Final Report on University "Fehmi Agani" in Gjakova

INSTITUTIONAL

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

March 1, 2024

Pristina – Brno – Bucharest – Malmo

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

The institutional evaluation of University "Fehmi Agani" in Gjakova (UFAGJ) was conducted according to the plan. The expert panel was provided well-prepared self-evaluation report and other related documentation of the UFAGJ prior to the site visit, and this way, the panel had sufficient time to study the documentation and prepare for the work during the site visit. The site visit was organized on a very good level. All the interviews went well, as planned, the same can be said about the observation of the UFAGJ facilities. After the site visit, the expert panel requested some additional documentation which was provided by the UFAGJ timely and in a sufficient manner. Consequently, the panel developed the draft report and submitted it into the KAA within the time limit, as agreed earlier. The final report was issued after the UFAGJ informed that they have no objections or any other comments to the text of the draft report.

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Date of site visit: February 7, 2024

Expert Team (ET) members:

- *Prof. Milan Pol, Masaryk University, Czech Republic*
- *Prof. Magdalena Iordache-Platis, University of Bucharest, Romania*
- *Lali Giorgidze, University of Malmo, Sweden, (student expert)*

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- *Shkelzen Gerxhaliu, Senior Officer for Evaluation*

Sources of information for the Report:

- *Self-evaluation report and other documentation provided by University "Fehmi Agani" in Gjakova before the site visit and later upon the panel′s request*
- *Interviews*
- *Site visit – observation of facilities*

Criteria used for institutional and program evaluations

- *KAA Accreditation Standards*

1.2. Site visit schedule

Time	Meeting	Participants/Comments
09:30 – 10:40	Meeting with the management of the institution *(no slide presentation is allowed, the meeting*	1. Drilon Bunjaku – Rector. 2. Arben Boshnjaku – Vice-Rector for Research, Academic Development and Quality Enhancement. 3. Nazli Tyfekçi – Vice- Rector for International Cooperation and Projects; 4. Dafina Kaçuri – Vice-Rector for Teaching and Student Affairs.

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	is intended as a free discussion)	5. Linda Dula – Halilabazi – General Secretary.
		6. Behxhet Gaxhiqi – member of the Steering Council.
		7. Hajrullah Latifi - member of the Steering Council.
10:40 – 11.40	Meeting with Quality assurance representatives and Administrative services	1. Daut Islami – Head of office for Quality Assurance.
		2. Rina Rudi – Head of office for the budget and finance.
		3. Nita Pruthi - Officer of the Legal Office
		4. Freskina Mula – Head of the Office for International Cooperation and Projects.
		5. Nurije Halili – Personnel Manager
		6. Abedin Sadrija - Head of Office for Academic Affairs
		7. Qëndresa Bardhoshi - Salaries and honorarium officer
		8. Arbër Krypa - Head of IT office
11:40 – 12:30	Meeting with Deans of Faculties (Head of programs in case of smaller colleges)	1. Ilmi Hoxha – Dean;
		2. Haxhi Kamberi – Dean;
		3. Labinot Berisha – Dean;
		4. Ferdi Kamberi – Dean;
		5. Edita Haxhijaha - Vice Dean of the Faculty of Education
		6. Faton Hoxha - head of study program
		7. Petrit Duraj - head of study program
12:30 – 13.30	Lunch break (to be provided at the evaluation site)	
13:30 – 14:20	Visiting tour of the facilities and infrastructure	

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14:20 – 15:05	Meeting with teaching staff	1. Sindorela Doli Kryeziu - Teaching Staff 2. Laura Naka- Teaching Staff 3. Elsa Vula- Teaching Staff 4. Artan Nimani - Teaching Staff 5. Agon Kokaj - Teaching Staff 6. Antigona Ukëhaxhaj - Teaching Staff 7. Gentiana Muhaxhiri - Teaching Staff 8. Muhamet Kadrija - Teaching Assistant / Nursing Clinical Practices
15:05 – 15:50	Meeting with students	1. Lirigzon Goci 2. Lyra Pozhegu 3. Albert Prenqi 4. Arlinda Muslija 5. Eriola Beqaj 6. Sihana Kryeziu 7. Leonisa Sinanaj 8. Albin Tahiraj
15:50 – 16:40	Meeting with graduates	1. Ardit Halilaj 2. Edonesa Jasiqi 3. Dhurata Xhehnemi 4. Arber Malota 5. Vlera Krasniqi 6. Mundim Imeraj
16:45 – 17:30	Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders	1. Behar Ferizi - Chamber of Commerce of Kosovo 2. Ilmi Shala - Director of the General Hospital in Gjakova 3. Kujtim Dula - Director of Employment Office 4. Miranda Shllaku - Director of High School "Fehmi Agani" 5. Arben Koshi - Head of Medical Family Center 6. Bekim Avdiu - Kosovo Police 7. Mimoza Bytyqi - Preschool kindergarten "Zgjimi"
17:30 – 17:40	Internal meeting – Expert Team and KAA	

17:40 – 17:50	Closing meeting with the management of the institution	

1.3. A brief overview of the institution under evaluation

The UFAGJ is a public higher education institution (HEI) that operates in Gjakova. The roots of this institution go to the first initiatives to establish teacher training institution in Gjakova in late 1940s. In 2002/2003 the Faculty of Education as the branch of University of Pristina was established in Gjakova, and a year later first groups of students were enrolled. Soon, more programs than education were established at the institution. Since 2013, this HEI was operating as self-standing independent university with three faculties. And in 2020 the Assembly of Kosovo approved the Permanent Statute and with this decision the name of the university is University "Fehmi Agani" in Gjakova (UFAGJ).

