



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo
Agjencia e Kosovës për Akreditim
Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency



UIBM - University of Mitrovica
“ISA BOLETINI”

INSTITUTIONAL RE-ACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

March 2023

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: February 22, 2023

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- *Prof. Peter Parycek, PhD*
- *Horia Serban Onita , student expert*

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

Shkelzen Gërxfhaliu, Senior Expert for Evaluation and Monitoring

Leona Kovaci, Senior Expert for Evaluation and Monitoring

Sources of information for the Report:

- *Self-Evaluation Report (SER) submitted by UM*
- *Information obtained during the online site visit on with the management of the institution, teaching and administrative staff, students, graduates, external stakeholders and employers of graduates*
- *Website of UM*
- *Visits of on-site facilities*
- *Documents attached in Annexes*

Criteria used for institutional and program evaluations

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

1.2. Site visit schedule

Time	Meeting
09:30 – 10:45	Meeting with the management of the institution (<i>no slide presentation is allowed, the meeting is intended as a free discussion</i>)

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10:50 – 11.40	Meeting with: 1. Quality assurance representatives - QA 2. Administrative services - AS
11:45 – 12:45	Meeting with Deans of Faculties (Head of programmes in case of smaller colleges)
12:45 – 13.30	Lunch break (to be provided at the evaluation site)
13:30 – 14:20	Visiting tour of the facilities and infrastructure
14:20 – 15:10	Meeting with teaching staff
15:15 – 16:05	Meeting with students
16:10 – 17:00	Meeting with graduates
17:05 – 17:55	Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders

1.3. A brief overview of the institution under evaluation

University 'Isa Boletini' in Mitrovica is higher education institution that started as the Technical High School in 1961. In particular important moment in its history is the opening of the Faculty Of Mining and Metallurgy in 1974. The Faculty played an important role in Kosovo, but also in the region and its development as well as new graduates contributed significantly to industrial development. In 2013 it has been established modern new public institution, University of Mitrovica 'Isa Boletini'. Today University has six faculties, it is comprehensive university covering technical, natural and social sciences. They offer 16 programmes in total, 11 bachelor and 5 master programmes. University has 135 academic staff engaged in teaching process, while 106 are full time employed. Little bit less than 2000 students are enrolled in programmes that are offered.

In the last accreditation process in 2019, University did not receive accreditation.

2. INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

2.1. Public mission and institutional objectives

University mission is based on three main pillars, teaching, research and community service. Mission has served as a basis to develop a Strategy and to adopt some changes in the process of its implementation. University mission is emphasizing provision of research, professional counselling and other professional activities that ensure well-being and social advancement.

University also defined set of values that are the basis for institutional functioning and activities. They are mutual responsibilities, justice and honesty, integrity and accountability, diversity and well-being, creativity and intellectual freedom and care for the environment and the society. (Standard 1.1)

In the process of defining mission, both internal and external stakeholders took a part. This has been stated in the SER, but the ET also gathered this information during the site visit. A new mission, defined in 2020, became a part of the UIBM Statute. The mission is also publicly available and an intention is to raise institutional awareness of its relevance for the institutional life (Standard 1.2, 1.3).

UIBM mission is directly reflected in strategic documents and its objectives (Standard 1.5) and there is a relatively good balance of two documents. Still, it would be important to better articulate objectives in terms of time needed to reach them. This would also enable better operationalisation (Standard 1.5).

The advantage of the University is covering different disciplines and addressing local and regional needs. However, considering the social context, and capacities University has, it is still sometimes only written, but not fully activated in a real time and space. Nevertheless, there is a serious intention to contribute not only to knowledge development, but also to individual, societal, cultural and economic development locally and in the region.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Define more differentiated medium and long-term institutional objectives and include them in the mission.*

2.2. Strategic planning, governance and administration

The current institutional Strategic Plan covers the period 2022 – 2025. It was drafted considering all the relevant national and institutional regulations.

Based on the mission statement, it defines the following seven strategic objectives :

- Teaching and professional development
- Scientific research
- Institutional and international cooperation
- Quality development
- Development of human resources
- Digitization, data management and University promotion
- Financial planning and management

The strategic plan defines clear objectives and related activities, however, we have to notice, that the objectives are not identically provided in the SER and Strategic Plan. All the objectives are elaborated in a descriptive way, but there are no clearly defined the short and medium term targets. (Standard 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5).

According to the SER, university took into account the actual needs of the internal and external environment, believing that this will lead to the institutional development. However, it seems that is missing that it might be the gap between the actual needs and capacity to meet all the objectives. These capacities are reflected in finances, human resources, but also general economic context (Standard 2.4)

The Strategic plan explicitly addresses eight stakeholder groups: academic staff, administrative and technical personnel, university management, students, alumni, business community, local and central government authorities, and external academic and scientific community. They are explained in details. The ET cannot notice that exactly the same sections, with the same divisions, explanations etc. do appear in other in strategic documents developed at other universities in Kosovo. This puts, with no doubt, some shed on a document and, inevitable questions some level of sincerity.

Detailed Action plan is a part of the Strategic Plan document. It has defined activities, responsible individuals or units, financial cost, KPIs, time frame, and expected results. This kind of Action plan does allow to do monitoring, however time frames are quite long periods and in the process of monitoring it would be difficult to decide on accomplishment of some tasks in some time points in between. (Standard 2.5)

The Governing Council is responsible for monitoring and evaluating implementation of the Strategy. According to the SER and information ET received during the site visit, it seems that there is institutional commitment to benefit from the Strategy in the process of institutional development.

