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

***HYDROGEOLOGY AND ENGINEERING
GEOLOGY (MSc)***

RE/ACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

March-April 2021, Kosovo



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit:

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 documents requested):

- *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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- *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 programmes (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
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, Metallurgy, while 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 to establish the 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, and Faculty of Education.

The SER states that 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), Master of Science (two-year studies). The Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology (MSc) program aims through research and training of young researchers, to increase research activities in accordance with national and international interests for the application of geological-technical principles in the study of rocks, soils and water.



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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 the region, in Kosovo, 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 equip the students toward the development of laboratory techniques and hydrogeological numerical modeling to analyze and interpret hydrogeologic geochemistry and groundwater systems; to describe the main hydrogeochemical processes and parameters of groundwater in water-rock interaction environments (crystalline and sedimentary rocks); to identify and explain groundwater pollution, measurements of parameters for the transport of pollutants, sources of pollution and their rehabilitation and develop technical rock parameters based on literature standards and comparisons and identify the basic rock types that an engineer can handle.

In the missions of the University, Faculty and program the main focus is to provide students with the needed skills so that they can be prepared for the labor market. Finally, the mission of the program is in the same line with the mission of the Faculty and the University.

Standard 1.2.

The SER states that the learning outcomes are in line with the Level VII 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 MSc students to be awarded the Masters Degree as the following:



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Knowledge: They will have highly specialized, extensive and in-depth knowledge, some of which is fundamental in a field of work or study and which relate to different fields as a basis for authentic ideas and research. This includes:

- Critical understanding of key theories, principles and concepts related to practical and conceptual knowledge of the subject, discipline or field of work - including relevant specializations;
- Knowledge that covers and integrates most of the key areas of subject, discipline or field of work, including specifics and terminology;
- Supporting critical awareness of current issues of a subject, discipline or field of work including relevant specializations.

Skills: Candidates will be able to apply specialized skills and techniques related to a subject or discipline, a professional field, including activities that require innovative ideas and research. They will have the attitude and know-how to evaluate new information, concepts and evidence from a wide range of sources and should be able to use specialized problem-solving skills, the development of new knowledge, and procedures and integration in various fields such as:

- planning and carrying out an important research and development project
- developing original and creative responses to problems and issues practiced in a wide variety of often unpredictable ways, in a variety of professional contexts;

Competencies: They will be autonomous and take initiative in professional and similar activities, taking responsibility for their own work and the work of others. They undertake work or study initiatives that involve managing and transforming work or study contexts that are complex, unforeseen, and require new strategic approaches. This may include:

- managing professional teams, contributing to the development of knowledge and practice and reviewing their performance;
- addressing complex ethical and professional issues and making decisions on issues that are not addressed by current professional codes or practices

The Masters will include knowledge and understanding that is built on and linked to Level 6. Academic learning will provide a basis for progress to doctoral studies.

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



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production in general, which reflects on general social development” we cannot conclude that the above-mentioned things are in line with it.

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 this particular program.

Having this in mind the experts think that 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.

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, which is welcomed. The students confirmed this. However, all of them pointed out that there is a need for more practical work which is one of the program`s weaknesses.

In addition, the syllabuses are presenting the tendency for the usage of different teaching and evaluation methods such as lab and field exercises, independent assignments, class quizzes and others. Moreover, the documents are showing practice of involvement of students in the academic staff`s research projects, which is welcomed.

There is no evidence in 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 for addressing the challenges related with the lack of didactic concept of the programme.



Standard 1.4.

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).

Standard 1.5 & 1.6

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

The frequency of revision and amendment (if needed) 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.

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: Substantially Compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *A specific definition of the learning outcomes is needed, together with standard and consistent vocabulary when required for comparable parts of the syllabuses or the education context.*
2. *The Faculty management should take serious steps and actions when it is required to make changes based on the review of the policies, regulations, terms of reference and statements of responsibility relating to the management and delivery of the program.*
3. *The FG should implement the recommendations of the academic staff listed in the QA questionnaire summary report for 2018/2019.*

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



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insist as this will allow the maximum benefit to the FG, Dept. of Geology, and the Masters program, from the quality assurance process.