At the moment, the UFAGJ has five faculties, namely those of Applied Sciences; Education; Medicine; Philology; and Social Sciences. The university offers a portfolio of bachelor and master study programs. According to the self-evaluation report (SER), there are 3127 students studying at the UFAGJ.

2. INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

2.1. Public mission and institutional objectives

The UFAGJ´s mission statement remains practically the same as in the time of institutional evaluation conducted in 2021 (very slight changes in wording are caused by a new translation, the expert panel assumes). It is formulated as follows: "The UFAGJ is committed to create knowledge through contemporary methods of teaching and research, fostering student enthusiasm and promoting academic integrity. The University offers academic and research experiences by collaborating with the community, and it also contributes to the social and economic development of the country and the region, through the unique and qualitative

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programs of study." (SER, p. 11). Such a statement includes all three pillars of a comprehensive higher education institution, namely teaching, research, and community service. From this perspective, the mission statement can be seen as relatively complex and balanced.

The vision statement of the UFAGJ, the set of values, and the goals to which the HEI under evaluation declares to be committed seem to be relevant and well related to the mission statement in its three main focuses.

There are indications the current mission statement of the UFAGJ has been defined as a result of a consultation process into which the top management but also staff, students, administration of the UFAGJ, and some representatives of labour market, the ministry of education, and other relevant external bodies were involved in some extent. This process had several phases which are described in the SER and were confirmed during the interviews with representatives of different groups within the UFAGJ and beyond.

As concerns the recognition of the mission statement by members of the academic community of the UFAGJ, several formal steps of involving representatives of relevant groups in the mission statement development and the information of the whole academic community of the UFAGJ were undertaken. They are described in the SER and were in some extent confirmed during the interviews. The mission as well as vision statements are stated at the UFAGJ's webpage, too.

As for the question whether the UFGAJ's mission provides an effective guide for strategic planning, decision making and operations of the institution, it can be said that the mission statement by explicitly mentioning all three main areas of the HEI's operation (in a general way) is a potential source which can be worked with when drafting further steps. Consequently, it has its projections in the main strategic objectives, as formulated in the current Strategic Plan of the UFAGJ (2021-2025). Explicitly this can be seen, for example, in case of emphasising quality programs and research, linking programs and societal needs, developing partnership with the community. The answer to the above-mentioned question remains clear only partly as concerns decision making and operations of the institution. For instance, there is still a little stated about measures towards the development of internal culture of the institution within the strategic objective "Institutional and organisational strengthening", the support of research does not clearly focus on the support of researching process/activity that could lead to research results. Public outreach is also considered in a rather narrowed way. In connection to the research, this must be acknowledged, however, the effort of the UFAGJ to work towards the research skills development;

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also, the tendency to award successful publications is to be appreciated, but this is just the next step that stands on the research process/activity for which an explicit support is hard to find.

In general, it can be said, however, that medium and long-term objectives of the UFAGJ are quite consistent with and are supporting the mission (with the reservations mentioned in the previous paragraph).

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Consider a possibility to develop richer portfolio of the third role activities, incl. for instance those of voluntary activities, university of so-called 3rd age format, and more.)*
2. *Consider a possibility to include into the values of the institution also the focus on sustainability, social life of the students and the staff of the institution, life-work balance, sustainability – and develop possibilities towards this end.*
3. *Make sure research process activities are explicitly in focus when planning the research support in your strategic plans.*
4. *Consider a possibility to pay more explicit attention to internal culture development of the institution in all strategic documents.*

2.2. Strategic planning, governance and administration

The UFAGJ has a strategic plan for the period 2021-2025, and the action plan has been drafted envisaging medium- and long-term periods. The strategic plan points out six strategic objectives. They are as follows: (1) Institutional and organizational strengthening; (2) Quality assurance and academic integrity; (3) Quality programs, teaching and scientific research; (4) Internationalization and networking; (5) Students and partnership with the community; and (6) Contemporary infrastructure and sustainable development.

Similarly to the evaluation process in 2021, the UFAGJ informed in its current SER about the process of drafting the strategic plan in a consultation with the academic community as well as relevant external stakeholders. During the interviews, the existence of a consultation has been confirmed by the participants.

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This can be confirmed that there are links between the strategic plan and the budget of the UFAGJ for the period of 2021-2025, with sums allocated for each of the five years for salaries and wages, goods and services, municipal expenditures, subsidies and transfers, total capital investments, total revenues. Concrete allocations to six strategic objectives and their concrete elaborations were stated, too.

The strategic plan works with the identification of strengths and weaknesses of the UFAGJ, and it is built with regard to their analysis and external factors that can affect the development of the institution. This can be said the strategic plan takes an account of aspects of the internal and external environment affecting the development of the UFAGJ.

The implementation of the strategic plan is monitored, and the outcomes are evaluated. The most visible measure in this respect is monitoring and evaluation of the achievements of what has been plan in the strategic plan, conducted in 2023. The Report on the Implementation of the Strategy Action Plan for the Period 2021-2023 informs in a sufficiently detailed way about how the institution progressed in all six strategic objectives formulated within the Strategic Plan 2021-2025, and what are the steps to be taken in the upcoming period. This Report is also published on the webpage of the UFAGJ. There are also established specific bodies to act in this direction at the UFAGJ, namely the Committee for the Implementation of the Strategic Planning (consisting of academic as well as student and community representatives). The set of regulations for supervising the strategic plan´s implementation is in place, too. The Committee is supposed to report regularly to the steering bodies of the institution.

