UBT College, Prizren Branch

INSTITUTIONAL RE-ACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

March 2023
Vienna-Bucharest-Zagreb

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: February 20, 2023

Expert Team (ET) members:

- *Dr. Dietmar Paier*
- *Prof. univ. dr. Magdalena Platis*
- *Marko Komso, student expert*

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- *Arianit Krasniqi, KAA Officer*
- *Leona Kovaçi, KAA Officer*

Sources of information for the Report:

- *Self-Evaluation Report (SER) submitted by UBT*
- *Information obtained during the site visit in meetings with the management of the institution, teaching and administrative staff, students, graduates, external stakeholders and employers of graduates*
- *General strategy and work plan of the College*
- *Research strategy*
- *Website of UBT College*
- *Visits of on-site facilities*
- *Statute of the College*
- *Code of ethics*
- *Various regulations governing administrative processes, teaching, and assessments*
- *Additional documents requested by the expert team*

Criteria used for institutional and program evaluations

- *Standards for institutional evaluation as outlined in the Accreditation Manual 2022 of the KAA*

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1.2. Site visit schedule

Time	Meeting
09:30 – 11:00	Meeting with the management of the institution *(no slide presentation is allowed, the meeting is intended as a free discussion)*
11:05 – 12.05	Meeting with: 1. Quality assurance representatives 2. Administrative services
12:10 – 13:10	Meeting with Deans of Faculties (Head of programmes in case of smaller colleges)
13:10 – 14.10	Lunch break (to be provided at the evaluation site)
14:10 – 15:00	Visiting tour of the facilities and infrastructure
15:00 – 15:50	Meeting with teaching staff
15:55 – 16:45	Meeting with students
16:55 – 17:45	Meeting with graduates
17:50 – 18:40	Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders

1.3. A brief overview of the institution under evaluation

UBT College is a private higher education institution being a part of the wider UBT Group which incorporates vocational training centers, educational services and an executive academy for professional development (SER, p. 7). UBT Group is operating since 2001 and maintains six branches of higher education in Kosovo and two external offices in Austria and in Hungary.

UBT College maintains 20 faculties with bachelor and master programs being offered at the time of the site visit. Its main products and services are related to (i) higher education and research, (ii) executive academy for professional development, (iii) vocational training center, and (iv) services.

UBT College was built on the experience of the Institute of Enterprise Engineering and Management (IEME) since 2001. The College was licensed to operate as a private bearer of higher education by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

The philosophy of the institution is to offer competitive education programs that would base teaching on labor market demands and international practices. UBT student orientation is balanced between three broad areas: (1) ICT, mathematics, and natural science, (2) Engineering, manufacturing, and construction, and (3) social, economic and human sciences.

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According to the national education Statistics in Kosovo", in the academic year 2021/22 a total number of 11.941 students were enrolled in UBT College, of which 10.642 bachelor students and 1.299 master students.

Since December 2022, the UBT Prizren Branch is located inside the ITP Park, which is a 40-hectare fenced area.

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2. INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

The institutional evaluation consists of 11 sub headings through which the administration, organisation and management of the institution, as well as teaching and research are assessed.

2.1. Public mission and institutional objectives

The SER (p. 32) outlines the mission of the UBT College Prizren Branch as follows:

> "UBT will be a major contributor to the strategic growth and development of Kosovo and the region. UBT will serve Kosovo and the region, preparing leaders for the 21st century with a global perspective and skills needed for educational, social, economic, political, environmental, and cultural advancement."

These statements address important functions of higher education providers without doubt and they are very likely to be true for any kind of higher education provider in all places inside and outside of Kosovo. Yet, these are not specific statements which explain the specific function of the Prizren Branch at all. Also, in other parts of the SER, no distinct mission statements which elaborate on the particular regional priorities of the Prizren Branch.

The ET misses clear statements on the main pillars for higher education providers in Kosovo, ie. teaching, research and community service, as requested in the KAA manual for institutional accreditation. The Prizren Branch declares that the mission was "developed through a process of staff consultation and extensive debate led by senior management" with the support "of external industrial and institutional partners (…) to identify what the market demands are and what people need to be UBT value (sic)" (SER, p. 33). The ET would have appreciated to learn more about these values in the section on the mission of the institution, but did not obtain information other than very general statements which have been mixed up with statements about the adoption of the "standard assurance (sic) guidelines of the European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (sic)" which is intriguing since these are highly relevant for chapter 2.6 of the SER on Learning and Teaching, but not for the mission statement. It would have also been helpful to learn about the concrete outcomes of the consultation process, but no minutes or other documentation were provided.

Thus, the ET concludes that the mission of the Prizren, which would explicitly highlight the three pillars, is not available. Unfortunately, there are no explanations how the three pillars are linked with the relevant stakeholder in the region and how this would have been communicated. However, if such a differentiated mission statement is not available or does not exist, this would impose uncertainties and risks to strategic and operational management.

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A further issue arises from the predominantly implicit understanding of teaching excellence which the College stresses frequently. In the Quality Assurance Regulation, it says: "With UBT 2025 Strategy the priority focus shifted from development to quality to achieving the highest standards of Excellence. The goal anticipates development of mechanisms, procedures and criteria for monitoring and assuring quality of educational, scientific and research, as well as artistic and professional activities." The ET acknowledges this statement but did not find evidence how this principle of continuous improvement is embedded in the organization practically; furthermore, it received different opinions of what teaching excellence means for different groups of staff, but no shared collective understanding at the Branch level became visible.

As the institutional mission does not provide concrete institutional objectives and key concepts are understood in different ways across the branch, the ET, this may also hamper effective strategic planning and decision making. This does not imply dysfunctional processes at all, since organizations may vary strongly in the way stable management and processes are achieved and the ET gained the impression that there is a solid level of flexible and effective management in place at the branch level. However, this does not replace a mission statement with clearly defined institutional objectives where the three pillars are linked to all stakeholder groups in detail. At the current state, no such institutional objectives could be found and therefor, assessing the consistency of medium- and long-term institutional objectives with the mission itself was not possible.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Develop a distinct mission statement as required by the KAA manual.*

2. *Document integration of all relevant stakeholder groups into the development of the mission, their specific contributions and how this made up for the particular priorities and values of the mission according to the three pillars.*

3. *Explain in detail all relevant linkages of the institutional objectives at the branch level and explain - by exemplifying concrete measures and projects - the specific activities and services which the Prizren Branch intends to accomplish for and in collaboration with relevant regional stakeholders.*

4. *Explain in detail the medium- and long-term institutional objectives of the Prizren Branch.*

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2.2. Strategic planning, governance and administration

In the SER, the UBT College Prizren Branch refers to the Governing Board of UBT College as the key panel for planning, evaluating and refining the strategy (p. 42ff.). There is no distinct strategic plan for the Prizren Branch, but a general strategy for the entire UBT College. The UBT strategy defines 3 overarching strategy areas which may be understood as strategic fields of action: (1) Teaching and Learning Excellence, (2) Community Engagement, (3) Infrastructure. At the next levels, 10 strategic objectives which again comprise 39 particular strategies are assigned to these strategic action fields. While this comprehensive matrix of fields of activity, objectives and strategies is not connected to a three-year strategic plan in the SER, the College submitted a "UBT Branch in Prizren Strategic Plan 2023-2028" (App. 4) which provides more details. The information provided in this Strategic Plan 2023-2028 partially overlaps with the information provided in the SER, and partially contains additional strategic objectives. Here, the College enumerates 5 strategic objectives: (1) Achieving Academic Excellence, (2) Developing Research, Innovation and Social Responsibility, (3) Creating a Positive Working and Learning Environment, (4) Initiating and increasing internationalization and regional partnerships, and (5) Partnering with the community (App. 4, p. 14).

The "Action Plan" which is a part of the Strategic Plan (App. 4, p. 15ff.) assigns 26 actions to the first strategic objective, 21 actions to the second strategic objectives, 23 actions to the third strategic objective, 7 actions to the fourth strategic objective and 23 strategic objectives to the fifth strategic objective, which results in a total of 100 actions related to 5 strategic objectives. In the "Action Plan", precise dates of implementation or goal achievement are assigned only to a very small proportion of actions. Thus, less evidence for an accurate assessment of the plausibility and the feasibility of the action plan is provided. This is hampered by the information provided in the "Annual Work Plan", which is another part of the Strategic Plan 2023-2028 (p. 33ff.), where only 30 strategies related to working areas which again coincide with the actions enumerated in the Action Plan only partially and which obviously refer to many everyday business operations such as "developing written and oral communication for students" but basically not to activities of strategic relevance. Overall, the strategic plan is not outlined in a systematic way but rather seems a combination of various strategic and operational plans following different structures. Furthermore, it must be asserted that the "UBT Branch in Prizren Strategic Plan 2023-2028" does not elaborate on the specific regional character of the strategy except for several general statements which may be applicable to any region in the country or elsewhere.