The ET welcome the evidence (links in SER to documents) in the SER and any supporting documentation, alongside the claims made. However further evidence is required, for example the actual number of students who have enrolled in the program, 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.

Standard 2.1.

The SER states that 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 Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology Masters program. Anonymous 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.



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The ET recommend that a broad 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.

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 Masters in Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology degree program. As part of this process, data is collected on the number of students who complete their degree within 2 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.

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.



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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 Masters in Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology modules. Information about the program and courses, and the expertise of staff, is publicly available on the UIBM website. It is not clear if the QA critique of the Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology MSc 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 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.



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The ET has received a detailed report (SER and additional documents) indicating the overall quality of the Masters in Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology 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’ in this model 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 processes. The aim must be that it leads to quality enhancement.

The SWOT does indicate that one weakness is insufficient literature in the Albanian language. This is a major concern, particularly for a postgraduate program. The FG strategic plan for research, and associated operational plan for research, must address this urgently. 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



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from industry that is not at full capacity, towards environmental and conservation issues in Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology, should produce new opportunities for internships.

It is true that international collaboration, including visiting academics, and local collaborations with industry, have the potential to improve the quality of the Masters in Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology 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 Masters program would be a valuable addition to the SER.

<i>Standard</i>	<i>Compliance</i>	
	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
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,	X	



investigation of the student workload, academic success and employment of graduates.		
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 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 the 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.*

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.



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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 the UIBM Human Resources Department.

Standard 3.4

Academic staff in the Masters 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 two staff named as coordinators for the Masters program. They each hold a Ph.D and are full-time employees. This corresponds to 120 ECTS for this 2-year Masters 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.

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 (ie. this is how to



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teach) to a ‘staff development’ model (ie. 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 and on into the Masters program.

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 Masters 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



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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 for the Dept. of Geology. 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 Masters in Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology 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' or 'understand' as the action verb. In each module, students should be challenged to achieve a range of action verbs from Bloom's taxonomy. All students should be challenged to summarise, explain, apply, interpret etc. within each module. This is very likely to be happening during the module, but it must be captured in the writing of the learning outcomes.

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) especially at Masters level.

The recommended texts in the module descriptions are more up-to-date than in 2017. This could be further improved. Where important texts are not available in the Albanian language (as stated in the SER) 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



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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.

SWOT:

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 some strengths and 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 staff and students on the Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology Masters 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. The organisation of formal and informal peer-learning for teacher-development within the FG and UIBM would benefit staff and therefore student learning.

Standard	Compliance	
	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	



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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
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 for the Dept. of



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Geology. If data management is fully digitised, then a sample of a report generated should be provided to the ET.

- 2. A list of grant applications, with successes noted, should be included in the SER*
- 3. Community engagement, and school visits, should be increased to attract students into the undergraduate and postgraduate programs.*
- 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. Plans should be put in place urgently to improve e-resources. This should maximise the opportunity afforded by Open Access publications.*
- 6. The 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.

In the SER the Geology Dept. state that the study program gives students a comprehensive and specialised scientific education in the study of rocks, soils and water. Elsewhere in the SER the Geology Dept. indicate that the demand for students with hydrogeology experience is higher than the number of students they can recruit. The program is reflecting a changing world and the range of opportunities in Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology. This will increase the attractiveness of the Master's program. Continued re-focusing on modern day concerns and challenges in Kosovo was the recommendation of the last ET report, but it can go further. The program should be under constant review to see if it is fulfilling a national need. The consultation with stakeholders is commended, and the Dept. of Geology should follow through on collaboration and the provision of sufficient internships.

Geoscience is central to many present day issues of global concern. Groundwater development and protection is a key player in this. The SER claims that interdisciplinary teaching and learning are included in the program. The ET recommend that fewer modules are offered, as 120ECTS are required (and 180ECTS offered), and also that the study of English replaces one 5-credit module offered, or that one existing 5-credit module is taught through English. This will better prepare students to contribute on a national and international stage.