The UIBM has all the necessary documents, regulation that in a transparent way are defining the roles, rights and responsibilities of all the staff, academic and administrative. Also, all the governing and management bodies have rigorous way to elect members as well as transparently defined procedures. All the institutional regulations and policies are in accordance with national policies and laws. (Standard 2.8, 2.11).

Administration staff is professional. They also receive regular professional trainings. General secretary is the highest administrative position, with specially defined rights and responsibilities. The responsibilities of administration staff are defined in institutional regulations as well as in document of systematization of jobs. Administrative staff is also evaluated annually and it is part of the quality assurance system. There are different administrative units-offices that are sufficient to handle all the administrative duties. (Standard 2.10).

Students have their representatives in all decision-making bodies, executive and consultative bodies. (Standard 2.9). Election of student representatives is prescribed and transparent. Institution cannot be involved in any way in the process of election of students representative. Students' interests are represented via Students Parliament and Students Council.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1.Revisit some of the objectives and targets in order to match them more realistically to institutional capacity and overall societal context

2. Carefully define short and medium-term targets in order to facilitate monitoring and revision of the Strategic plan

2.3. Financial planning and management

According to the SER, UIBM appears to have a well-defined and comprehensive approach to financial planning that considers both short-term and medium-term financial needs. The institution understands the financial resources required to achieve its mission and strategic objectives, and references to the strategic plan 2022-2025. (Standard 3.1)

UIBM has a realistic annual budget as well as a three-year budget. The Assembly of Kosovo has approved the budget limits for 2022 and the estimates for 2023-2024. (Standard 3.2)

UIBM has established a specialized office (p. 50) accountable to supervise and manage the institution's budgeting and accounting functions: managing the budget process, ensuring

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compliance with budget rules and procedures, and drawing up the cash flow plan. The following functions: Director of the Budget and Finance Office, Senior Budget and Finance Officer; Revenues and Financial Goods Receiving Officer; Commitment's Officer; Expenditures' Officer; Asset Management Officer.

UIBM meets the standard of having an accurate monitoring of expenditure and commitments against budgets with reports prepared at least once per year. All financial implementation activities/expenditures are recorded in the Integrated Financial Management Control System (IFMCS), p. 52 (Standard 3.4)

Based on the SER, the Budget and Finance Office applies these standards to provide details of expenses for each activity spent, and activities are harmonized according to economic categories and subcodes. (Standard 3.5)

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations: None

2.4. Academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability

UIBM has a comprehensive Code of Ethics and Academic Integrity (9. Pages) that outlines key principles such as academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and ethical integrity, which is published and online accessible. (Standard 4.1)

The Code of Ethics that is mandatory for all internal stakeholders, including academic staff, administrative workers, and students. The University has implemented measures to prevent plagiarism, such as the use of the anti-plagiarism platform Plagiarism check and the regulation of the accepted level of similarity of 15% for Bachelor studies (p. 56). During the site visit to assess the concrete implementation, it was described the management exemplified that Students have access to the plagiarism software and are encouraged to use it for their review; however, due to the lack of a campus license, they are advised to share licenses and organise their access themselves. (Standard 4.2)

The code is implemented through clear processes and mechanisms (p. 57, SER). The comprehensive regulation of the procedures in a scope of 18 pages is accessible. (Standard 4.3)

Based on the “Code of Ethics”, the Senate has established the “Ethics Council”, which is responsible for dealing with serious disciplinary violations by university teachers and associates. (p. 58) Further body is “Disciplinary commissions” for academic staff and students, which are competent for dealing with light disciplinary violations. (Standard 4.4)

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The implementation of the “Code of Ethics” is demonstrated using the anti-plagiarism platform, staff performance indicators developed by the “Quality Assurance Office” and the transparent appointing process. Throughout the meetings, the EP got the impression that the principles are known, understood, and practised in a regular practice. (Standard 4.5)

The referred standards are publicly accessible or made available as internal documents via file sharing. All of them were available and verifiable. (Standard 4.6)

The institution claims to publish the needed data like academic staff, research and academic activities, programs offered, the number of students enrolled, and key performance indicators of academic staff on its website, but it provided only a link to scholarships. A full comprehensive assessment was not feasible. (Standard 4.7)

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *ET recommends additional links to the requested information.*

2.5. Quality management

Based on SER provided, it appears that UIBM has a formal quality assurance policy and framework established that outlines the institutional quality assurance system, processes, mechanisms, instruments, reporting, data collection, timelines, quality cycle, and responsibilities of all individuals and units involved in these processes. The policy is a public document aligned with relevant laws, frameworks, and strategies.

The university also has specific objectives for strengthening the quality assurance system, established and package of instruments for quality assurance and evaluation and regular assessments. The university strongly focuses on the quality management of study programs and less on administration and research. A balance between the three areas could be strategically evaluated for further development. (Standard 5.1)

The Quality Assurance Office at UIBM has adequate human, financial, and material resources for leadership and management of quality assurance processes, including a Central Commission for Quality Assurance and Evaluation, a Vice Rector for Quality Assurance, Quality Assurance Officers, and Vice Deans and Coordinators for Quality Assurance. The budget includes funds for external and internal quality assurance. (Standard 5.2)

The university has implemented a continuous evaluation and improvement process that involves all academic and administrative units. The evaluation results are communicated to all relevant offices, students, academic personnel, management bodies, and administration. (Standard 5.3)

