entity. The SER explains that the University's Steering Council decides on the budget of the academic unit according to the proposal of the rector and the budget hearing with the academic unit. The provided financial plan for the next three years is showing that the Faculty plans to collect most of its funds from the University (the Central Unit), and a really small percentage of it through fees for and during the studies, and from donations, sponsorships, and foundations. The financial plan is showing that 35% of the funds are, and are planned to be, spent on research and professional literature (books, equipment, IT). One of the strategic objectives of the Faculty is to create a fund from financial revenues to support research, and organize the FG conference, that will be part of the Faculty's envisioned strategic plan of scientific research. Further on, the SER highlights the financial resources for supporting the research programs, as one of the program's aims.

From the information provided above can be concluded that the Faculty has managed to ensure adequate long-term implementation of the study program.

39



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

Standard 7.3 & 7.4

The submitted video is showing that the Faculty's library is a place where at least 30 students at the same time can study. In the Faculty's premises there are places for students' group work, as can be noticed in the video submitted by the Faculty to the experts' team.

Standard 7.5

The literature available for the students, the non-digitized library, access to important databases, and lack of literature according to new curricula in Albanian are the biggest weaknesses and challenges identified in the SER and were further pointed out during the site visit. In addition to this, during the site visit, the experts were informed that the management of the Faculty plans to increase funds for the e-library since they are seeing the importance of it. The students have also access to the University Library of Francophone. During the site visit, the students' informed the experts' team that they are receiving learning materials from the teachers in the English language and the teachers are helping them if they do not speak English.

The University has its own University Management System through which all information and data are spread among the academic staff and students. The e-learning was pointed out as a challenge together with the non-digitized library during the site visit. Due to these two pieces of information, the experts' team recommends undertaking some serious measures for solving these.

Standard 7.6.

The Faculty's facilities that are adapted to students with special needs, as shown in the video includes an elevator and a platform for access.

Finally, the Faculty's future plans are to develop a virtual lab available for the students from March 2021. In addition, the Faculty will form an Institute for Research (stated in the previous SER) through which they plan to collect funds for their research work.

| <i>Standard</i> | Compliance | |
|--|-------------------|-----------|
| | Yes | No |
| Standard 7.1. The adequate long-term implementation of the study program is ensured in quantitative terms as regards premises, human resources and equipment. At the same time, it is guaranteed that qualitative aspects are also taken into account. | x | |



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|---|---|---|
| Standard 7.2. There is a financial plan at the level of the study program that would demonstrate the sustainability of the study program for the next minimum three years. | x | |
| Standard 7.3. The higher education institution must demonstrate with adequate documents (property deeds, lease contracts, inventories, invoices etc.) that, for the study program submitted for evaluation it possesses the following, for the next at least three years: a) owned or rented spaces adequate for the educational process; b) owned or rented laboratories, with the adequate equipment for all the compulsory disciplines within the curriculum, wherever the analytical syllabus includes such activities; c) adequate software for the disciplines of study included in the curriculum, with utilisation licence; d) library equipped with reading rooms, group work rooms and its own book stock according to the disciplines included in the curricula. | | x |
| Standard 7.4. The number of seats in the lecture rooms, seminar rooms and laboratories must be related to the study groups' size (series, groups, subgroups); the applicative activities for the speciality disciplines included in the curricula are carried out in laboratories equipped with IT equipment. | x | |
| Standard 7.5. The education institution's libraries must ensure, for each of the study programs: a) a number of seats in the reading rooms corresponding to at least 10% of the total number of students in the study program; b) a number of seats in the group work rooms corresponding to at least 10% of the total number of students in the study program; c) their own book stock from Albanian and foreign speciality literature, enough to cover the disciplines within the curricula, out of which at least 50% should represent book titles or speciality courses of recognised publishers, from the last 10 years; d) a book stock within its own library with a sufficient number of books so as to cover the needs of all students in the cycle and year of study the respective discipline is provided for; e) a sufficient number of subscriptions to Albanian and foreign publications and periodicals, according to the stated mission. | | x |



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Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency

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|---|---|--|
| Standard 7.6. The infrastructure and facilities dedicated to the implementation of the program is adapted to students with special needs. | x | |
|---|---|--|

Compliance level: Substantially Compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Accelerate the plans for opening the Institute for Research through which the Faculty can collect additional funds, and supply the e-digital library and literature in Albanian according to new curricula.*
2. *The Faculty should address the e-learning issues and digitalize the library as soon as possible having in mind the situation with the world pandemic and the need for having a stable e-learning methodology, practice and tools.*

3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

The ET welcomed the SER which was much improved on previous versions. It has addressed some of the issues raised during the last accreditation. The staff of the Geology department have made good improvements to the course syllabus, particularly in relation to the module descriptions, and some refocusing on current regional and national issues has taken place. There is still a need to go further as described in the sections above. This Geology BSc program has potential for students enrolled to gain employment in the region, nationally or internationally (if the student has another modern European language), and for staff to engage in associated research. Every effort must be made to realise this potential. This includes modern teaching and learning approaches which are interactive and research-based, and with increased access to e-learning resources. A continued move towards Earth Systems Science, requiring some interdisciplinarity, will further increase the attractiveness of the degree program.

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the study program Geology B.Sc. offered by University ‘Isa Bolitina’ Mitrovica is *Substantially compliant* with the standards included in the *KAA Accreditation manual* and, therefore, recommends *to accredit* the study program for a duration of *3 years* with a number of *60* students to be enrolled in the program.



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Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency

| Standard | Compliance Level |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Mission, objectives and administration | Partially |
| Quality management | Substantially |
| Academic Staff | Substantially |
| Educational Process Content | Substantially |
| Students | Partially |
| Research | Substantially |
| Infrastructure and resources | Substantially |
| Overall Compliance | Substantially Compliant |

4. APPENDICES *(if available)*

N/A

Expert Team

Chair

Bettie Higgs

06/04/21

(Signature)

(Print Name)

(Date)

Member

43



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(Signature)

Marija Vasilevska

(Print Name)

06/02/21

(Date)