A decision-making system and internal operating regulations seem to be in agreement with existing legal provisions. These rules and regulations include especially those for studies, functioning of steering council, senate of the UFAGJ, organization and systematization of working positions, disciplinary procedures, ethical issues, and more. Decision-making structures include governing as well as organizational structure of the administration. The Steering Council is the main leading authority of the University; the rector is the main managerial authority of the University; the senate is the highest academic body of the University; and the general secretary is the Higher administrative official at the UFAGJ. Deans and Faculty Councils are the main bodies at the level of faculties. There are several offices directly linked to the general administration, namely general secretary office, central administration office, administration office of faculties.

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A number of other offices deal with specific agenda at the university level, namely staff office, IT office, law office, office for budget, finances and infrastructure, discipline office, QA office, office for international relations and project management, academic development and student affairs, university library, career development office. There is also a number of committees are linked to individual parts of the institution/its areas of functioning at the UFAGJ.

The Steering Council has issued the Regulation on the establishment of Counselling Committee for statutory issues and Supervision of Implementation of other regulations and other acts issued by the organs of the UFAGJ. Organogram seems to be confusing, though. Despite to declarations of the important position of the teaching, research and the third role processes/activities, the faculties (where this all should mainly take place) seem to be rather sidelined in the organogram.

Election criteria and processes of the decision makers and other elected positions seem to be clear and transparent at the UFAGJ. They are also clearly stated in the UFAGJ´s regulations. This can also be said that responsibilities of decision-making bodies are defined, and the academic decision-making structures are differentiated and followed in practice. This relates to academic, administration as well as student bodies.

Student representatives are members of the decision-making bodies of a decisional, executive as well as consultative nature. The mechanism of electing student representatives is formulated in Regulations for Student Elections in the UFAGJ, and the process seems to be democratic, transparent and non-discriminatory. The institution is not involved in this process but contributes to it financially. This way, student representatives are involved in the senate (two students), steering council (one student in the role of observer), studies committee (one student), each faculty´s council (always one student), central committee for QA (one student representative), faculty´s committees for quality (always one student representative), and in most ad hoc committees.

Similarly to the evaluation in 2021, the expert panel concludes that it seems the UFAGJ has the administration effective in terms of organization, staffing levels and qualifications, and they seem to function sufficiently. English language proficiency of the staff seems to be – in general – one of the chronically underdeveloped features. This is not a good sign bearing in mind internationalization of all key areas of the UFAGJ´s operation is one of the strategic objectives and probably will remain to be one of the priorities for the years beyond 2025.

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The responsibilities of the administrative staff seem to be clearly defined, matching with the qualifications of the individual.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Make sure teaching/learning, research and third role activities related to the faculties have clearly a central position in the organisational structure of the institution.*
2. *Consider possibilities to improve English language proficiency of the staff – as a precondition for successful internationalization.*

2.3. Financial planning and management

Based on the data available, the expert panel concludes that the UFAGJ has sufficient financial resources in the short as well as medium terms. Consequently, there is a precondition the institution can fulfill the mission and the strategic plan as formulated. This is said bearing in mind that the institution itself is mentioning a relative lack of research funding – this seems to be a more complex issue at the Kosovo HEI area, though. Financial resources are composed from government grants, personal incomes, donations, and revenues from community services. The budget is in some extent explicitly interlinked with the strategic plan and its objectives.

This can be said that on the basis of the overall budget, the UFAGJ has a realistic annual financial plan as well as three-year budget. The annual as well as three-year budget (2024-2026) are broken down to several areas: salaries and wages, goods and services, municipal expenditures, subsidies and transfers, capital investments, and own resource revenues. Budget allocations are also split into individual faculties and the rectorate. The institution also has financial policies which address its financial sustainability.

Oversight and management of the institutions budgeting, and accounting functions are carried out by a specialized office responsible to senior administration. According to the UFAGJ´s Statute, financial issues are supervised „by the Steering Council of the UFAGJ, based on the reports of the financial statements from the Finance office verified by the Rector, respectively

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managed by the Vice-Rector for Budget, Finance and Infrastructure. The financial administrative part is carried out by the Budget and Finance Office, which reports to the General Secretary in the UFAGJ." (SER, p. 51) The above mentioned office works according to the   Regulation for Internal Organization and Systematization of Workplaces, and positions/functions within the office seems to be adequately determined.

Expenditures and commitments are monitored against the budget, and reports are prepared annually, in line with legislation. Moreover, there are more financial reports submitted by the UFAGJ to the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI). These reports are approved in advance by the Steering Council of the UFAGJ.

The UFAGJ is a public institution and as such it is a subject of standard professional accounting procedures (also stated in the Statute of the University). Budget expenditures and financial statements undergo regularly and in exceptional case audits which are carried out by the Internal and External Auditor. In this relation, the Kosovo Financial Management System (KFMIS) is applied, which is an integrated system for budget expenditure oversight procedures by Budget Organizations, with a high control by the Kosovo Treasury and the Central Bank of Kosovo.