The College also provided a distinct "UBT Branch in Prizeren Research Strategy" which enumerates 8 research institutes and 11 Centers of Excellence (p. 4f.), where strong emphasis on international excellence of future research in four domains is made: Business, Management

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and Economy; ICT; Agriculture, Food Sciences and Technology; Nursing and Public Health. A detailed assessment of the research strategy is provided in section 2.7. of this report.

During the site visit, the ET learned about the particular collaboration of the UBT College Prizren Branch in the area of ICT, where it established close collaboration with the Innovation and Training Park (ITP) Prizren, located in the same campus as the College, in the area of ICT. As the ET learned during the site visit, the Prizren Branch is in discussion with ITP regarding the creation of synergies, especially in the fields of ICT and creative industries, which is a promising approach. The College also collaborates with a considerable number of companies which provide important inputs for academic operations and the ET considers the culture of collaboration in business projects as an important element and a significant achievement of the Prizren Branch.

In meetings with employers and external stakeholders, the ET gained the impression that companies and external stakeholders are more involved in strategy implementation and collaborative business projects - eg. through giving direct inputs for curriculum development, through arranging student competitions to increase business skills and entrepreneurship and through collaboration for internships and scholarships - rather than in strategic planning. Such projects are in any case important dimensions of university-industry collaboration. The College has also described these activities in a document titled "Industrial bord Brench of Prizeren" (sic!), which clearly demonstrates this very operational approach and contain general declarations of interest for further collaboration. Interestingly, in this document no companies with principal offices in the Prizren region are cited as members of the Industrial Board. Although the ET considers business projects as very important measures to advance labor market orientation of the College and to develop career opportunities for students and graduates, it must be emphasized that practical cooperation does not replace more formalized ways of involving external stakeholders and companies systematically into strategic planning. For instance, graduates reported during the site visit that if they are approached for inputs about the labour market relevance of their study programs this is done on an informal basis, but no systematic, regular collection of information from alumni is being done. As a conclusion, the college-business relations can be considered well developed, while systematic integration of the outcomes of these collaborations into strategic planning are developed at a rather basic level.

Moreover, the strategy does not show any concrete regional approach nor does it refer to *specific* regional circumstances or needs. For example, the regional dimension is not explained in detail, eg. by describing the particular characteristics of regional partnerships or the particular regional labour market demands. Here, a clear description of the regional characteristics of the college-business relations and its strategic relevance for the future development would help make comprehensible how the particular strategies of the higher education institution may leverage and reinforce beneficial regional structures and development processes.

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Another issue the ET wishes to mention are the very general provisions regarding the first strategic objective "Teaching and Learning Excellence". Here, some formulations appear to be wrong since they refer to other levels of the education system, eg. when it is stated that it is the objective of the institution to "understand and apply the most effective subject methods, both in primary and general education …" (sic, SER, p. 42). Other strategies which are assigned to this objective are redundant or expressed in a very general way, such as the objective of fostering critical thinking, which the ET considers being of utmost importance, and which is emphasized frequently in the SER, however, without providing an idea which measures are to be deployed to achieve this objective. In principle, the ET also misses elaborations on how up-to-date key concepts of academic teaching and learning are adopted in the strategy, since the majority of strategies presented are expressed in such general ways that they are suitable for every level of the education. Conversely, this means that in the SER, the statements on teaching and learning excellence address the higher education area at a rather general and low level.

Integration of strategic planning with annual and longer-term budget processes may be assumed and appears to be done on demand and in a flexible way according to internal financial and compliance regulations.

The criteria for election of decision-makers and decision-making are outlined in detail in the Statute of UBT College and elected positions in the relevant academic bodies are elaborated in a transparent way. The College shows a clear structure of responsibilities that defines roles and responsibilities for overall policy and accountability appropriately. Both, the senior administration for management, and the academic decision making structures seem to be clearly differentiated and followed in practice, which is reinforced by the ownership structure of the College.

Regarding student representatives, the College set all formal requirements which are necessary to ensure student representation in relevant academic bodies.

The administration of the UBT College Prizren Branch seems to function as required for a higher education provider. The ET did not obtain detailed information about position descriptions of the administrative staff, except for one particular position upon request of the ET (Civic Engagement Office).

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Develop a system to integrate stakeholders in a consistent way in regular surveys of which the results are used for strategic planning.*

2. *Document all activities of strategic planning processes and the particular roles and contributions of each stakeholder group.*

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3. *Document the criteria and outcomes of the assessment of each stakeholder group's input for strategic planning.*

4. *Develop a real academic strategy with clear provisions for teaching excellence and research excellence at the level of higher education.*

5. *Refine the strategy in terms of a feasible, non-redundant set of strategic objectives which are consistently related to a work plan and monitoring scheme for short and medium-term targets.*

6. *Integrate the methodologies for short and medium-term monitoring as well as the results of strategic planning and publish the stages and results of this process.*

2.3. Financial planning and management

The assessment of financial resources of the Prizren Branch of UBT College is based on figures provided in the SER, in the Strategic Plan 2023-2028, and in an additional document on the projection of student numbers requested by the ET.

Unfortunately, the figures and information provided in these documents show huge discrepancies. With regard to *incomes* from student fees, the projected incomes for the period 2023-2028 as displayed in the SER (p. 60), show an increase from EUR 2.835.030 in the academic year 2023/24 to EUR 4.456.028 in the academic year 2026/27. In the Strategic Plan, the figures for income from student fees are EUR 518.075 for the academic year 2023/24 and EUR 1.058.193 for the academic year 2026/27. A reasonable explanation for these extreme discrepancies could be differences in underlying projections of student numbers. During the meeting, the ET was told that the student fee used for calculation is EUR 1200, with about 10% of students who may receive discounts of about 15% on average. That means that differences in discounts which may occur over the years cannot explain such differences in incomes.

The information obtained from an additional document requested by the ET compounds the problem, since in this document the number of students in 2023/24 is supposed to be 1383 and 1708 in 2026/27. This would result in income from student fees of EUR 1.659.600 in 2023/24 and EUR 2.049.600 in 2026/27 (possible discounts and other changes not included), which hardly can be reconciled with the projections mentioned before even when possible dropouts, interruption of studies or similar eventualities are taken into account.

The projections of other incomes as well as expenditures show similar discrepancies. The staff expenditures may serve as an example here: While in the SER (p. 60) the staff expenditures are rising from EUR 1.440.209 in 2023/24 to EUR 2.090.255 in 2026/27, they are increasing from EUR 378.000 in 2023/24 to EUR 709.530 in 2026/27 in the Strategic Plan, p. 32. This implies a significant growth in academic and/or administrative staff within this period. Again,

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the figures in an additional document requested, the corresponding projection of academic and administrative staff (full time equivalents) do not comply with the financial forecasts at all, since for the period mentioned the academic staff is said to increase by 41% and the administrative staff by 20%.

While these discrepancies alone are incomprehensible, another difficulty in assessing the financial planning of the Prizren Branch arises from the fact that this comes along with an abrupt rise of student numbers from 391 students in the academic year 2022/23 (SER, p. 18) to a projected total of 1383 students in 2023/24 which would be an increase of 350% within one year.

From these documents provided by UBT College it must be assumed that no reliable financial plans which would be substantiated by evidence-based data and serious extrapolation were submitted for the purpose of institutional accreditation. In principle, financial management as a shared task between the UBT center and the Prizren Branch attributes relevant budgeting tasks to the Coordinator of the Branch in collaboration with the central Financial Office of the UBT College, with accounting being done at the center level. Given the description of the responsibilities of the branch and the center, the branch coordinator is dependent on the provisions and on the collaboration with the center, particularly on the approval of budget plans and expenditures. According to the SER (p. 51f.), a specialized office overseeing and managing the branch's budgeting and accounting is not established in the Prizren Branch. While it is reasonable from the UBT center's perspective to determine the branch's budget centrally, this might limit the branch managers and other executive officers at the branch level to act flexibly in order to respond to regional needs.