Standard 4.2.

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

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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. The ET recommend that, since there are so few students, only the most necessary 120ECTS are offered (and not 180ECTS as stated). Modules stating 45 hours of lectures are out of line with modern teaching approaches. A larger number of ECTS could be awarded for fieldwork and the Masters' thesis.

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 Masters graduates should have acquired during postgraduate study of the program, for example 'an ethical approach to addressing issues of water supply and protection'. The program learning outcomes should be at a higher 'umbrella' level, and include approaches and values that all of the modules in the program are addressing. An example could be "Can apply appropriate technical expertise in the investigation of a hydrogeological and engineering site" or "Can carry out a scientific investigation in a range of situations". These are broader outcomes than those given for individual modules.

In order to carry out this review, consult the FG strategic Plan, and specifically the National Qualifications Framework for reference to appropriate Level 7 learning outcomes, For example:

- will be able to apply specialized skills and techniques related to the field of hydrogeology and engineering geology, including activities that require innovative ideas and research.
- will be able to evaluate new information, concepts and evidence from a wide range of sources
- will be able to develop original and creative responses to problems and issues in hydrogeology and engineering geology.

Standard 4.4.

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

The writing of the learning outcomes has improved for many modules. This is to be commended. However, there is further refinement needed for the majority and this should be carried out at the

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earliest opportunity. Module coordinators should strive to have one action verb as the focus in each learning outcome. The set of learning outcomes for each module should cover a range of action verbs from Bloom's taxonomy.. Note that 'understand' is not a recommended action verb. The coordinator should make it clear what the student must be able to do to demonstrate understanding.

For example in the module *Foundations and their consolidation* "After completing this course (subject), students will be able to: 1. Better understand the geological-engineering conditions in relation to foundations and their impact on ground. 2. Understand changes in the geological environment during construction and use of the building." could be written "After completing this course students will be able to demonstrate understanding by being able to 1. Explain a range of geological-engineering conditions in relation to foundations and their impact on ground 2. Recognise changes in the geological environment during construction and use of the building." The students will then have a clearer picture of what they will be able to do.

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 in most cases, however there are examples where this needs review, for example in *Groundwater Protection* the maximum load of hours is for fieldwork, but 50% of the assessment is a terminal exam.

There are two modules with the same name *Groundwater Protection* and the same code. They appear to have similar content, but different lecturers and different workloads and assessment formats. This should be addressed.

Several course descriptions suggest that 45 hours of lectures are delivered within one module. This is excessive. 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 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

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inclusion of the English or German languages in the program. It is not clear how many students come from abroad to take the Masters program, or how they are accommodated in English (as stated in the SER).

The SER mentions the HERAS project but does not state the progress that has been made. At the site visit, in response to a question to senior managers, this information was not obtained. The link to Regulations on mobility and internationalisation is useful, but again, it was difficult to gain information about how many students and staff have availed of these opportunities, and what impact they have had. Until this is known it is difficult to make recommendations and highlight the opportunities.

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.

The SER states that the focus of the program is on mining and industry. The ET recommend that this focus be widened to governmental schemes, and aquifer-based regional development.

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 may be 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).



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There is no statement on formative assessment. The Dept. of Geology should include this in their curricula planning. Formative assessment can include discussion, peer feedback, group work, etc. This is a very important component of student learning and enables informal teacher-assessment of the student-learning.

Standard 4.9.

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.

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 10ECTS is not making the most of the opportunity for learning. If the student is asked to do more than keep a diary, for example given a challenge or a small research project, then there is an opportunity to award 15ECTS for this important teaching and learning approach. The ET recommends that new and challenging opportunities for internships are sought in collaboration with stakeholders.

Standard 4.12.

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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.