Based on the findings of the evaluation processes, improvement plans are developed and included in key documents such as strategic plans and work plans of academic offices and vice-deans and coordinators of academic units. The internal quality assurance process cycle and framework provides a comprehensive overview of involved units. During the meeting, specific changes were discussed, like the further development of curricula, the training of lecturers based on evaluation results, the enhancement of processes, and the integration of students into quality assurance processes. (Standard 5.4)

The university conducts regular evaluations at the end of each semester through questionnaires for students and academic personnel. The university uses quantitative and qualitative instruments for quality assurance. The Quality Assurance Office prepares reports with findings and recommendations. During the site visit, the described quality assurance process and instruments were discussed in several meetings with management or teaching staff. Further examples of instruments were provided during the meeting with QAO, such as focus groups, peer groups, and staff feedback groups held four times a year; in addition, ad hoc groups or commissions may also be commissioned for specific issues. The ET got the impression that instruments and processes for continuous improvement in education are in daily usage. (Standard 5.5)

As assessed in the previous sections, UIBM has built a quality framework and developed instruments that consider inputs, processes, and outputs. The assessment results are used to define improvement activities and learning is integrated continuously in operational and strategic documents. (Standard 5.6)

All academic and administrative units within the UIBM, including the governing body and senior management, participate in quality assurance processes and contribute to their continual improvement. The discussions have confirmed that all units know the quality management office and participate in the quality development processes. (Standard 5.7)

According to the information provided, UIBM has established a quality management office inside the institution's central administration, which has sufficient resources to operate the quality framework effectively, which are described in the SER (p. 72), e.g. from support, guidance, and leadership in ensuring and advancing academic quality, or promoting a culture of quality, to advising on study programs. During the site visit, the ET had the impression that adequate resources are available, and the quality of the SER is indicative of the quality of the quality management office. (Standard 5.8)

UIBM established the Central Commission for Quality Assurance and Evaluation (CCQAE), which is responsible for designing quality policies and promoting a quality culture, with members approved by the Senate for a 4-year term. (Standard 5.9)

The quality assurance guide and the Regulation on quality assurance and assessment at UIBM clearly describe the roles and responsibilities of CCQAE and QAO. The complete quality assurance guide was accessible and consisted of approx. 25 pages. (Standard 5.10)

The roles and responsibilities of the quality assurance office and committee and the relationship are well defined. The quality management office coordinates faculty members supporting the activities in the academic units, the international cooperation office and the research office scientific. The quality assessment at UIBM is done periodically, as assessed in the previous sections, using quantitative and qualitative instruments (p. 74 f). The quality assurance office prepares a summary report and publishes it on the website. (Standard 10, 11)

The data collected is recorded in a database managed by the Quality Assurance Office (QAO) in the Electronic System for Quality Assessment (ESQA) (ESQA). ESQA provides for the publication of questionnaires, data collection, confidentiality maintenance, data display in reports, and other opportunities for data collection and storage. This system is accessible to all internal and external stakeholders, including academic and administrative personnel, students, and management of UIBM, as well as alumni. (Standard 12)

In the SER provided, more than 25 measures were listed that were improved and changed on the basis of the quality assurance processes. In the meeting with the management and the Quality Assurance Office, further consistent examples were given; based on the SER and the meetings, the expert team got the impression that UIBM has established a quality culture in the last years. (Standard 13)

The quality assurance system is evaluated and reviewed regularly to ensure its effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. (Standard 14)

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

The UIBM evaluation system is generally well developed and established in terms of instruments, methods and processes and its integration into operational and strategic development. The expert team has the following recommendations.

1. The workload evaluation is crucial for the faculty's verification of the time spent, which serves as the basis for the course transcript and credit allocation. In the interviews, no explicit method and implementation process were offered. Therefore, the

ET recommends providing lecturers and curriculum developers with more precise guidance on evaluation outcomes.

2. COVID accelerated teaching innovation that was frequently led by individuals; the challenge for institutions is to determine which teaching and learning practices can be derived from this for the future of teaching and how these may be established permanently. During the meeting the ET had not the impression that UBIM has any measures in place for creating a foundation for one of the most critical questions of teaching development. Therefore, the ET recommends setting up a process for collecting the best cases of COVID initiated teaching innovation and foster a discourse about the future of teaching.

2.6. Learning and teaching

The UIBM has a set of policies and procedures applicable to all academic programs, which are monitored regularly to ensure their efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore, policies and guidelines have been developed, like regulations for bachelor and master studies, program development, implementation, and evaluation guidelines, and quality assurance and evaluation regulations. These policies and procedures are monitored through various mechanisms, including the UMIB Senate's approval of the academic calendar, reports from the program evaluation process, curricula publication, and syllabus implementation monitoring. The performance indicators' results are analyzed and discussed at academic units and the Rectorate level. As an example, a link to the key performance indicators of the Faculty of Mechanical and Computer Engineering has been provided, with a total page count of approx. 25 pages. (Standard 6.1)

The UIBM has established a system for developing and evaluating study programs, with proposals for new or revised programs reviewed by various academic units and the Senate for approval. Programs are reviewed regularly to ensure high quality academic content, and they adhere to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The university implements the recommendations of the Bologna Declaration and offers programs based on the system of three cycles of higher education. The quality of teaching and learning is ensured like key performance indicators. (Standard 6.2)

UIBM set up Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). KPIs are drafted annually at the university and academic unit level and published on the website. The document is well written and quite comprehensive, with a total page count of more than 50 pages. The findings of KPIs are used to develop work plan activities for UIBM and each faculty, which are reflected in the strategic plan and annual action plan. (Standard 6.3)