Subsequently, it must be assumed that an accurate monitoring of expenditures and budget commitments is not fully developed at the branch level. While in the SER, the accounting system is described in a comprehensible way, it is all the more astonishing that such discrepancies in financial forecasts can find its way into documents which are crucial for institutional accreditation.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Avoid discrepancies between different financial plans and avoid mistakes in financial plans.*

2. *Develop correct and evidence-based financial plans for each program and substantiate and explain obvious deviations in incomes and expenditures.*

3. *Explain the specifics of the development of budget lines.*

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2.4. Academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability

UBT has a Code of ethics adopted in May 2019, being publicly available at https://www.ubt-uni.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/10-41-V2-UBT-Code-of-Ethics.pdf, which covers the academic integrity (articles 3-7), academic freedom (article 12), and some other issues related to the ethical integrity, for example regulations on the conflict of interest, on correct procedures for selecting, electing and appointing Academic Community Members, on the respect of copyright and the strict citing of references in any paper. The document also explains the role of the Ethics Commission and of the faculty Ethics Sub-commissions. The published version of the Code was adopted in May 2019 (this date appears in the end of the document), but on the first page, it contains another date (May 2020), which might generate confusion to the readers.

The Code of ethics at UBT requires that all internal stakeholders act consistently with high standards of ethical conduct and avoidance of conflicts of interest, explaining what this conflict of interest mean; the Code of ethics applies to the entire academic community consisting of staff, students and contractors, as stipulated in the Article 1, Code of ethics. The document covers integrity-based behavior in areas such as teaching, research and administrative work. The Code of ethics regulates the tasks for the Ethics Commission, such as receiving proposals for amendments, discussing reporting violations, compiling annual reports, adjudicating complaints, as well as for the subcommittees (article 14 and 17). Nevertheless, the document does not clearly stipulate that it is enforced through clear processes and mechanisms which applies to all structural units in the institution; the code refers to members of the academic community which includes staff, students and contractors. Administrative staff and units should be clearly considered in the ethical mechanisms, since the most recent report of cases handled by UBT sub-committees and the central ethics of 2020-2021 considered 75 cased of misconduct by administration (in the previous year there were 0 cases). Moreover, a minute of an Ethics sub-committee was provided as an additional document to the ET. This shows evidence on institutional preoccupation that UBT applies the code of ethics on all activities and that the transparency on the cases from a statistical point of view is obvious.

Regulations and policies are being made public at https://www.ubt-uni.net/en/ubt-en/about-ubt/regulations-and-policies/ (in English) and at https://www.ubt-uni.net/sq/ubt/per-ubt/politikat-rregulloret/ (in Albanian). These regulations cover general areas (for example Statute, Student organization Statute, Regulation of assurance of health of the employees and the work environment, Regulation of preserving personal data etc), but also specific areas, such as the teaching domain (e.g. Regulation responsible for organizing the teaching process, Regulation of Administering the Examinations, Regulation of student enrolment etc), the research activity (for example - Regulation of Research and Publications). In addition to these

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all, at UBT, staff and students have access to E-services. A demo of how to use E-services was provided to the ET during the site-visit at the secretariate. Some website pages are not functional, for example The Code of Conduct, in English: https://www.ubt-uni.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Ethics-Code.pdf, at the visit and report writing date.

According to SER (page 66): "*Transparency is one of the main goals of UBT and this is achieved mostly through publishing its main, relevant, accurate, detailed information on its website*". Therefore, checking the published information on the institutional website, ET observed that details about studies are available, (but not with all elements for every programme), at: https://www.ubt-uni.net/en/study/, with study programmes described by considering their mission, design of the programmes, their learning outcome, type of study, number of students, minimum duration of studies, research topics in the field of the programme etc. For example, the bachelor programme called "Management, Business and Economics" (https://www.ubt-uni.net/en/study/bachelor-programs/management-business-and-economics/) or the bachelor programme called "English Language" are differently presented from the rest, such as the bachelor programme in "Computer Science and Engineering" (https://www.ubt-uni.net/en/study/bachelor-programs/computer-science-and-engineering/) or the bachelor in "Dentristy" (https://www.ubt-uni.net/en/study/master-programs/dentistry/). Moreover, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures are shown in a dedicated page of regulations and policies (https://www.ubt-uni.net/en/ubt-en/about-ubt/regulations-and-policies/). Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement in the visibility of the passing rates of students in every programme, of opportunities of scholarships, fees and tuition.

ET appreciates the efforts to increasing the internationalization within institution, different opportunities being promoted online, such as "The Fulbright Foreign Student Program in the United States (Master's Degree) Competition for the 2023-2024 Academic Year Is Now Open" available at: https://xk.usembassy.gov/education-culture/exchange-programs/fulbright-foreign-student-program-masters-degree/#new_tab. For staff, different information is also available, such as programmes for professional development and publication activity as a recognition of the academic community efforts or publishing opportunities (https://www.ubt-uni.net/en/services/programs/publishings/). At the UBT Research Centre, the institution makes efforts to make local knowledge visible. Moreover, through The alumni network (Alumni), graduate employment information is provided to the interested parties. The dialog of the ET with graduates during the site visit confirmed that they get e-mails with job offerings, invitations to events, exhibitions etc. The students participating in the site visit also confirmed that the UBT helps in student mobility (for example to Istanbul).

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

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ET recommendations:

1. *Check the date of the Code of ethics (first page and the last page) to be the same or in case of different dates, to specify their meaning;*

2. *Revise the Code of ethics by considering clear mechanisms for all categories of staff and units, including administration and make sure that all categories are aware of them;*

3. *Make sure that all study programmes in the same qualification level are presented in the same format on the webpage;*

4. *Improve the visibility of financial information for students, such as: opportunities of scholarships, fees and tuition and make visible how you monitor the passing rate for every programme;*

5. *Make sure that important document are publicly available (example: https://www.ubt-uni.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Ethics-Code.pdf is not functional at the visit and ET report writing date*

2.5. Quality management

At UBT, the Quality assurance Regulation was adopted in September 2020 (Appendix 10 to SER); it contains basic principles and procedural goals, mechanisms, procedures and responsibilities, as well as details on reports and data collection. The document is public, available at: https://www.ubt-uni.net/sq/ubt/per-ubt/politikat-rregulloret/ (here, the document in the Albanian website is "Rregullorja për Sigurimin e cilësisë", while in the English website, the regulation does not exist, under the name of "Regulation of Quality Assurance", being in fact, "The Quality Manual" (https://www.ubt-uni.net/en/ubt-en/about-ubt/regulations-and-policies/). According to this document, the assessment process at UBT covers the following ones: Procedures for the design and approval of new programmes, subjects and modules, Procedures for student assessment, Procedures for ongoing monitoring of programmes, Procedures for programme evaluation, Procedures for selection, appointment, appraisal and development of staff, The Quality Manual outlines the procedures for staff appraisal and development, Procedures for evaluating premises, equipment and facilities, Procedures for evaluating student services, Procedures for evaluation the governance and quality assurance policy, Procedure for the evaluation of public information. In addition, the responsibility for quality assurance is shared among rector, deans, the Academic Council, the UBT Quality Assurance Committee, the Faculty Council, Faculty Quality Assurance Sub-Committee and the Quality Manager.

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According to SER (pages 68-69), "*The Quality Manager is the administrative officer responsible for coordinating and implementing the policies adopted by the Quality Assurance Committee*"; the Office is equipped with adequate human, financial and material resources for the leadership and management of quality assurance processes. At the same time, the institution has also recruited Quality Assurance Officers in all Faculties and Departments; Quality Assurance processes at the faculty level are overseen by Quality Assurance Sub-Committees. It is important to mention that programs delivered at the branch level are part of the faculties at the central institution level.

During the site visit, the dialog of the ET with the quality assurance representatives and the administrative services proved that at UBT, Prizren Branch, the scope of the quality system in terms of monitoring and measuring resources standard is based on the ISO 9001:2015 model which is entirely applicable for all faculties, branches and departments under the UBT. ET requested as additional document the latest audit report for the Prizren Branch and Internal Audit/Assessment Report of January 2023 was provided; it explains the need for reviewing the performance indicators of the quality management system in light of the new institutes, study programs, and services introduced by the institution and the need of reevaluation of the allocation of physical resources such as classrooms, labs, and offices, based on the needs of the programs.