SWOT:

The Dept of Geology has identified the strengths of the program, including the expertise of the academic staff. It has also identified the weaknesses that must be addressed urgently, including lack of library e-resources, and the ability to track plagiarism. Plagiarism can be reduced by designing the assessment in order to make plagiarism more difficult. 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 MSc. program. This, together with the language of science issues and take-up of mobility, must be addressed. Meeting a local/regional/national challenge or addressing a local/regional/national research question posed by an employer may increase the opportunity for paid internships. All of these measures will improve the attractiveness of the program, and mitigate against threats due to 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	



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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	
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.	X
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	



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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	
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Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *The FG should consider varying their bench-marking partners, to gain new learning.*
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 appropriate level that all of the modules are addressing. They need not be so specific about the content of courses.*
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. Students should be challenged to synthesise, explain, classify, interpret, plan, solve etc. at the appropriate level in every module.*
6. *It is essential to continue 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 English language classes.*
8. *The program should be continually reviewed to reflect a changing world and the broadening range of opportunities in Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology. This must look beyond only mining and industry. This will increase the attractiveness of the MSc. in Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology program.*
9. *The Dept of Geology should consider making internships more challenging and maximise the learning opportunity they can provide.*

2.5. Students

Students are equal members in the governing processes of the particular Faculty. As reported in the SER and the additional documents, on the Faculty level there is a Students Council, that



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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 show that the Faculty of Geosciences has formally adopted the admission procedure at the institutional level for the students` recruitment. The procedure involves the Senate and the Rectorate of the University of Mitrovica, who decide the quotas based on the proposal that they receive from the Faculty`s Dean and the head of the study program. Currently, for the Masters program, this number is 15. After the decision of the number, the application process is announced. The enrollment process requires completed bachelor studies and pass of the entrance exam.

The students` interest for the particular program is decreasing. The documents provided to the ET show that there is a trend of very large decreasing of the number of enrolled students, from 10 enrolled students in 2017/18, to 9 in 2018/19, 0 in 2019/20 and 2020/21 (with the explanation that in that year the program was not accredited). The Faculty is explaining this in the following way: *“This is due to the small number of students during an academic year, so studies in one year are organized in the program Deposit of Mineral Raw Materials, whereas in the following year in Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology. Based on this in the academic year 2020/2021 we have enrolled students in the program Deposit of Mineral Raw Materials, while in 2021/2022 students will be enrolled in the program Hydrogeology with Engineering Geology”*- additional documents requested by the ET. The management is aware of this challenge and will try to undertake different actions for addressing this.

The students that the ET 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 them as future 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 small groups that has increased the quality of teaching and learning as reported in the SER.

The University Management System is used as an information tool for the regulations, sharing students` feedback, informing the students for the exams` results and its recording and data from



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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 ET met shared that they are working together with the academic staff. This is also confirmed through the Faculty`s commitment to ensuring 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. In specific, every professor has at least twice a week, two hours 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. However, no information or evidence shows the feedback to students on their performance and whether results of assessments are given promptly and accompanied by mechanisms for assistance if needed.

The experts` team was informed that there is a practice of students` involvement in the research projects. The additionally requested documents are providing an information for five research projects on a Faculty level in which students are included.

Standard 5.8 & 5.9

The University does not have software for ensuring originality of the students` work. The SER shares 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. In addition to this, the SER includes information that the academic staff highlight the importance of the uniqueness of the students` work in all classes through informing them how to place the references/bibliography used for their work.



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 nor 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 Masters 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.

Finally, the experts' team can conclude that the Faculty is taking care of the position of the students and for 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	
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: Substantially 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 for disseminating the program's value among the future students and society is needed. 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.*



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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. 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 on the Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology Masters program. Students report their appreciation in particular of practical laboratory classes and internships that involve research projects for their learning. This teaching and learning research-focused approach should begin in semester 1 and increase throughout the program, culminating in a research thesis.

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 student learning in the Masters program.

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. 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 students on the Masters program.



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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, and stakeholders. This should be encouraged and supported, and has great potential to increase research collaborations. This initiative should give students on the Masters 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 future research and/or employment.

The holding of a roundtable on Earthquakes, with a focus on Kosovo, was an excellent initiative. The ET recommend that more such initiatives are taken, with the objectives of public service and strengthening collaborations for research and student internships.