The UFAGJ is not decentralized into such extent that academic units (faculties) would be dealing directly with finances. Instead, "university management during financial planning and expenditures constantly consults with academic and organizational units and based on these data drafts the annual financial plan and procurement plan. The heads of the academic and organizational units submit requests for their financial and infrastructural needs, which are then incorporated in the budget of the university." This practice was confirmed during the interviews. To conclude, this can be said that accounting systems comply with accepted professional accounting standards and as far as possible attribute total cost to particular activities.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Consider a possibility to decentralize some parts of the budget to individual aculties/other structural units.*

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2.4. Academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability

Ethical issues are dealt with in four documents of the UFAGJ, namely Code of Ethics, Student Handbook, Code of Ethics for Administrative Staff, and the Code of Ethics and Integrity in Scientific Research. These documents are instruments through which, it can be said, the UFAGJ defends the values of academic freedom, institutional autonomy and ethical integrity.

In general, the code of ethics of the UFAGJ informs all the staff of the institution about their obligations and rights as well as the rules of conduct and ethics. This can be said this Code of Ethics requires that all internal stakeholders act consistently with high standards of ethical conduct and avoidance of plagiarism in research, teaching, performance evaluation, and n he conduct of administrative duties, and avoid conflicts of interest. The code of ethics of the UFAGJ explicitly states the ethical values, such as iintegrity; correctness; honesty and sincerity; conduct, goodwill, and cooperation; high morale and objectivity; professional excellence and academic freedom; respect for academic and institutional hierarchy; mutual respect and human dignity; personal and institutional responsibility as well as accountability; citizen responsibility (Code of Ethics, p. 3). Besides to is the Code of Ethics of the UFAGJ also mentions unacceptable behavior. It relates the values and unacceptable behavior of teachers and students, research and knowledge, relationship with colleagues, responsibility of the university, responsibility to society. Also, Ethics Council and its scope of action is defined in this document.

The UFAGJ has developed Rules of Procedure of the Code of Ethics in which procedural framework for its implementation is defined. Following this, regulations on the disciplinary procedures for the academic staff, and separately for the students were developed. Disciplinary committee then works with the Code of Ethics for Administrative Staff. This way, it can be concluded that ethical code is enforced through clear processes and mechanisms, and it applies to all staff and structural units in the institution.

The Ethics Council has been established at the UFAGJ as a body that seems to play a key role in the matters in this context. Members are elected, have 4-year mandate and among them there is also a student representative. It was proven during the interviews that "The Ethics Council is responsible for the development of disciplinary proceedings, including the organization of

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hearings for each person accused of violating the provisions of the Code of Ethics and for proposing disciplinary measures for cases of violation of the Code." (SER, p. 58).

As already mentioned above, the documents related to ethical issues related to main areas of the UFAGJ activity. As for antiplagiarism, the SAP system is accessible to all academic staff and students of the UFAGJ. The results of the application of Code of Ethics that are published on the webpage relate to the decisions to set up the process initiated mainly by individual student dissatisfaction with the assessment at the exam. These relate to two faculties (Education, Philology) and are dated by 2019 and 2020. This cannot not be confirmed that the results of the application the code of ethics were fully published at the webpage of the university.

It was proven during the evaluation process that main regulations, procedures, self-evaluation reports and decisions of governing bodies are made publicly available by the UFAGJ.

The UFAGJ provides a well-structured website which covers all the duties of publications the institution has. The transparency the UFAGJ provides in this case is on a good level, and stakeholders seem to be able to find relevant regulations, documents and statistics on the website.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Make sure the results of application of the Code of Ethics are well publicly available.*
2. *Consider possibilities to work with current issue that can potentially intervene into the area of ethical considerations, such as artificial intelligence.*

2.5. Quality management

The UFAGJ has officially adopted quality assurance policy and all documents related to its implementation are publicly available on the institutions website – https://uni-gjk.org/en/sc/dokumente/48. Furthermore, in the context of the university's strategic objective,

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the Quality Assurance Office is tasked with implementing quality assurance policies across the institution. Operating under the oversight of the Rector and Vice-Rector, the office is also responsible for monitoring and enhancing the quality processes across the university. During interviews the panel of external reviewers could see commitment of QA office to implementing this function, as well as outcomes of these evaluation. The active contribution of the QA office to university activities related to quality assurance and its role in leading accreditation processes highlight its proactive approach to ensuring quality.

Overall, human, financial and material resources for leadership and management of quality assurance processes appear to be adequate on surface. The institution has developed training program for newly recruited staff and students on internal quality management. The SER mentions that there are 34 employees involved in quality assurance activities, including academic, administrative staff, and students. Additionally, the office has appointed a Head of the Office for Quality Assurance and has recently recruited two additional employees for quality assurance and accreditation processes. But given the diverse range of responsibilities outlined for the Quality Assurance Office, such as coordinating quality assurance processes, implementation of strategic plan, administering evaluations, managing data, and collaborating with stakeholders, it's essential to ensure that the office has the necessary expertise and capacity to carry out these functions effectively (see section on standard 5.8 for further analysis on this). The UFAGJ may also need to consider conducting evaluation of workload allocation on staff to identify areas where additional resources may be needed to enhance the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance Office in fulfilling its responsibilities.