Mistakes and weaknesses are recognized by those responsible and used as a basis for planning for improvement. This mechanism is confirmed through the quality assurance processes; at UBT, a self-evaluation report with the assessment of the quality situation is prepared very 3-5 years and the Academic Council and the Governing Board, adopt decisions regarding proposals and implementation of improvement measures. Some minutes of quality assurance units meetings were provided, as examples: Minutes of the Academic Council Meeting - UBT Prizren of December 2022 and February 2023 show that there is an institutional interest on improving the quality of teaching and learning, mainly. Moreover, the dialog with the teaching staff showed that there is an institutional interest in improving the academic staff skills and competences.

UBT at Prizren branch provided evidence that normal planning and development strategies in a defined cycle of planning, implementation, assessment and review. In appendix 16 to SER, staff development include: "*Supporting the professional development of those in management roles within the institution, supporting managers in addressing performance issues, Supporting staff in the professional development of lecturers and researchers, Supporting e-learning activity, Supporting Staff in Technology and Knowledge Transfer*". Moreover, the Strategic Plan for 2020-2025 considers quality assurance system in a whole range of institutional activities (https://www.ubt-uni.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Academic-Strategic-Plan_compressed.pdf). Moreover, Appendix 4 to SER is the UBT Branch in Prizren Strategic Plan 2023- 2028 where clear and measurable action are set for teaching and learning, research, learning environment, relationship with the community etc.

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The quality assurance procedures at UBT are detailed in the Quality Manual (Appendix 9 to SER) and cover the following: procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of quality assurance policy and structures, procedures for design and approval of new programmers, subjects and modules, procedures for the assessment of students, procedures for ongoing monitoring of programmers, procedures for the evaluation of programmers at regular intervals, procedures for selection, appointment, appraisal and development of staff, procedures for evaluating premises, equipment and facilities, procedures for evaluating student services and procedures for evaluating stakeholder communication/public information.

According to The Quality Assurance Regulation (Appendix 10 to SER), at UBT, types of internal and external evaluations include: External examiners' reports; Internal and external quality assurance panel reports; Evaluator reports from funding agencies; Feedback, both formal and informal, from industry partners and others; Feedback from students, academic and administrative staff, graduates; Course board reviews; Internal auditors' reports; Department and School Meetings. Moreover, performance institution is considered in the "Key Performance Indicators Work plan 2021 – 2023" provided as appendix to SER; this document shows activities, indicators, time frame, responsible persons according to specific area, for example: Enhance Student Success, Expand Research, Scholarship and Creative Work, Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment for Student Learning, Deliver Excellence in Performance, Create a Positive Working and Learning Environment, Partner with Community.

In addition, performance indicators are monitored, such as: "Graduation rate, Dropout rate, Degree of student satisfaction with the program, Staff satisfaction rate, Number of scientific papers at the conference, Number of citations, Number of mobilities, Number of partnerships"; they are considered in the "RAPORTI VJETOR 2021/2022 DIZAJN I INTEGRUAR PRIZREN", provided as requested additional document. Therefore, regular evaluations are carried out and reports prepared that provide an overview of performance for the institution as a whole and for organizational units and major functions within it. An example is "Quality Management Directorate Report for the evaluation of the teaching staff and the institutional evaluation in the academic year 2020/2021". During the dialog of the ET with different stakeholders, students confirmed that they provide feedback on the teaching and learning.

Different evaluations are carried out at UBT at Prizren branch regarding the monitoring process of programmes, and of staff recruitment, facilities, student services, as well as regarding satisfaction of students etc. Evaluations take into account inputs and processes and reports are simple, where there is room for improvement, by giving more particular attention to the quality of outcomes. The annual report (for example, the rector's report should refer to objectives generated from the strategic plan. Reports do not include concrete measures to be further implemented to achieve continuing improvement in performance.

According to SER (page 73): "*The main teams and individuals with responsibility for quality assurance are: The Governing Body, President, Academic Council, Quality Assurance*

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Committee, Quality Manager, Heads of Faculties and Departments, Faculty Councils, Academic Staff and Students, and Branch Director". During the site visit, participants expressed their limitations in answering to same questions, inviting the ET to address the same question to other participants in the meeting (for example, the rector suggested to ask for concrete QA details the QA representative, which ET did). The quality management office is established at an institutional level, resources and administrative support being provided for the office to operate effectively at faculty levels and specific committees. Therefore, activities are clearly specified and effectively coordinated under the supervision of the Head of the Quality Office. The quality committee consists of 7 members – consisting of an international staff member, 3 academic staff members, and one representative from Student Counsellor, Student Services and Alumni. ET expresses regret that during the meetings with students and graduates, no student representative was in the group, neither from the Quality Committee, nor from the Ethics Committee.

Common forms and survey instruments are used for similar activities across the institution. ET asked as additional documents all questionnaires and reports prepared for quality assurance issues and UBT provided the following ones: questionnaire for the evaluation of administrative staff performance, teacher self-evaluation, lecturer performance evaluation, and questionnaire for industry. Therefore, graduates and effective employers of specific programmes graduates are not subjects for data collection. Moreover, reports of such surveys are not made publicly available.

Statistical data is being retained in an accessible central database and provided routinely to departments and units for their use in preparation of reports on indicators and other tasks in monitoring quality. Some indicators are considered in the rector's report and some others collected by the secretary. During the site visit, ET checked the e-services and the information collected from them and observed a useful and functional tool. Moreover, for staff, specific services are provided from the Human Resource department.

The quality assurance arrangements are relatively recently adopted – The Quality Assurance Regulation and The Quality Manual were adopted in 2020; there is no formal evidence that these and all the questionnaires and surveys are themselves regularly evaluated, reported on and improved. The revision of the documents is based on feedback from different stakeholders, but it is less formalized. Moreover, the students' feedback is mandatory (the Head of the QA Office confirmed), and those who did not answer are not capable of addressing some requests until the survey is filled in (students confirmed during the site visit); this aspect should be part of the QA arrangement revision from an ethical point of view.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

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ET recommendations:

1. *Check regularly that the documents and all information in Albanian and English websites match (for example the link "The Quality Assurance Regulation" goes to The Quality Manual while the link of the Rregullorja për Sigurimin e cilësisë goes to the document in English);*

2. *Create reports based on objectives (generated from the institutional strategic plan) and mention if the objectives were totally or partially accomplished; consider to integrate in the end of reports a set of measures to be implemented to improve the outcomes;*

3. *Make sure that in future evaluations, in the group of students and graduates, at least one member is from the Quality Committee and one from the Ethics Committee;*

4. *Develop the survey with industry representatives considering relevant questions of their satisfaction on graduates hired in their company;*

5. *Extend the surveys with one addressed to graduates, and focus on getting more quality information about the level of representation of the graduates in the industries they are hired in;*

6. *Develop the Teacher self-evaluation document by including apart from teaching activity, research related activity and other activities (for example service to university/community);*

7. *Include in the QA regulations one paragraph stipulating how quality assurance arrangements are themselves regularly evaluated, reported on and improved; revise the arrangements, including that of having students' feedback as mandatory;*

8. *Make sure that all the documents that are available on website have functional links (https://www.ubt-uni.net/en/ubt-en/about-ubt/regulations-and-policies/).*

2.6. Learning and teaching

In the SER, general policies and procedures are outlined which regulate the setup of new study programs as well as the evaluation and revision of existing programs. During the site visit, the ET also learned that that the learning and teaching approach of the programs at the Prizren Branch follow the general principles approved at UBT College in general.

The policies and processes currently established at UBT College demonstrate that regular meetings are held, and reports are produced on an annual basis regarding ongoing developments in the study programs. A closer examination of the annual sample reports which

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have been submitted to the ET upon request shows that the reports generated do take into account a considerable range of formal and organizational issues of the regular courses of study, starting with descriptions of the study program, ECTS regulations, planning of teaching hours, regulations on examination, collaboration with external stakeholders, staff and student mobility, alumni activities, several performance indicators and other important topics.

From the quality assurance arrangements, it became evident that satisfaction surveys for students take place, however, the ET did not receive really sturdy information to what extent they are taken into account when reviewing the curricula. Following the request for quality assurance reports for the study programs to be implemented at the Prizren branch, the ET received some sample reports, which also included a report of the Quality Assurance Office based on the student satisfaction with the teaching staff and the courses taught. While in these reports formal and organizational topics are given much attention, no information on particular difficulties or quality issues in teaching and learning, nor reflections on needs for improvement or changes could be found in these reports, be it on the curricular or on the course level, which means they mainly are of administrative and organizational importance.