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. This journal should encourage research papers from the students on the Masters program, as a result of their internship or thesis, as part of their 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 Masters program. At Masters level, the majority of topics should be facilitated by staff with the appropriate research background. This appears to be the case. 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.

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.



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Standard 6.6.

The academic staff involved in the Hydrogeology and Engineering Masters 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 Masters program, and the students enrolled. All opportunities for this type of collaboration should be availed of. The FG should encourage and support increased cooperation of this type, with the benefit to the program as an objective.

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.

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, increase the involvement of the Masters students in publishable research projects with the teachers. 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 Masters in Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology program and inform future development of the program.



Standard 6.10.

Given the predominance of FG in the region and nationally in Kosovo, the number of students involved in research projects with industry and governmental organisations should be 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 water provision and protection, and building construction, together with environmental, conservation and sustainability issues should have a large potential for student research work. This would allow the recruitment of more than 15 students per year.

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	



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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
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 (associated with the strategic plan) for research should be produced, including, where appropriate, reference to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research.*
2. *Research-based learning should begin in the first semester of the Masters in Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology program, and increase in subsequent semesters. 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 journals, or other dissemination channels, for research according to the intended audience*



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4. *Co-hosting international research conferences and roundtables should be encouraged and supported. This has great potential to increase research collaborations. Such initiatives should give students on the Masters program the opportunity to present their research work.*
5. *Where staff have research expertise, this should facilitate students carrying out research-based learning through practical projects. Also, consider increasing the involvement of the Masters students in publishable research projects with the teachers.*
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 Masters 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.*
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, and student enrollment. New developments in hydrogeology and engineering geology, together with environmental, conservation and sustainability issues should have a large potential for student research work.*

2.7. Infrastructure and resources

Standard 7.1

The Faculty of Geosciences, as an entity of the Campus of the University "Isa Boletini" of Mitrovica, operates in the University's new campuses. The usable area for the particular Faculty is 3980.37 m², or 45.23 m² per student (during the side visit we learned that the Faculty has 88 students in total). The SER, the appendixes, and the submitted video from the Faculty are showing that the Faculty has enough 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 internet.

Standard 7.2.

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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 student fees 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 creating a fund from financial revenues to support research, organizing the FG conference, that will be part of the Faculty are 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 it can be concluded that the Faculty has managed to ensure adequate long-term implementation of the study program.

Standard 7.3 & 7.4 & 7.5

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.

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 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 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 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 information the experts' team would like to recommend undertaking some serious measures for solving these.

Standard 7.6

The Faculty's facilities that are adapted to students with special needs. The video is showing 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 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	
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	



<p>Standard 7.5. The education institution’s libraries must ensure, for each of the study programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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
<p>Standard 7.6. The infrastructure and facilities dedicated to the implementation of the program is adapted to students with special needs</p>	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, e-digital library and literature in Albanian according to new curricula.*
1. *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. The staff of the Geology department have made good improvements to the course syllabus, particularly in relation to the module descriptions, and some refocusing has taken place. There is still a need to go further as described in the sections above. This Masters program has huge potential for students enrolled to gain employment, and for staff to engage in associated research. Every effort must be made to realise this potential. This includes modern teaching and learning



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approaches which are interactive and research-based, and increased access to e-learning resources. There is increased potential for international research collaboration in the important areas of hydrogeology and engineering geology, and the recent advance in virtual meetings will benefit staff of the Dept. of Geology. To maximise this, a greater emphasis will need to be placed on having a second European language.

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the study program Masters in Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology offered by University 'Isa Bolitina' Mitrovica, Faculty of Geosciences, 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 *15-20* students to be enrolled in the program.

Standard	Compliance Level
Mission, objectives and administration	substantially
Quality management	substantially
Academic Staff	substantially
Educational Process Content	substantially
Students	substantially



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Research	substantially
Infrastructure and resources	substantially
Overall Compliance	substantially

4. APPENDICES *(if available)*

Expert Team

Chair

(Signature)

Bettie Higgs

(Print Name)

06/04/21

(Date)

Member

(Signature)

Marija Vasilevska

(Print Name)

06/04/21

(Date)