UIBM follows the standard of ensuring that each study program is based on learning outcomes. Both Bachelor's and Master's studies are organized into semesters, with each program having a summary specifying general and specific program objectives and Syllabi for each subject. The learning outcomes of the courses are harmonized with the program outcomes, aiming to develop competencies. Outcomes of each program are aligned with the National Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. Additionally, all programs have self-evaluation reports on the academic unit's website. The quality of the report in the SER is clear and comprehensible and is in line with the discussions. The presentation of the Syllabi is good; only the question of the workload evaluation remained open and has potential for improvement. Credit allocation and workload evaluation need to be addressed in the implementation by the faculty for a course- and program design as well as in the evaluation methodic by the QAO - as already recommended in the Quality Management. (Standard 6.4, 6.5)

The assessment methods for UIBM students are defined in the Statute and Regulation for Bachelor and Master studies, which include exams, mid-term assessments, seminar papers, professional practice, and practical tests. The teaching staff uses appropriate methods and strategies for different learning outcomes, and participates in activities to improve their teaching effectiveness. There is a Plan for Academic Staff Development. During the site visit, the information largely coincided. During the site visit, the information largely coincided. The current question, a discussion issue during the meeting, of how the challenge of chatgpt for the exams will affect us and how UBIT will react to it remained open. (Standard 6.6)

UIBM has a Plan for Academic Staff Development, and each academic unit has its respective Academic Staff Development Plan. Additionally, staff development is part of the objective of UIBM's strategic plan, which continuously ensures that the staff is trained on new teaching methodologies in higher education and specific content according to their needs. At the meeting with the teaching staff, the training was confirmed. (Standard 6.7)

The SER describes the teaching philosophy at UIBM as student-centred and emphasizes the importance of student autonomy and responsibility for learning. Student-centred learning (SCL) is a pedagogical concept that focuses on developing students' competencies and engagement in active, collaborative, experiential, and problem-based learning. During the meeting with the faculty, Problem-based teaching methodology was mentioned that it has been introduced in the computer science faculty. While this teaching approach has shown promising results, it has not yet been scaled up to other faculties. (Standard 6.8)

According to the SER, stakeholder feedback is collected through students, teachers and program evaluations, program evaluations by alums, and industry/company evaluations of graduates. At the meeting with the employers and stakeholders, the engagement was confirmed. In the meeting, different branches were represented and provided an excellent overview of the positive impact on the labour market. (Standard 6.9)

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1.The ET recommends scaling-up the problem-based teaching methodology by introducing it faculty to other faculties and departments. It would also be beneficial to continue to provide professional development opportunities for academic staff members to ensure they are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively implement this approach.

2.The ET recommends implementing cross-faculty courses that utilize a problem-based teaching methodology. This approach could provide students with opportunities to collaborate with peers from different disciplines, which could help broaden their perspectives and enhance their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Additionally, this could promote interdisciplinary learning and potentially lead to the development of new and innovative solutions to complex problems.

2.7. Research

University of Mitrovica is a small university with limited research capacities. This is not something only specific to UIBM, but it is a feature of many small, regional and local universities. This is why it is important to be able to be self-conscious as an institution, critical toward real capacity and wise to define research priorities that could be carried on with the existing resources. University is covering unique fields that do not exist at other institutions. It also has a good combination of social sciences and technical sciences (including natural science as well) and this could be recognized as one of the advantages in performing research. Institution could be also perceived by the external stakeholders as a significant factor in social development. All these facts need to be recognized and capitalized in institutional approach in research.

It is very good that the UIBM developed Strategic research Plan 2021-2026. It is based on overall institutional Strategy. It defines three main objectives, and 14 specific objectives. This attempt to elaborate Strategic research plan this way is with no doubts good institutional exercise. However, probably it would be easier to implement, to achieve results if it was more focused. Although all the objectives might be relevant and of interest, more focus would match better the actual institutional capacity. (Standard 7.1)

Action plan has the main components for the implementation, however components are too broad, not enough specific. Again, this could hinder monitoring and adjustments. During the

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site visits the ET had a chance to see facilities, including laboratories and new equipment. As much as it is very good to have new equipment, it is extremely important to have realistic plans and capacities how to use it. Another important aspect is maintenance of a new equipment that could be quite financially demanding. All those factors need to be carefully taken into account in order to assure research. There is also a risk to use laboratories primarily for service which could be a good source for increasing the budget, but at the same time, in already limited human resources, this approach could decrease actual research. In other words, when planning research many different factors need to be taken into account in order to succeed. (Standard 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4).

The UIBM assured certain budget dedicated to research, such as 3,000 EURO for professional trainings and exchange, or 5,000 EURO for engagement of experts. Very positive investment is investment in new laboratories. What is missing in such budget distribution is funding research itself. This is actually the most demanding part, both in terms of the costs, but also in managing to prepare research grants or to develop research ideas. In other words, although funding is planned for different research activities, there are no funding for performing actual research. (Standard 7.4).

Research production still did not reach the acquired level, and even though there are academic staff who are publishing more, there is staff still with very low productivity. The UIBM must also increase number of research grants, in particular try to establish more and stronger networks with international universities and this way, increase their chance to join more research proposals.

The UIBM has a document that regulates intellectual property and this is certainly an important step in further development of different types of cooperation with external industry partners. Very positive is the fact that students are also part of the documents and in the course of their academic work their rights have been considered as well.