This is also true for the minutes of the Academic Council, which also have been provided upon request, and for the Report on the Evaluation of Academic Staff and Institutional Evaluation in the Study Year 202/21. With regard to the Prizren Branch, it is interesting that these documents do not contain any information on the programs offered at the Branch level at all, although these documents were submitted as evidence for the procedures which are supposed to be in place on the branch level. This does not mean such procedures at the branch level do not exist, since during the site visit it became clear that, for instance, course evaluations are carried out as an important means of quality assurance and data obtained therefrom is processed.

However, in the documents provided there is a significant lack of evidence what the practical relevance of evaluation results are, and which conclusions have been drawn for improvement of teaching and learning and they might have been communicated to the officers responsible at the branch level and, of course to the teachers and deans, in particular. Thus, the ET assumes that if information obtained from institutional procedures, which is relevant for the Prizren Branch, is processed this is done in more informal ways and no documentation about the practical implications for the branch is being made. The reports submitted to the ET contained statistical information on student satisfaction but no identification and reflection of issues in teaching and no conclusions about potential improvements of teaching concepts and teaching.

This is very unfortunate, since during the site visit, the ET received very positive feedback from the students, showing that the students are in general satisfied with teaching quality, teaching process and staff performance. In meetings with the teachers, it also become apparent that certain elements of student-centered learning and teaching processes are part of the teaching practices. However, as mentioned above, the descriptive nature of these reports and

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lack of any analysis and reflection does not allow the ET to conclude that these results are analyzed against the overall teaching and learning strategy of UBT College. Thus, the ET admits that policies and processes for improvement of teaching and learning do exist, the link between data gathering, assessing results, drawing conclusions for improvement of programs and teaching and learning is missing, which would link improvements at the program and at the course level via quality assurance processes with strategy development.

Regarding the alignment of the study programs to the National Qualification Framework (NQF) and the European Qualification Framework (EQF), the UBT College states that "The program (sic) structure follows the guidelines of the National Qualification Framework" (SER, p. 87). For the purposes of evaluation, the ET assumes this statement refers to all programs offered at the Prizren Branch. In the SER, no information is provided how following the guidelines of the NQR at the program level is achieved practically. Also, the ET did not receive information that this is implemented rigorously during the site visit. In fact, the information obtained supports the conclusion that the statements in the SER are more of a formal, assertive character, since the College did not provide explanations how the adoption of the levels and associated descriptors of the National Qualification Framework (NQR) and of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) is achieved at the program level.

This also demonstrates a weakness in terms of a lack of outcome-orientation at the conceptual level. When reviewing the "UBT Quality Manual" which is supposed to be a QA framework for all branches, of course, it becomes clear that the College puts strong emphasis on teaching excellence: "The UBT will be a modern and leading higher education institution in Kosovo, committed to apply excellence in teaching learning and research within an inclusive student-centered environment through applying a multi-disciplinary approach" (p. 3). It is all the more interesting, that key elements of good teaching are not mentioned in the Quality Manual at all, such as learning outcomes and outcome-orientation, student-centeredness, constructive alignment of teaching, learning, and assessing, or the nature and practical support of learning with "metacognitive strategies" (SER, p. 89). The ET would have expected to get explanations of these concepts which the College considers key elements of teaching excellence, but also during the site visit, no substantial explanations were given from UBT side, although the ET wants to emphasize that it has met a highly motivated academic staff members who seem to have very good individual teaching skills. The academic staff also demonstrated a certain use of the Moodle learning management system and some have already participated in trainings on potential usage of Augmented Reality (AR) tools in teaching and learning, thus showing a high level of acceptance of new learning technologies. However, the UBT Quality Manual entirely lacks of explanations of key concepts of teaching excellence and of indicators which allow for capturing data on the true implementation of such concepts in the teaching practices of the Prizren Branch. In addition, whether in this document which is in fact an overview on topics relevant for QA but not a true Quality Manual, nor in other documents or in explanations about

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teaching excellence, the ET was provided detailed information on processes which might be used to assess the fitness and effectiveness of assessment methods at the branch level.

The UBT College at the central level also maintains an Institute for the Development of Education and Academic Affairs (IDEAA) which might serve as a provider for further training of teachers in teaching skills. Following the information obtained from UBT documents and during the site visit, it is not clear as to which extent this Institute is really used as an internal training provider, since in the "UBT Staff Development Policy" where a detailed description of the functions of the IDEAA for faculty development could be expected, it is not mentioned at all. The latter document also does not contain up-to-date information about the actual trainings offered to the academic staff, but a staff development activity plan for the year 2018/2019 (!), where for the period 2023-2025 (!) 21 academic staff members from two faculties (Integrated Design, Architecture) are scheduled for trainings in international projects and in Kosovo without specifying the topics of these trainings (except for a few teachers scheduled for trainings in "compilation of curricula" (ibd. 10ff.). No information about trainings already done or scheduled for the future for academic staff from other faculties which are active at the Prizren Branch was provided.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Ensure systematic adoption of NQF and EQF standards and guidelines at each study cycle, in each program and each course.*

2. *Develop systematic qualification profiles for each study program by clearly differentiating learning outcomes according to different types of skills and competences.*

3. *Make digital teaching skills, outcome-oriented formulation of learning outcomes and assessment methodologies and collegiate formats for continuous improvement key elements in the agenda of the Center for Teaching Excellence.*

4. *Develop an academic teaching program on a regular basis for teaching staff and administrative staff with priorities on continuous improvement of teaching skills based on up-to-date teaching concepts.*

5. *Integrate academic staff from all faculties in this academic teaching program by making annual participation in at least one training exclusively addressing teaching skills obligatory.*

6. *Develop and implement a system of standards and criteria for evidence-based monitoring of teaching quality based on up-to-date teaching concepts.*

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7. *Document and make visible in which programs and how the results from quality assurance procedures are used for advancement of teaching quality.*

2.7. Research

The research strategy of the UBT College Prizren Branch is outlined in the "UBT Branch in Prizeren Research Strategy". In the research strategy, the key strategic research goals are listed as follows (p. 9):

- To be internationally renowned for our world class activities in a number of strategically important centers of excellence, whilst simultaneously demonstrating excellence across a broader range of disciplinary areas;
- To be recognized internally and externally for the provision of outstanding research leadership, infrastructure, facilities, and support, and be admired for our creativity in developing and supporting new talent and initiatives;
- To substantially increase our share of external research grant income, in order to provide a sustainable funding base for our research;
- To attract increasing numbers of high quality postgraduate research students, and provide them with a stimulating and supportive research environment and training;
- To have active engagement with a number of key strategic partners from across the Region, Europe and the world and be increasingly sought out by potential collaborators, partners, funders, policy makers, and the media, so that we increasingly shape the external research agenda.

The UBT College Prizren Branch is fully aware that these objectives are very ambitious, particularly, "that realizing these objectives in an environment characterized by insufficient resources requires the urgent implementation of a sustained program of radical action" (Research Strategy, p. 10). Implementation of these objectives would require a rigorous action plan. Instead, the Research Strategy lists some provisions which are vague and undetermined, such as "Shape what should do, not simply what can or are best equipped to do" (sic!). Among these provisions, there are some highly relevant starting points, eg. emphasis on the need to "align institutional competencies with external environment and national aspirations" (ibd.). In any case, a more rigorous and systematic elaboration on how the institution intends to leverage these ambitious goals facing insufficient resources in connection with the characteristic economic and cultural development needs of the region would be essential. A first and very important step is to move on creating synergies with the ITP which can be assumed to become an important player in the regional innovation system. During the site visit, the ET learned that

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this collaboration is supposed to be a strategic basis for developing joint research proposals in the EU Horizon program.

In the Research Strategy, the College addresses different sectors (Small and medium-sized enterprises, service sector, and government Sector) and assigns specific research areas ("research questions") to each sector. All in all, 100 bachelor theses and 34 research projects are presented as key performance indicators (p. 10ff.). Across the different sectors, there is a strong emphasis on ICT as a transversal matter of research. However, this list is not complemented with a time plan, thus leaving it unclear to which extent these projects have already been implemented or finished, nor does it explain the nature of the research projects or its relevance or particular purpose for regional needs. It also remains unclear why the academic disciplines of some programs offered at the Prizren Branch are not covered in the research strategy, such as Agriculture, Food Science and Technology. Of course, there might be reasons for this, yet the missing explanations.