The panel of reviewers also noted that the current quality management processes at the UFAGJ may be lacking sufficient focus on innovation and quality enhancement in teaching and learning and in third mission activities, which are essential for maintaining competitiveness and relevance in education; as the demand for innovative teaching methodologies grow, there is need for universities to continuously improve in these areas to meet the evolving landscape of higher education. Without adequate resources and support for fostering innovation and enhancing teaching and learning quality, the university risks falling behind its peers and failing to provide students with the transformative educational experiences they need to succeed in the modern world. Therefore, it is necessary for the UFAGJ to invest in building the necessary capacities and capabilities within its quality management processes to prioritize innovation and quality improvement in teaching and learning. Sufficient focus on innovation and quality enhancement is equally vital for the institution's third mission endeavors, such as community engagement, social responsibility etc. However, the UFAGJ may be experiencing capacity limitations in effectively integrating innovation and quality assurance practices given the existing resources and structures within the Quality Assurance Office. Therefore, it is recommended that the UFAGJ enhances its quality management processes and ensures human and financial resources by finding synergies between innovation and quality in its teaching and

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learning and third mission activities. To achieve this, the UFAGJ can foster a culture of creativity and experimentation among faculty, staff, and students, encouraging innovative approaches to curriculum design, pedagogy, and assessment. Professional development opportunities can be provided to all academic staff (notwithstanding their performance outcomes) to enhance their skills in utilizing educational technologies and implementing effective teaching strategies. Interdisciplinary collaboration should be promoted to tackle complex issues/challenges in learning and teaching and promote innovation across disciplines. Additionally, the UFAGJ can prioritize sustainability and social responsibility by embedding these principles into teaching, and community engagement efforts. By adopting these strategies, the UFAGJ can enhance the quality of its educational programs, and make meaningful contributions to society, along with ensuring its continued relevance in the higher education landscape.

The Quality Assurance Office collects, processes, and analyzes evaluation results, which are discussed within the Central Commission for Quality Assurance (CQAC). Recommendations for improvement are then formulated based on these findings. The comprehensive summary report, distributed to all relevant parties including the Rector's Office and the Senate, outlines evaluation procedures, results, and comparative data. This data-driven approach facilitates the identification of trends and necessary measures for enhancement. The institution has also developed the guide for determining indicators for evaluating the performance of study programs and has implemented practice of rewarding achievements in performance that also foster improvements within the institution.

The current quality assurance framework within the university is indeed comprehensive in its scope, covering various institutional activities. However, there are notable gaps in evaluating certain aspects, particularly in the realm of internationalization and the third mission. While the assessment of internationalization efforts primarily revolves around student exchange programs and benchmarks related to academic staff publications in international journals, this approach overlooks broader opportunities for enriching educational experiences and benchmarking against global standards. Furthermore, to ensure a truly holistic quality assurance system, it is recommended for the university to expand its evaluation criteria to encompass the diverse facets of internationalization efforts and develop assessment mechanisms for third mission activities. This would not only enhance the institution's overall quality assurance framework but also align it more closely with contemporary standards and best practices in higher education.

For integrating quality assurance functions into institutional planning and development strategies, the institution appears to primarily employ approaches based on control and regulation, rather than enhancement and proactively seeking opportunities for improvement. Illustrations of this include the comprehensive reporting and accountability system for quality

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assurance in place at the institution, the recruitment of staff members solely for external evaluation purposes, and the practice of reactive problem-solving evident in quality assurance processes. These mechanisms primarily address problems or deficiencies that may arise from staff or student surveys (e.g., professional development trainings are only offered to academic staff whose performance is not assessed well based on surveys). In contrast, an enhancement-oriented quality assurance approach would involve more proactive identification of improvement opportunities for positive change and prioritize ongoing learning and development for academic staff. This suggests a fundamental misalignment with the intended purpose of quality assurance, which should serve as a catalyst for continuous enhancement and innovation across all institutional activities. Therefore, it is necessary for the institution to shift towards a more enhancement-focused approach for normal planning and development strategies, ensuring continuous improvement and adaptation to evolving standards and practices. During the reporting period, the university has made significant efforts to establish and consolidate traditional quality assurance practices for maintaining established standards and detecting deficiencies. This groundwork has prepared the foundation for the implementation of a more enhancement-oriented approach, which actively seeks opportunities for innovation, growth, and excellence.

The quality of internationalization appears to be assessed through student exchanges and setting benchmarks for academic staff to publish in international journals, overlooking broader opportunities for enriching educational experiences and benchmarking against global standards.

The institution conducts regular evaluations at the end of each semester, accompanied by comprehensive reports that offer insights into the overall performance of the institution. These reports are available on the university's website, ensuring transparency and accountability to stakeholders. Surveys of staff and students majorly serve as source of data for these reports; in addition to surveys, the university should actively seek other sources of input for evaluation, such as focus groups, interviews, discussions in working meetings etc. to obtain a holistic understanding of its operations and identify areas for enhancement.

The institution majorly relies on surveys to evaluate inputs processes and outputs. Before each evaluation, discussions are held among stakeholders, including the CQAC and the Office for Quality, to enhance evaluation instruments and distribution methods. For instance, in the winter semester of 2023, the student questionnaire underwent revisions based on feedback received from students and colleagues, resulting in clearer and more relevant questions. Specific improvements have also been made to assess administrative services, with questions tailored to address various aspects comprehensively. In evaluating outputs, the CQAC incorporates feedback from students, alumni, and employers to gauge satisfaction levels and

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program effectiveness. As discussed in section 5.4 of the report the approach to evaluations employed by university is currently more control-oriented, and it is recommended that the institution develops more enhancement-oriented component (supporting innovation and excellence) of its evaluations to better facilitate achievement of strategic objectives.