The ET notice many positive activities and desirable changes on the level of institution, but having in mind future and positive developmental changes in the long run, there is still space for improvement. It is necessary to assure further development in research, to have more and focused investment in research, and to develop mechanisms to support doing research. (Standard 7.10)

The UIBM developed Code of Ethics, document that deals with different forms of non-ethical behaviour in academic community. New regulation on Research Ethics and academic Integrity has been also drafted with an aim to set general principles governing research and provides basic standards for good practice in research. The documents is still in a process of acceptance.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Research productivity needs to be supported by additional mechanisms*
- 2. Establish better balance between research development plan and allocated budget*
- 3. Make sure that different disciplines are similarly supported in research*
- 4. Additional mechanisms need to be developed to support and monitor research productivity.*

2.8. Staff, employment processes and professional development

UIBM has established a Human Resources Manual that covers topics such as academic and administrative staff rights and obligations, recruitment procedures, monitoring, and professional development. The manual is periodically updated and acts as a decision-making resource for the workforce. All internal acts of the institution are also published on the website. (Standard 8.1)

UIBM statutes, laws, and internal regulations define the conditions and procedures for recruiting academic staff, ensuring that all recruited staff have the relevant qualifications to manage educational, scientific, and research activities effectively. Based on the SER, the recruitment process is fair and transparent, with open competition and criteria that the candidates must meet. The university also ensures equal opportunities, merit, and integrity in recruiting administrative staff, with the right for candidates to appeal the selection process. No inconsistencies were found in the on-site discussions. (Standard 8.2)

Based on the SER, UIBM provides complete and detailed information to candidates during the recruitment process for academic and administrative staff positions, including the terms of employment, working duties, and responsibilities. (Standard 8.3)

According to the SER, the management of the Faculties prepares an orientation meeting and gives the new employee with the Human Resources Manual and all internal regulations regarding teaching, research, and learning at UIBM. During discussions, the introduction procedure was discussed and confirmed. (Standard 8.4)

According to the SER, UIBM has a favourable staff-student ratio: for the academic year 2022-2023, the ratio of students to professors is 14:1, which is lower than the ratio at most worldwide public universities. Faculty-specific student-professor ratios range from 1:7 in the Faculty of Geosciences to 1:27 in the Faculty of Mechanical and Computer Engineering. The fundamental norm for academic personnel with the titles of assistant professor, associate professor, and full

professor is six hours per week for lectures, up to five additional (honorary) hours for lectures, and one hour per week for consultations with students for each subject – no differentiation across the faculties. (Standard 8.5)

According to the SER, the recruitment process is transparent, with public advertisement of the competition process, selection process in two stages, and the involvement of the central level bodies of the university. The qualifications required include typically, a doctorate degree, significant number of monographs and publications in international scientific or artistic journals. (Standard 8.6)

Performance evaluation criteria and processes for academic and administrative staff are clearly defined in the Performance Evaluation Manual and Regulation no. 21/2020. Academic staff are evaluated based on teaching, scientific research, and professional and contributory activity, while administrative staff are evaluated based on the achievement of defined objectives and professional conduct. The evaluation results are used for promotion and improvement of shortcomings, and the university provides mandatory training modules for employees who receive unsatisfactory evaluations. (Standard 8.7)

The evaluation of academic staff at UIBM is performed on a formal semester and annual basis in compliance with the Quality Assurance Office Work Plan. The evaluation criteria are well defined and cover aspects such as teaching quality, research work, participation in projects, and community service. The results of the evaluation are shared with academic staff and published on the university website. In addition, specific rewards and an annual reward fund have been established to recognize outstanding performance. (Standard 8.8)

The faculty dean discusses the evaluation results and develops an improvement plan with the staff rated below average. The improvement plan includes specific activities related to evaluation issues, and the dean oversees plan implementation. If a negative result is repeated, a co-lecturer is hired for the following academic year. The findings are made available on the UIBM website. (Standard 8.9)

UIBM has established a comprehensive plan for academic staff career development, which is reviewed and updated on an annual basis. Each academic unit has its own three-year staff development plan that identifies staff needs through various methods. The University provides financial support for the plan, and activities within the plan are related to joint programs with other, universities or projects. (Standard 8.10)

The provision of the sabbatical study year paid leave for academic mobility, and support for postdoctoral studies and fellowships are positive indications of the University's commitment to the professional development of its academic staff. Some of the activities have been mentioned and confirmed during meetings. (Standard 8.11)

Compliance level: Fully compliant

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ET recommendations: None

2.9. Student administration and support services

Regarding standards 9.1 and 9.2, The University of Mitrovica has an admission system which operates according to the national legislation. There are two sessions of admissions, the first one opening in July and, if needed as not all positions are fulfilled, a second competition opens in September. Several specific regulations are in place pursuant to the legislation. For example, SER mentions that pursuant to AI No. 09/2016 of MESTI, UIBM enrolls up to 12% regular students from the non-majority communities and 1% of the enrolled students can be from a certain set of country. Despite beyond the reach of the competences of the university, in terms of promoting the internationalisation, the latter percentage is low.

The ET appreciates the diverse criteria for examination, which also adapt to certain qualifications and previous academic results of the candidates. In most cases, the admission system takes into account multiple criteria.

For Masters students coming from Bachelor studies from other scientific fields, the regulations impose that candidates could have up to five differential exams, which they would undergo before the committee of three members. The ET stresses out the importance of promoting inter- and multidisciplinary approaches and, with this pursuit in mind, it would be important to provide adequate support to those students migrating and combining study fields from BA to Masters.

For the admission procedures, an office is mandated to work at institutional level, while Studies councils are competent at faculty level.