The research activities described in the Research Strategy show are categorized in four areas respectively types of research (p. 16): applied research, opinion research, basic research, education research. Also here, this (inconsistent) typology is very general and contains several topics which seem to be designed for the entire UBT College and not particularly for the Prizren Branch, since the branch itself does not seem to have the research skills to conduct research in some of the fields mentioned, such as education research, for which, in turn, no research activities are defined in the Research Strategy. Instead, the Research Strategy cites 131 research priorities (ibd., p32ff.) which, however, are not aligned with types of research, nor is their relevance for the Prizren branch explained in more detail.

Regarding the research outputs, the Strategy mentions scientific publications and scientific and professional conferences as main indicators, but without complementing this with a concrete time plan or numbers. No patents or copyrights, which might be generated from business-college collaborations are mentioned, too.

In terms of research infrastructure, the "UBT Branch in Prizeren Research Strategy" lists 103 laboratories which are available for research activities (ibd., p. 20ff.). As the ET learned during the site visit, the vast majority of these labs are not available directly at the Prizren campus nor are they maintained there, but in other locations. However, ICT labs are not confined to physical locations and thus can be used on a regular basis. Furthermore, a food technology lab is available at the Prizren Branch, too.

The elaborations on the internationalization of research refer very much to Erasmus projects funded by the European Union which usually do not have a focus on research but on education and capacity building, and concrete collaborative research projects at the international level involving the Prizren Branch apparently have not been the case. However, there are ongoing

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initiatives at the level of the center of UBT College to set up research collaboration at the international level where regional branches can be involved, too.

Regarding the research budget, continuous growth is provisioned in the budget lines on research projects, showing an increase of incomes from research in the tables in the SER and in the Strategic Plan. Here the same situation occurs, since there are huge discrepancies in the two different financial plans which cannot be resolved. In both documents and as has to be concluded from the site visits, it remains unclear where these incomes really come from, since during the site visit the heads of the programs and the professors reported that some research for municipalities was done so far, but seldom so research projects commissioned by business or industry.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Revise and make the research strategy coherent by defining research priorities accurately aligned to regional needs which have been identified in evidence-based regional analysis.*

2. *Align research projects with concrete collaborative research and development projects in the region, with a realistic action plan and indicators for monitoring implementation of the research strategy on an annual basis.*

3. *Revise the financial plan for research incomes and expenditures and clearly allocate the financial resources and the costs allocated to the Prizren Branch.,*

4. *Develop an accurate set of key performance indicators and quality indicators for research which allow rigorous assessment of research performance at the branch level.*

2.8. Staff, employment processes and professional development

At UBT, a handbook for staff was provided to ET as Appendix 9 to SER, but this does not contain employment policies and regulations; it refers to the organization of the teaching process, to after teaching requirements, during learning etc, many of the issues being useful for students more than to professors or other staff categories. The handbook for staff appears available on the website at - https://www.ubt-uni.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Staff-Handbook.pdf but, this document does not include rights and responsibilities, recruitment processes, supervision, performance evaluation, promotion, support processes, and professional development; this document includes student -related issues, for example: exam

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and graduation terms, student participation in lectures etc. Moreover, the Albanian website contains a document called "Rregullorja mbi marrëdhënien e punës dhe përgjegjësin për kryerjen e detyrave të punës / Regulation on the employment relationship and responsibility for the performance of work duties" which was approved in 2010, fact that makes it might look like outdated, but this is due to the fact that the Labor Law itself was approved in 2010. In addition, according to SER (page 121): "*Academic staff selection and promotion procedures in College UBT Branch Prizren are set out in the Statute of UBT College*", the Statute being approved in 2018. In this document, only articles 49-52 refer to the appointment and requirements of academic staff, administrative staff being not regulated here. The institution has in place The Regulation for Staff Recruitment Procedures (the Albanian version is available at: https://www.ubt-uni.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Rregullore-per-procedurat-e-rekrutimit-e-stafit.pdf),

The recruitment processes ensure that staff have the specific areas of expertise, qualification and experience for the positions they occupy. The recruitment processes ensure equitable treatment of all applicants. Moreover, the meeting with the teachers confirmed that they are aware of recruitment regulations. According to SER (page 122): "In 2018, UBT College Branch Prizren has reviewed and provided job descriptions to *include the detailed profiles of the desired skills, knowledge and attitudes of jobholders*". UBT has provided as a requested additional document, the example of job description at the Civic Engagement Office and this is adequate evidence that qualification and experience are the right ones.

Candidates for employment are provided with full position descriptions and conditions of employment. According to the data requested as additional documents to UBT, in the academic year 2022-2023, at Prizren branch work 98 staff members, out of which 25 are administrative staff, with full positions. Moreover, new teaching staff is given an effective orientation to ensure familiarity with the institution and its services, programs and student development strategies, and institutional priorities for development; the dialog of the ET with the teachers showed the preoccupation of seniors to integrate the young staff in the team. Different sessions are delivered at the College's Induction days, on matters, for example: Mission and Strategy, Governance and Management, Teaching and Learning Strategy, Research Strategy, Quality Assurance Policy, Student Support and Examination, Employment and Ethics, Communication and IT, Teaching and Assessment Methods, Local context of the branch (SER, page 123).

The level of provision of teaching staff (the ratio of students per full time staff member) is adequate for the programs offered. According to national statistics, the Ratio Nr.of Students/

Full Time Staff Teaching is 11 at UBT (SER, page 125), which is adequate from the quality point of view.

Teaching loads are equitable across the institution, taking into account the nature of teaching requirements in different fields of study. The main requirement for academic titles, according to the specific regulation (Appendix 14 to SER) are: "*The criteria that the candidate must*

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fulfill to obtain the title are as follows: appropriate education or an appropriate scientific or professional title in the relevant field of habilitation (academic calling); competencies for professional work; pedagogical (teaching) competencies; positive evaluation of the majority of the evaluation committee members for the candidate's competencies; in-depth knowledge and fluency in at least one international language". Criteria and processes for performance evaluation are clearly specified and made known in advance to all staff, as the teaching staff confirmed during the site visit.

All staff at UBT, including staff working at Prizren Branch dedicate 30% of their work to teaching, other 30% to research and 40% to administrative activities (SER, pages 126-137). ET checked few professors teaching at Prizren branch according to the curriculum description and the CV of staff (https://www.ubt-uni.net/en/study/bachelor-programs/law-prizren/curriculum-structure/); therefore, all staff employed in the institution (academic, scientific, administrative) hold the relevant qualifications so that they effectively manage educational, scientific, research, and administrative processes. Moreover, staff are given fair opportunities for career development, being encouraged to take part in mobilities, international conferences and projects.

Academic staff evaluation is based on a teacher self-evaluation (document was provided to ET as a requested additional document) and on students' evaluation. According to SER (page 138): "Staff Evaluation Report is sent to the Faculty Council and Academic Council Committee for Staff Selection, Promotion and Assessment. The Branch Director is also informed about the staff evaluation report". Nevertheless, UBT does not consider all the activities an academic staff member performs (research, teaching and administrative task, only teaching) in the self-evaluation form; moreover, peer evaluation is not yet implemented, and the results are not publicly available on the UBT webpage.