Quality assurance regulations of the institution support involvement of all academic and administrative staff in quality assurance. However, the SER mentions some challenges in relation to full engagement of academic staff in quality matters. One of the reasons of this can be overemphasis on quality control that sometimes-academic staff finds not meaningful. Therefore, to enhance meaningful engagement of academic staff in quality management, it is needed to strike a balance between monitoring and controlling quality and fostering a culture of enhancement and development within the academic community. Further, it is needed to introduce incentives for staff professional development in quality assurance to encourage active participation and ongoing skill development in this critical area.

The institution has established the Office for Quality Assurance within the central administration, where senior management operates. The QA office has been staffed, with additional personnel recruited as per the needs of the office, including two consultants/officers to support its smooth functioning. Collaboration between the QA Office and Central Commission for Quality Assurance (CQAC), and Quality Assurance Commissions of Academic Units is evident, facilitated by administrative staff members integrated into each academic unit's commission. However, the oversight of the Rector and Vice-Rector over the Quality Assurance Office could potentially raise concerns about the independence of the office. Independence is crucial for quality assurance bodies to effectively carry out their responsibilities without undue influence or bias. When a quality assurance office operates under the direct supervision of top university administrators, there may be challenges in maintaining autonomy and impartiality in its activities. To mitigate potential issues related to independence of Quality Assurance office and thus support its effective operation, the university could consider appointment of the head of the Quality Assurance Office based on merit and expertise in quality assurance principles, rather than direct appointment by university administrators. Additionally, the institution could consider establishing reporting structures that allow the Quality Assurance Office to report its findings and recommendations directly to governing bodies rather than solely to university administrators.

Another concern in relation to implementing its functions by Quality Assurance Office arises regarding the coordination of implementing the strategic development plan by the Quality Assurance Office, that may strain its capacity and efficiency. Coordinating the implementation of the Strategic Plan requires specialized expertise in strategic management and comprehensive understanding of institutional objectives, which may not always align with the core competencies of the Quality Assurance Office. Additionally, this coordination role

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demands significant time and resources, potentially diverting the office's focus away from its primary responsibilities related to evaluation, data analysis, and quality assurance. Instead, strategic planning coordination could be more effectively managed by a dedicated strategic planning committee or unit comprised of individuals with expertise in strategic management, thereby allowing the Quality Assurance Office to concentrate on its core functions of monitoring and enhancing institutional quality.

The institution has established the Central Commission for Quality Assurance, which along with Quality Commissions in academic units, ensures comprehensive oversight and collaboration across the institution.

The role of the Quality Office is defined in legal and by-laws such as: the UFAGJ Statute, regulation for quality assurance and assessment at the UFAGJ, quality manual. The role and responsibilities of the quality office are clearly defined. The role, duties and responsibilities of the Quality Assurance Office (QAS) are presented on the UFAGJ website. The Commission for quality assurance and evaluation at the level of academic units prepares the plan of activities for quality and evaluation in their unit, based on the directions and instructions of the KQSC. At the recent meeting of the Central Quality Assurance Commission, held on May 15, 2023, the UFAGJ undertook a comprehensive review of its questionnaires to enhance accessibility and effectiveness. Minor adjustments were approved to streamline content and structure, facilitating easier completion by students and professors. Additionally, discussions encompassed the advantages and drawbacks of distributing questionnaires in both physical and electronic formats, ensuring thorough consideration of feedback mechanisms. Furthermore, revisions to the performance manual were initiated following consultations with academic staff, aimed at refining evaluation processes and mechanisms. These actions are part of the UFAGJ's ongoing commitment to continuous improvement in quality assurance practices, as evidenced by the annual updates to the Quality Assurance Activities Plan overseen by CQAC. Moreover, the university has proactively drafted guidelines for student engagement in internal and external quality assurance processes, reflecting its dedication to fostering a collaborative and inclusive approach to quality enhancement.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Consider conducting an evaluation of workload allocation among staff to identify areas where additional resources may be needed to enhance the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance Office in fulfilling its responsibilities.*

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2. *It is recommended that the institution strike a balance between control and enhancement in quality assurance by strengthening the culture of quality and innovation within its academic community. This can include, but is not limited to, creating synergies between innovation and quality in teaching and learning, encouraging innovative approaches to curriculum design, pedagogy, and assessment, and fostering an innovation culture in general.*

3. *To support the quality of teaching and learning, professional development opportunities need to be provided to all academic staff, regardless of their performance outcomes, for utilizing educational technologies and effective teaching strategies. Incentives for professional development of staff should also be created to encourage active participation in professional development and support ongoing skills development in this critical area.*

4. *To ensure a truly holistic quality assurance system, it is recommended to expand evaluation criteria to encompass the diverse facets of internationalization efforts.*

5. *To ensure a truly holistic quality assurance system, it is recommended to develop assessment mechanisms for third mission activities.*

6. *Considering the operation of the Quality Assurance Office under the direct supervision of top university administrators, it is necessary to introduce measures supporting QA in maintaining autonomy and impartiality in its activities and effectiveness of its operations.*