Furthermore, we can observe from the documents provided that the decisions on the rules for admission are dated 12.07.2022, with the registration period from 12th to the 19th of July 2022. The SER also mentions that ‘On the basis of humanitarian considerations, UIBM reserves the right to admit candidates with special needs.’ The ET believes that the paradigm should be changed into providing equal and fair access to the study programmes for candidates with special needs.

We commend the university for organising informative days with secondary school graduates and promoting the admission through various means, such as social networks, billboards, TV, radio and in newspapers. Furthermore, During the academic year 2021-2022, the Career Development Centre (CDC) and the Student Parliament have organized the Open Day.

We appreciate the improvement in terms of providing transparent information. According to SER and confirmed by our analysis, each faculty, on its website, presents the faculty background, the faculty organizational structure, the CVs of the academic staff, the faculty council, the curriculum of the teaching subjects etc. However, a barrier towards the accessibility of documents (which can also be extrapolated) is the fact that they are scanned, therefore it is difficult to search them for relevant information.

Regarding Standard 9.3, both according to SER and to our discussions, Orientation Day is held on the 1st of October each academic year. It is also important to mention that students are involved in this activity, thus creating a peer-based approach. Apart from the Orientation Days, the university provides leaflets and establishes the institutional identity through creating an email account for all students.

For standards 9.4, the university has approved a Regulation regarding the allocation of scholarships and financial support. According to the SER, in the 2021-2022 academic year, UIBM has awarded scholarships to 107 students (64 bachelor's students, 43 master's students) for academic achievement, in the amount of 760 euros for each one. Meanwhile, during the academic year 2021-22, 87 students have been released from the semester payments, while in the academic year 2022-23, 49 of them have benefited from this.

We appreciate that the number of students who have benefited from scholarships is increased, despite the fact that the individual amount decreased from 1000 euros to 760 euros. Nevertheless, our consultations confirmed that students believe this amount to be adequate. Furthermore, students mentioned they are informed about how scholarships are distributed, corroborated also with the fact that information sessions are organized at UIBM on the possibilities of benefiting from scholarships from various local and international institutions and organizations.

There is no scholarship for social cases (disadvantaged students), as the means to support them is to waive the tuition fees. However, it is important to mention that indirect costs should also be supported, as these barriers (accommodation, food), could also have an impact on access to education. Furthermore, the criteria for eligibility should be expanded, as at the moment only external factors are considered (e.g. if the family of the student is in social assistance).

The ET has been presented evidence of the data collection regarding different granular criteria based on the profile of students, their progress and satisfaction with various areas. This is done through SMU, which generates general and detailed statistics for all programs and study levels within the faculties. Despite a precise image not being possible, it is convincing that this data is used within QA purposes. In terms of supervising student progress, the Faculty Council is also competent.

For the drop-out cases, the reasons are also collected. The most predilect ones are ‘personal reasons’ and ‘changing the faculty’. The ET recommends that this data is also linked to the activity of the Counselling and Psychological centres, as well as policies are created for early intervention in case of potential dropout.

In terms of collecting data from graduates, the SER mention that not all of our graduates are enrolled in alumni, and data is collected from the alumni network. However, as those registered within the network are those with closer ties (and, presumably, also a better experience) with the university, the results can be skewed.

A Student handbook which comprises relevant information is available to students both online and offline. Apart from this resource, students mentioned that they are informed by the Student Parliament and through the Office for Public Information and Communication, which sends emails, has a newsletter etc.

We commend on the fact that since the last visit an Ombudsman has been put in place. It is important now that the position becomes established and known within the university.

For exams, students can appeal their result for both written and oral examinations, and an independent review committee would be established.

The ET has been informed that in order to launch complaints. a complaint box located in a place that is not covered by the camera is available and opened once a week by the committee appointed at the faculty level. According to the SER and to the interviews, the committee that opens the complaint box, evaluates the type of complaints and directs them to the responsible persons. Complaints are reviewed by the Disciplinary Committee within the academic unit, which consists of two professors and one student. In case the student is dissatisfied with the decision of the disciplinary committee, he has the right to address the matter to the Appeals Committee as a second instance body.

This procedure ensures anonymity, but also it is a rather non-systemic approach to ensure collection of complaints. Furthermore, there is little information on what is the potential impact of the complaint on staff.

According to the internal regulations, the maximum tolerated similarity is 15%. There are procedures in place for dealing with cases where students are above this percentage, for both courses and final thesis. The ET has been informed that the academic staff uses the anti-plagiarism system Plagiarism Check.org.

The development of student services within the university is appreciable. The campus has a space of 20m² per student in the closed premises and 90m² in the outer spaces. Since the last visit, a second building of the campus has been finalised, as well as a second library. Furthermore, investment has been allocated for recreational spaces, four sports facilities and greenery. Internet is ensured for students and staff across the campus. Students can also use the Family Medicine Center located 500m from the campus, where free services are provided for students.

There seems to be a good interconnection and coordination between different services, and students can have a centralised access through the SMU. The services are coordinated by the Students Services Office, which also plans to hire more staff.

The university has built in a student canteen facility and student dormitories, which is a very important improvement. Despite the fact that they should have been launched in 2022, several issues prolonged the inauguration and funding needs to be allocated for inventory as well. Especially since the degree of finalisation is so high, it is needed to prioritise the finalisation of these facilities.

Students are surveyed about the quality of the services, and the ET has received examples of some suggestions being implemented. The summary of the consultations is also published on the University's website.

The university has a Centre for Career Development (CDC) that supports students' career planning and employment. According to SER, CDC has organized various information sessions, CV and motivation letter drafting skills training, job interview preparation and professional training and counselling, organized together with partners. CDC also annually organises a careers fair. Support in increasing employment opportunities also comes from the alumni association.