At UBT, staff performance was not considered less than satisfactory in the case of the academic staff. Mechanisms to improve this issue, in case it would appear refer to few processes: the Branch Director discusses with the staff member; issues that may involve staff unethical behaviour are referred to the Ethics Sub-Committee of the respective Faculty in which the study program in which he/she teaches falls. For improvement, a staff development plan is elaborated (Appendix 16 to SER), main areas covered being the following ones: *"(1)Supporting the professional development of those in management roles within the institution, (2)Supporting managers in addressing performance issues, (3)Supporting staff in the professional development of lecturers and researchers, (4) Supporting e-learning activity, (5)Supporting Staff in Technology and Knowledge Transfer*". Nevertheless, the staff development plan (apart from the Appendix 16 to SER, was again requested and this time, it was provided as policy, with old data for 2018/2019 or 2017 and although a list of members to be included in staff development plan during 2022-2025 was considered, the only training for them was the participating to international conferences at UBT. However, ET is reserved in

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considering the participation to conferences other than a good mechanism of research dissemination and not of effective training for staff.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Revise the documents regularly (for example The Handbook for Staff which the content is now student-related – like: Organization and progress of the learning process, Conditions and criteria for taking and entering the exam etc);*

2. *Develop the peer evaluation of staff and improve the reports visibility by making them publicly available;*

3. *Create an effective development plan for all staff categories, with clear topics and mechanisms, structured on their needs, other than international conferences.*

2.9. Student administration and support services

Admission of students is governed by the Academic Council Regulation on Admission to Undergraduate and Graduate Programmes. The entrance examination is conducted by the Commission on Admissions, which is appointed by the Faculty Council for a period of three years. The institution maintains a register of student records: examination register, registration, list of students who participated in the examination in the given examination period, examination report, students' logbook, students' files with information about the repeated examinations and the final grades obtained in them. The home page of the study programmes contains information about study plans, duration, ECTS, tuition fees, teaching and learning methods, assessment methods, study subjects and career opportunities. The Student Management Information System is an electronic student management platform. It allows students to track their study progress, select courses and electives, pay tuition fees, and apply for exams. The UBT Learning Platform is an open source platform that allows students and staff to manage their course, schedule, study materials, and exams. Students receive an orientation session at the Prizren branch prior to the start of each academic year, conducted by the branch director or programme coordinators. Admission of students is regulated by the Admission Regulations of the University Council for Undergraduate and Graduate Students. The entrance examination is conducted by the Admission Examination Board, which is appointed by the Faculty Council for a period of three years. The institution maintains a register of student records: examination register, registration, list of students taking an examination during the examination period, examination report, student record, student files with information on reexaminations and final grades obtained in them. The programme's website contains information on courses, duration, ECTS, tuition fees, teaching and learning methods,

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assessment methods, subjects and career opportunities. The Student Management Information System (SMI) is an electronic student management platform. UBT Learning is an open source platform that allows students and staff to manage courses, schedules, study materials, and exams. Students receive an introductory session before the start of each academic year at the Prizren Branch, conducted by the Branch Director and Programme Coordinators. Students receive general and programme- specific information, including the schedule, exam timetable, an overview of the subjects offered that semester, and teaching and learning strategies before the classes begin. An overview of the library and the computer labs and how to access it is provided during the orientation session by the IT officers working in the branch. Students who have limited financial resources but can demonstrate a high level of academic success will be partially exempt from paying tuition. All other students who have achieved high levels of performance in a timely manner during their studies will receive a 25% discount on tuition fees. The UBT branch in Prizren offers a discount of 20-30% for civil servants. The link for discount can be found on the website https://www.ubt-uni.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Students-scholarship-50-discount.pdf. The institution conducts regular evaluation of programmers every three years. This process is conducted as part of the accreditation process. The Student Handbook is essentially a written copy of the information provided at orientation and is made available to students through the student portal. The Student Handbook is reviewed and updated annually to ensure its completeness and accuracy. The Student Complaint Procedure is an appropriate audit trail for the process and is clearly logged with accurate, detailed information at each stage. UBT University has established a complaint management system. To handle complaints and grievances, the university has established an institutional-level grievance committee and departmental grievance subcommittees. These subcommittees also operate at the branch level. At the beginning of the class students receive general and course-specific information, including the class schedule, exam schedule, and an overview of the subjects taught that semester, as well as teaching and learning strategies. The students are also informed that the professors are there for consultation at least two times per week or online if needed. Students with limited financial resources, but who demonstrate great success during their studies, will be partially exempt from tuition fees. All other students who have performed briskly and well during their studies will receive a 25% reduction on tuition fees. The UBT branch in Prizren offers a 20-30% discount to civil servants. The institution regularly reviews the programs every three years. This procedure is part of the accreditation process. The Student Handbook is essentially a written copy of the information provided at the orientation session and is made available to students through the student portal. The Student Complaint Procedure is an appropriate audit trail for the process and must be clearly recorded at each stage with accurate and detailed information. UBT College has established a complaint management system. To handle customer complaints and grievances, it has established an institutional grievance committee and departmental grievance subcommittees with at least one student member. There is a program called "Turn it in" to detect plagiarism. The professor and students told the expert team that there wasn't any student misconduct at the Prizren branch.

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There is also a UBT College Code of Ethics and Code of Student Conduct that has a student member. The institution uses a fair and equitable disciplinary process. The process is initiated when a student is alleged to have violated the Code of Ethics. The disciplinary process is designed to ensure efficient resolution of issues to avoid delays while respecting the fairness and specificity of each case. Disciplinary actions taken by the Ethics Subcommittee include minor violations, serious violations, and gross violations. No violations occurred at the UBT Prizren branch. The Student Counseling Service was established at UBT College and has been fully operational since 2015. Students at the Prizren branch have access to these services either through the central facility or through the same services provided at the branch level. UBT College Branch Prizren students benefit from the College Career Office System, which was established at UBT College in 2012. The college has established an alumni office at the college level. Through the central facilities of UBT College, students can also participate in competitions such as soccer, swimming and bowling. In the conversation with the students, the expert team received confirmation that all information concerning them is publicly available and that they are familiar with their duties and rules of the college. The students also praised their professors and said that they help them whenever needed. The student union is at the UBT central in Prishtina but through regular elections members of the branch become members of the student union. The Statute of the student union can be found online on the website on the link. https://www.ubt-uni.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Statute-of-Students-Union.pdf

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Include more students from Prizren into being active members of the student union.*

2.10. Learning resources and facilities

It is worth mentioning that the evaluation was based on the information received from the professors of the institution, the self-evaluation report, the website of the UBT College and the personal presence of the expert team. The UBT website was very helpful as it is very user friendly and easy to acces. The expert team had the opportunity to personally visit the UBT branch in Prizren. UBT College Prizren resources include library resources and IT resources (teaching laboratories and equipment). UBT College Branch Prizren has a policy of providing and maintaining a safe, well-equipped building that is available and accessible to students as well as being accessible to students with special needs. Institutional financial resources are allocated to fund a large variety of library books, specific magazines and e-library access to all books that are in the library. The UBt College in Prizren pays each academic year to access

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online databases, including EBSCO, SAGE Journals, and J-Store). In the library, study books can be found in English and also in Albanian. The expert team also found books in other languages such as German which is commendable if the students are interested in additional learning to improve their knowledge in addition to basic books. There is a large number of books that are published by the academic staff of the UBT which is worthy of praise that serve students for their studies including writing student papers, theses and learning for exams. The branch in Prizren has digitized its library catalog with information about books related to their field of study and it is available to students during the library's working hours. It should be noted that the expert team could not assess or obtain information on the number of physical copies of books on the syllabus reading lists in the library and/or whether all books mentioned in the syllabi are available to students. Building on that, all students said that all the books they needed during their studies were at hand. There is one fully equipped computer laboratory owned by UBT to organize effective instruction, and there are two fully equipped computer laboratories that UBT rents for its students. The computer laboratories are equipped with computers on which basic programs are installed, but there is also a 3D program for students. The professor showed us the mentioned 3D program during the visit to the laboratory. The computer laboratories are equipped with the relevant equipment for each field of study which is performed at the Prizren Branch of the UBT College. The branch of UBT in Prizren, in addition to the computer laboratory, has access to the laboratory with 3D printers in the KREN of ITP, which is the latest technology. Students have the practical opportunity to increase their professional knowledge by designing products with eon-xr technology and to produce the finished product with 3D printing technology. The overall professors / student ratio is very satisfactory and something to point out. Personal laptops, tablets and mobile devices can be connected to the library's free wireless network, which the expert team did successfully. Students and the academic staff of the UBT have unlimited access to a very large UBT College library and very modern facilities provided at the central level in Prishtina. The library of UBT College Branch Prizren is open all year round. It is open from Monday to Friday from 09:00 to 22:00 and on Saturdays from 09:00 to 14:00. In the library there is a personal computer for the students to help them when looking for a book or when needed in something else in regards to studying. The procedure for recording loans and returns is carried out using the Koha System software that is available in the UBT centrali n Prishtina and in Prizren. If there are no other copies than one the student has the right to use the book only in the library during the working hours. UBT College Branch Prizren facilities fully comply with the Kosovo legislation on health and safety, as well as all administrative directives of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labor of the Republic of Kosovo. UBT Prizren branch has gradually increased its infrastructural capacity and at this stage the branch meets all the necessary conditions for the implementation of the existing programs and more. There is a fire extinguisher on every floor of the university that is close at hand in case of an accident. The UBT Quality Manual, which applies to the branch in Prizren, clearly defines the procedures for the evaluation of premises, equipment and facilities. The mentioned manual