7. *Coordinating the implementation of the Strategic Plan requires specialized expertise in strategic management and a comprehensive understanding of institutional objectives, which may not always align with the core competencies of the Quality Assurance Office. Additionally, this coordination role demands significant time and resources, potentially diverting the office's focus away from its primary responsibilities related to evaluation, data analysis, and quality assurance. Ensure that a dedicated strategic planning committee or unit comprised of individuals with expertise in strategic management coordinates the implementation of the strategic plan, thereby allowing the Quality Assurance Office to concentrate on its core functions of monitoring and enhancing institutional quality.*

2.6. Learning and teaching

The University of Gjakova (UFAGJ) has drafted and adopted policies and procedures applicable to all academic programs – several regulations for the bachelor level of studies: Faculty of Philology, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Medicine, and Faculty of Social Sciences and also, a regulation for the master level and another one for the doctoral programs (SER, p. 84). These documents stipulate several organizational aspects, for example the faculty objectives, the ECTS number, the teaching language of the programs, the responsibilities of the program leaders, the organization and the development of the learning process, students' rights and obligations, details on the diploma paper. Similar issues are integrated in the regulation defining the master studies, but relevant for this cycle of studies: duration of studies, registration of students, transfer of students from other universities. In the regulation on doctoral studies, an important focus is put on publications and preservation of the doctoral dissertation and on the quality of the doctoral studies. During the site visit, the management of the institutions explained that the institution monitors the extent to which those policies and procedures are implemented with the contribution of the Quality Committee based on specific indicators.

At the UFAGJ, one of the goals mentioned in the Statute is the aim to create and support the highest standards in the field of teaching and learning, initial approvals, regular changes, and monitoring of performance; the document, also reveals how academic units are created through the integration or dissolution of other units by decision of the Steering Council and after consultations with the Senate, preconditions for gaining the status of an academic unit, the faculty responsibilities etc (Appendix 2) Moreover, the university has set up a Working Group for the Industrial Board which has an essential role in the development and improvement of innovation and entrepreneurship within the university. According to SER: "Monitoring is conducted regularly, daily, monthly, and after each exam period, including events and activities carried out by the respective faculties" (SER, p. 85); ET was not provided with evidence of a formalized process in monitoring these processes with this time sequence, but only for a monthly monitoring.

The UFAGJ has set up several committees to monitor the quality in programs: the Studies Commission, the Central Commission for Quality Assurance, and the Commission for Quality Assurance in each academic unit (CQAAU) (SER, p. 87). A manual on performance indicators provide leading indicators for the evaluation of the performance of study programs, such as student/professor ratio, student participation rate, exam completion rate/graduation rate, percentage (%) of international students, student dropout rate, supporting donations for research, number of publications for academic staff, and other indicators. monitors quality indicators, identifies, and investigates differences in quality between programs, and acts to ensure that all programs meet required performance standards (SER, p. 87). In addition, the heads of programs, who are also professors, confirmed during the site visit that they monitor and evaluate the performance of the required standards in cooperation with the Central Quality

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Assurance Academic Unit, but the evidence on the results of monitoring processes could be more effective.

Study programs at the UFAGJ are based on correlations between learning outcomes; they are aligned with the university's mission and the latest theories and practices in their subject fields. Each program description includes objectives and competencies students should achieve based on their academic level, for example for the program in Primary Education where students are prepared for many aspects, such as: for promotion, organization, evaluation, and implementation of educational curriculum effectively to students, parents and other members of the society – community; to gain knowledge, understanding and skills in order to respond to the demands of the 21st century; for emphasizing the different options of study-learning educational issues within primary education. The study programs at the UFAGJ are presented in the form of a series of documents which include general and specific objectives of the programs, the curriculum, the ECTS allocated, and the disciplines distributed over the study period. Clear syllabi expressing learning outcomes in the form of cognitive, technical, or professional and affective-value competences achieved by a discipline have been clearly explained to the ET (SER, pp. 88-91). ET would like to appreciate the professional evidence of documents in the SER, with many hyperlinks included.

Student learning outcomes of each program are consistent with the National Qualifications Framework and with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. The programs for the bachelor level of studies include 180 and 240 ECTS and master's level programs are designed with 120 ECTS, with each academic year consisting of 60 ECTS. The primary objective of the programs is to equip students with advanced knowledge and a comprehensive understanding of a specific subject or field of study. In addition, the programs aim to develop students' skills to analyse, evaluate, and apply results in a course, utilize research and analytical skills to solve real-world issues and foster autonomy in research (SER, p. 92). Moreover, during the site visit, professors confirmed their duties in writing syllabus properly and correlated to the program general outline, and the national and European qualification frameworks.

At the UFAGJ there are effective processes in place to ensure the effectiveness of the assessment methods for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Clear descriptors in the Statute and regulations on bachelor, masteral and doctoral studies show the institutional interest in organizing and implementing adequate processes according to the defined learning outcomes and the program objectives. Therefore, The UFAGJ has in place assessment forms that best manage to evaluate or measure the achievement of learning outcomes, these being defined in the Article 108 of the Statute, considering exams, midterm exams, seminar papers, professional practice, practical test during the tutorials, and interpretation and presentation of artistic creativity and other works, when necessary. Professors present their course syllabus to

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their students at the beginning of the semester; both teachers and students confirmed these activities during the site visit. The final exam is organized separately for each subject or combined for more subjects, in accordance with the study program (commission exam) (SER, p. 93).