Furthermore, the Centre for Psychological Support and General Well-Being has been established. During our interviews, we've seen however that the services still need to be streamlined and promoted, therefore we recommend additional steps in this direction.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. The ET stresses out the importance of promoting inter- and multidisciplinary approaches and, with this pursuit in mind, it would be important to provide adequate support to those students migrating and combining study fields from BA to Masters.*

2. *The ET recommends that the university expands the information of admission in regional and international languages, as information other than in Albanian is scarce.*
3. *We reiterate the recommendation provided by the previous ET as well to ensure at least 6 months for the publication of admission information.*
4. *We stress out the need to create and guarantee adapted admission policies for candidates with special needs.*
5. *The ET recommends that documents published on the UIBM's website are searchable.*
6. *the ET recommends that support for disadvantaged students takes also the form of scholarships, as well as an expansion of criteria to include the possibility for the student to prove the need for assistance.*
7. *The ET recommends that the university puts effort into ensuring that a higher percentage of graduates are surveyed.*
8. *The ET recommends that students are also engaged in the creation of the Handbook (both student representatives and first-year students after the experience of using the handbook).*
9. *The ET recommends decreasing the level of similarity and not establish it as a one-size-fits-all policy at university level, as well as ensure bachelor students' access to the plagiarism software.*
10. *The ET recommends prioritising the finalisation of the dormitories and canteen.*

2.10. Learning resources and facilities

The university provided extensive information regarding the resources allocated for different types of acquisitions, equipment, services, and system development. For example, for the book purchases UIBM spent 4,000 euros in 2021 and 6,000 euros in 2022. Investments in new learning and student facilities for the period 2014-2021 were in the amount of €17,253,827.00, of which €15,070,000.00 from the Ministry of Public Administration and €2,183,827.00 from the UIBM budget.

In 2022, the construction of two facilities to serve the students was finalized: the Dormitory facility (accommodating 279 students) and the Canteen facility for food. The dormitory accommodates 279 students. Both of them are yet to be inaugurated. For the supply of computers, during the years 2014-2022, €219,219.10 were spent.

However, despite acknowledging the challenges, the ET recommends a more accurate planning of the investment cycle, considering also allocating resources so investment objectives close to finalisation can be put to service. For example, during our visits we've seen equipment delivered months ago for laboratories which in practice are not accessible/used by students.

Regarding the library facilities, the university opened a second library and is constantly increasing the number of resources (during the 2023-2025, 24,000 euros are planned to be spent in buying books), which currently numbers 9675 books. The library has study rooms, reading rooms and for presentation activities, and they are equipped with computers and 24-hour internet. The Erasmus + QATEK project has purchased 99 new book titles during 2022 in the field of Education, and the university promotes the policy of donating books.

The progress should be made in the area of access to e-books and electronic journals, mainstreaming their use to bachelor students, including from home, and increasing the use and accessibility of the digital catalogue of books. The university through Prelego E-Library had access to more than 300,000 e-books for a period of three months, as well as free access during Pandemic. There is also access to EBSCO and University Library of Francophonie, but not fully available for Bachelor students. Despite efforts already made, longer working hours during exam periods. This would also increase the use of the library, together with a better link between requirements in syllabi and offers in the library.

Based on recommendations from the previous evaluation, the university introduced a regulation that before graduating each student could be asked to prove that they returned all borrowed books/materials and pay for any lost material so that it can be replaced by the library. We also commend the university for dropping out the 100 euros fee.

In order to access the e-resources, as well as to conduct work for the classes, students have access to computers in the library. For staff, each member has a computer, and each academic unit has an IT laboratory.

The ET had the opportunity, through the site visit, to confirm that the institution provides an adequate, clean, attractive and well maintained physical environment of both buildings and grounds. This is for sure also a result of the QA processes, which include surveys for stakeholders on the quality of these services. Other consequences of actions based on users input is, for example, that projectors and smartboards have been introduced. The stakeholders/users engagement is not limited to the input phase, but they could be actively engaged in the implementation and monitoring of follow-up actions, as well as co-managing their proposals.

According to SER, 0.16 % of all students of the university are students with special needs. There have been developments in terms of physical accessibility of building for these students, and also in the dormitories 8 rooms where prepared for students with disabilities. Furthermore, the Support Office for students with special needs is a central unit coordinating this policies and has also introduced measures to raise awareness within the larger community. In order to create a holistic environment conducive to the full inclusion of the students with special needs, higher attention should be focused on teaching practices, learning resources and assessment methods being adapted for students with special needs.

Both students and staff have access to computer equipment. Each of the teachers is equipped with a personal computer and support equipment in the cabinet of the academic personnel. In order to support the digital skills and digital learning, the IT office manages and coordinates the process of continuous updating and elaboration of the electronic learning strategy, proposes applications for learning in distance (E-learning) and organises training of employees working in the IT Office and in academic units (faculty) and sessions with students. While all these activities bring added value, we believe a dual approach is needed. While for the usability of tools, the IT continues to provide support and training, it should be the remit of the Center for Professional Education and Development to support digital skills and strategies for digital learning and hybrid learning, as this is linked with pedagogy, not with IT.