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also defines and implements procedures for evaluating the quality of student services at the branch. These procedures relate to the following services: Library and Information Services, Computing Services, Student Support Services, Technical Services, and Communications. UBT College Branch Prizren provides support for students with special needs. The infrastructure of UBT College Prizren has been certified to meet the minimum standards for students with special needs which the expert team was convinced of. UBT College Branch Prizren has access to a large video conference room with technical aids such as a television, a video projector and a smartboard. The institution also has a learning system to support learning and teaching activities. UBT College Branch Prizren organizes the national championship MOS (Microsoft Office Specialist), which is free for all citizens of Kosovo aged 15 to 22. There is a student canteen on campus, which is open to all students and professors with daily cooked fresh meals. In the conversation with the students, the expert team got the impression that the students are very satisfied with the college's infrastructure. When entering the Prizren branch there is a screen with a list of classrooms and lectures currently teachin in them which helps the students a lot. The academic staff of the Prizren branch is satisfied as well with the infrastructure because it helps them teach, they especially pointed out the computer laboratories because that's how they get students interested in topics that might not seem interesting at first. There is a large free parking space for employees of the UBT branch in Prizren as well as for the students in front of the main college building.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Update the library with more books that are accessible for students.*

2.11. Institutional cooperation

In 2021, UBT adopted The Institutional Cooperation and Internationalization Strategy for the period of 2021 – 2025 in order to guide the institutional decisions and resource allocation in this matter. According to SER (page 170): "*In particular, UBT College Branch Prizren benefits from over 400 international partnership agreements that the central institution has with numerous universities ranging from joint-programmers, research, staff development and exchange, student exchange and knowledge transfer*". This strategy was provided to the ET as Appendix 5 to SER; it describes what a successful institutional partnership mean, defines the internationalization at home and abroad, explains the main goals for UBT's strategic international cooperation and explores the key strategic opportunities and the relevance to different stakeholders.

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UBT has created and assigned the portfolio for institutional cooperation and/or internationalisation to a member of the upper management that is directly mandated and accountable for the initiatives and results in this area. The website page dedicated to internationalization show that the institutional coordinator is the president himself, and that apart from the Head of the International Office, there is an International Project Coordinator. At UBT Prizren branch, all participants were very good English speakers, fact that proved the institutional preoccupation to develop the internationalization, having the human resources to do so.

Moreover, the branch in Prizren, has the capacity to identify international stakeholders that are interested in thematic areas important for the regional community context of Prizren in the areas of specialisation of the Branch in Prizren (spatial planning, and regional economic context, and health services). In Prizren branch at UBT, an industrial board is functional, consisting of 4 persons from the institution (Dean, Research Sector, Academic Staff, Student representative) and 6 responsible persons from different companies.

The institution has different agreements and memorandums of understanding with relevant international partners and organizations. The responsibilities of partners are clearly defined in formal agreements. The latest Memorandum of Understanding signed at an institutional level (requested as additional documents) are documents set the cooperation with The University of National and World Economy, Sofia, Bulgaria (November 2021), with the Necmettin Erbakan University, Turkey (December 2022) and Izmir Bakircai University, Turkey (January 2023). Although agreements are signed at an institutional level, the Prizren branch implements these agreements in the fields of specialization and thematic areas of branch in Prizren, and regional community context of Prizren branch. Moreover, UBT sets agreement with local stakeholders, as with municipalities (Appendix 22 to SER).

The institution takes part, either as a leader or as a partner, in international projects. A list of 12 projects is provided in SER (pages 183-185) during 2014-2019. Moreover, the most recent ones are listed at: https://international.ubt-uni.net/international-projects/ UBT organises events of international visibility and outreach (conferences, summer schools, etc.): international summer academies (https://fest.ubt-uni.net/2021/en/summer-academies/#new_tab), international staff week (https://international.ubt-uni.net/international-staff-week/), international visiting researchers (https://international.ubt-uni.net/international-visiting-researchers/), Global Fest (https://international.ubt-uni.net/global-ubt-fest/) ec. Clear data are presented in SER on student and staff mobility (pages 187-194).

Engagement in international cooperation and contributions to the community are included in promotion criteria and staff performance review. The criteria that the candidate must fulfill to obtain the academic titles include in-depth knowledge and fluency in at least one international language; therefore, internationalization is encouraged. ET appreciates the quality of the dialog with all the internal stakeholders, participants all being able to speak very good English, no

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matter the age or role in the institution. The webpage dedicated to internationalization is well equipped with information of different topics – projects, opportunities, events, past and presents. The page can be considered an example of good practice in sharing the effort of the institution towards internationalization, and in promoting current and future events in this matter.

According to SER (page 195): "*The two most common agreements between UBT College and other institutions are through an agreement known as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), or an International Exchange and Linkage Agreement (IE). Through MOU, the agreement is on academic and research cooperation between UBT College and the partner institution, whereas the IE agreement also includes commitment of using the institutional resources for specific activities*". Therefore, mechanisms are established to support cooperation with international higher education institutions, networks and organisations. Assistance is given for teaching staff to develop collaborative arrangements such as mobility support.

Staff are encouraged to participate in forums in which significant community issues are discussed and plans for community development are considered. There is an institutional mechanism to support the internship cooperation for the student benefit, and Career office elaborates a report for work and internship (provided to the ET in case of ICT companies). Relationships are established with local industries and employers to assist program delivery which include placement of students for work-study programs, part time employment opportunities, and identification of issues for analysis in student project activities. Industry representatives expressed their appreciation regarding the students and graduates at UBT, due to their knowledge; some of them admitted that the graduates are well equipped including soft skills, others expressed the conclusion that there was room for improvement in the soft skills set.

Local employers are invited to join appropriate advisory committees and invited as speakers at different events; some of the industry representatives confirmed that they worked with professors and students and that even they have interns from UBT, they did not contribute much in the programme design. All participants expressed their willingness to further support the development of the UBT Prizren Branch, considering that their openness to support the institution is in fact their investment in students and in the local community as the students will soon become employees. The companies' representatives were having between 3 and 40 graduates either interns or employees in their companies.

Some contact is maintained with alumni, keeping them informed about institutional developments. Apart from emails, graduates did not mention any other type of relationship with the institution, such as to be invited to fill in surveys, or to be regularly invited to take part in different activities or being encouraged for new developments. They all were very open

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to discuss about their studies and willing to further develop their relationship with the institution in a formal way.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Reconsider the internationalisation strategy by integrating measurable objectives (SMART objectives);*

2. *Develop the relationship with the industry representatives by making them more active in the design of the programmes;*

3. *Develop the relationship with the alumni by diversifying the relations, including the invitation to fill periodically a survey to monitor the employability and their career development over different periods of time.*

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3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND JUDGEMENTS OF THE ET

As shown above the compliance levels per general areas are:

Standard	Compliance level
1. Public mission and institutional objectives	Partially compliant
2. Strategic planning, governance and administration	Partially compliant
3. Financial planning and management	Partially compliant
4. Academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability	Substantially compliant
5. Quality management	Substantially compliant
6. Learning and teaching	Substantially compliant
7. Research	Partially compliant
8. Staff, employment processes and professional development	Substantially compliant
9. Student administration and support services	Fully compliant
10. Learning resources and facilities	Fully compliant
11. Institutional cooperation	Substantially compliant
Overall compliance	**Substantially compliant**

*According to the KAA Accreditation manual, in order to be granted a positive decision for institutional accreditation, every education provider has to demonstrate at least a **substantial compliance** level in the overall judgment. Standards on evaluation of Higher Education Institutions, Chapter no. 6 related to Learning and teaching, and chapter no. 10 related to Learning resources and facilities are mandatory. No accreditation on institutional level can be granted unless these two (2) chapters has been fulfilled to either substantially or fully compliant level.*

*According to the expert team's 3evaluation, **UBT College Prizren Branch** is **"substantially compliant"**. Therefore, the ET recommends **to accredit** the institution for a duration of three years.*

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The present report suggested a series of relevant recommendations that would bring the college closer to the KAA standards and these should be implemented by the college before another future request of accreditation is made.

Expert Team

Chair

	Dr. Dietmar Paier	**March 16, 2023**
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

Member

	Prof. univ. dr. Magdalena Platis	**March 16, 2023**
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

Member

	Marko Komšo	**March 16, 2023**
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

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