Based on the documents provided, progress has been made also on streamlining digitalisation in administration, albeit platforms are still missing, according to SER, on project management and mobility.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *the ET recommends a more accurate planning of the investment cycle,*
2. *The ET recommends that progress should be made in the area of access to e-books and electronic journals, mainstreaming their use to bachelor students, including from home, and increasing the use and accessibility of the digital catalogue of books*
3. *Despite efforts already made, we also recommend increasing the working hours during exam periods*
4. *the ET recommends that stakeholders/users engagement is not limited to the input phase, but they are actively engaged in the implementation and monitoring of follow-up actions, as well as co-managing their proposals.*
5. *the ET recommends that higher attention should be focused on teaching practices, learning resources and assessment methods being adapted for students with special needs.*
6. *The ET recommends that while for the usability of tools, the IT continues to provide support and training, it should be the remit of the Center for Professional Education and Development to support digital skills and strategies for digital learning and hybrid learning, as this is linked with pedagogy, not with IT.*

2.11. Institutional cooperation

Institutional cooperation and internationalisation are part of the strategic objectives of the UIBM Strategic Plan 2022-2025. Some more specific objectives include raising the human resources capacities of the office for cooperation and increasing the number of scholarship applications.

UIBM possesses a Regulation for Internationalization and Mobility. However, a relevant portion of the Regulation is, in fact, a set of medium-term objectives. In this regard, the medium-term objectives from the Regulation should be separated into an Action plan with concrete steps. This plan should also effectively tackle aspects such as budget prioritisation for internationalisation or how to better promote the uptake of English.

In terms of cooperation, we are glad to see that the close cooperation with Industry, which is considered as traditional by the university, was not affected by Covid.

Within the university, a Vice-Rector deals with the portfolio of International Relations and Scientific Research. The Vice-Rector is supported by the Office for International Cooperation and Scientific Research. This office should have overarching competences on international cooperation, while currently these competences are also scattered – for example, the Central Studies Committee is mandated for external education partnerships.

According to the data we have been provided, UIBM currently has 57 memorandums of understanding with national and international institutions of higher education (HEI), as well as 38 memoranda of understanding with organizations and institutions. Despite this, at the last evaluation the university had 54 memorandums with HEIs and 36 memorandums with other organisation. Further efforts are needed in the field of creating partnership, but especially creating a plan through which the university would reap the benefits of these cooperation, as many are not reaching their potential. This is also seen through the Erasmus+ mobility exchanges, where currently 6 learning agreements are in place.

In terms of projects, the university has implemented 5 Erasmus+ projects, as well as others such as HERAS+. Further funding opportunities should be taken into account, together with providing support to academic staff from university services to write projects, as well as benefits for winning projects.

The university promotes scientific cooperation and organises several scientific conferences at national or international level. This is also in line with the strategic option of linking internationalisation to research. However, based also on students' recommendation, students should participate in research from earlier stages, including in symposiums and conferences.

We commend the university on increasing their participation in international structures, including the promotion of values such as open access research, as well as cooperation on learning & teaching enhancement programmes such as Fulbright Specialist Program. In order to increase the benefits of these networks, we believe support for staff should be increased, including transparent funding schemes within the university.

As mentioned above, there is a good cooperation between the university and the local community. At institutional level an Industrial Board is established, while academic units have established advisory boards from industry and business representatives of the sectors covered by their programs as well. We recommend the improvement of the cooperation in terms of internships and work-based learning within study programmes, considering also the lack of systematic approaches on how to ensure quality internships and that their learning outcomes feed into the objectives of the study program.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. The ET recommends that the medium-term objectives from the Regulation are separated into an Action plan with concrete steps. This plan should also effectively tackle aspects such as budget prioritisation for internationalisation or how to better promote the uptake of English.*
- 2. The ET recommends enhancing the work in the field of creating partnership, but especially creating a plan through which the university would reap the benefits of these cooperation, as many are not reaching their potential.*
- 3. The ET recommends that further funding opportunities are taken into account, together with providing support to academic staff from university services to write projects, as well as benefits for winning projects.*
- 4. the ET suggest streamlining and supporting students' participation in research from earlier stages, including in symposiums and conferences.*
- 5. the ET highlights the need to ensure more clear and impactful criteria for rewarding staff contributing to third mission and community engagement.*
- 6. We recommend the improvement of the cooperation in terms of internships and work-based learning within study programmes.*

3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND JUDGEMENTS OF THE EXPERT TEAM

As shown above the compliance levels per general areas are:

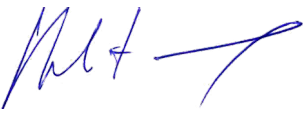
Standard	Compliance level
1. Public mission and institutional objectives	Substantially compliant
2. Strategic planning, governance and administration	Substantially compliant
3. Financial planning and management	Fully compliant
4. Academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability	Substantially compliant
5. Quality management	Fully compliant
6. Learning and teaching	Fully compliant
7. Research	Partially compliant
8. Staff, employment processes and professional development	Fully compliant
9. Student administration and support services	Substantially compliant
10. Learning resources and facilities	Substantially 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. In order to be granted a positive decision for the program and institutional re/accreditation, every education provider has to demonstrate at least a substantial compliance level in the overall judgment. Therefore, failure in meeting at least an overall substantial compliance level entails delaying, withdrawing, suspending or denying accreditation.*

According to the expert team's evaluation, University "Isa Boletini" Mitrovica "**substantially compliant**" with the standards included in the KAA Accreditation manual and, therefore, the expert team recommends **to re-accredit** the institution for the duration of three years.

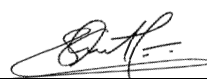
Expert Team

Chair

	Prof. Melita Kovacevic, PhD	18-3-2023
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

	Prof. Peter Parycek, PhD.	18-3-2023
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

Member

	Horia Onita	18-3-2023
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)