Teaching staff is preoccupied in professional development from teaching and research perspective. The UFAGJ has included the relevant required criteria for promotion of the teaching staff, as defined in several articles of the Statute and of the Regulation on the promotion of academic staff. The implementation of the adequate teaching methods is the responsibility of the academic units in cooperation and coordination with the Didactic Center for Teaching Excellence and the Office for Academic Affairs. The UFAGJ prioritizes the continuous updating of academic staff in the application of new teaching methods, as this has a direct impact on the teaching process and quality assurance. During the site visit, the staff demonstrated adequate capabilities for generating performance of students, being highly prepared with both theoretical and practical skills. The Didactic Centre for Excellence in Teaching is a structure within an educational institution that offers training, seminars, and services for the development of teaching and learning skills. It could develop further on with updates on its webpage with the plan for the current academic year for staff development and call for training, when they are about to happen to allow all staff to register for the training. One of the latest workshops was dedicated to the review of the pedagogical practice and the student evaluation instruments (SER, p. 93).

The learning methods and environments are student-centred and stimulate students' motivation, self-reflection, and engagement in the learning process. During the site visit, teachers explained that they do not have difficulties with students attending, as out of 30 students, 28 are attending regularly and have opportunities and they go outside of the classroom to learn more about their field of study, such as in medicine and in social science – working groups, theory into practice, lab works etc.

Teaching quality and the effectiveness of programs is evaluated through student assessments and graduate and employer surveys with evidence from these sources used as a basis for plans for improvement. The UFAGJ has clear processes for the evaluation of the programs and their level of satisfaction: Student Evaluation – students are surveyed through the questionnaire about their satisfaction with the program, subjects, teachers, services provided by the University/Faculty; Graduates Evaluation – the graduates are surveyed through the questionnaire about their professional skills for the labour market, difficulties, and services offered by the University/Faculty; Employers Evaluation - the employers reflect on the acquired competencies of graduates in relation to the criteria and requirements of the labour market. Relevant reports are prepared after each session of evaluation (Appendices 1-16 of the Quality section, SER, page 96).

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Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Add in the regulation's conditions for the transfer of students (not only from other universities – see article 13 in the regulation for the master programs);*
2. *Make sure you include in all the official and final regulations the date of approval and the date when the regulation is getting to be applied (the regulation for the doctoral studies has a stamp with the approval date, but the other do not);*
3. *Create a procedure to monitor the effectiveness of the current implemented policies, especially for the regulations on bachelor, master and doctoral studies; include any relevant activities in the formal monitoring process – when, who, what, how to monitor (not only about the indicators to be used); evidence the monitoring with a report at the end of the monitoring process;*
4. *Update the website page for documents and activities of the* <u>*Didactic Center for Teaching Excellence*</u> *(latest are since 2021 or 2021-2022 academic year).*

2.7. Research

Scientific research is integrated in the UFAGJ mission. In July 2023, a new <u>regulation on scientific research</u> came into force which aims to regulate the organization and financing of scientific-research activity, the rights and obligations of the competent bodies of the UFAGJ and the academic staff participating in scientific research activity, as well as to determine the conditions, criteria and procedures that allow the Steering Council of the university to allocate funds for the publication of scientific papers and for the participation in scientific research activities. This documents also stipulates the institutional bodies responsible with the scientific research activity, for example the vice-rector for research and scientific research, the Scientific Research and Project Management Office, the Science Council and Science institutes. Moreover, in the university Strategic Plan for the 2021-2025, the research objective is correlated with the teaching domain (Appendix 3 to SER). The action plan is at the end of the Strategic Plan document and shows for research the following activities: subsidizing publications in journals indexed in Web of Science and Scopus platforms; strengthening skills for scientific research; the connection of teaching with scientific research; supporting academic staff with grants for participation in conferences; supporting academic staff for publications in impact factor journals; practical development of teaching in laboratories. In addition, the UFAGJ has developed a <u>Scientific research strategy 2021-2025 "OPEN EYES"</u> with proper strategic objectives of scientific research considering: lifelong learning and education; quality assurance system; scientific research work; inter-institutional cooperation and scientific

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mobility; human capacities - financial and material resources and recruitment of new academic and scientific staff. Therefore, ET considers that the research development plan is consistent with the nature and mission of the institution and the economic and cultural development needs of the region is prepared and made publicly available.

The research development plan is part of the university Action Plan incorporated in the Strategic Plan of the UFAGJ (Appendix 3 to SER). The measures considered in this official document are more descriptive, and vague than quantitative based, for example: training of academic staff and new staff for scientific research or training to develop best practices between research and teaching; equipping laboratories with necessary tools. The UFAGJ has a huge potential in developing applied research actions and projects, due to the professional qualification and experience. During the site visit, the teachers expressed their commitment to integrating practice into teaching and involving students in different practical activities.

The UFAGJ has formally adopted a regulation for the publishing house to support staff research publications, in 2023; the impact of this regulation is too soon to be observed. The Steering Council of UFAGJ has approved an Annual Budget of the amount of 80,000 EURO for financing the scientific research activity; out of this amount, 20,000 EURO are planned for the implementation of research and scientific projects, while the rest will be divided proportionally (15,000 euros) for each of the academic units.an adequate research budget (including allocations for research equipment and facilities) to enable the achievement of its research plan (Appendix 18 of SER, SER, p. 104). Other support for research activity development includes funding of monographs, university and teaching books, establishment of a journal ("THE JOURNAL OF SOCIAL EDUCATION AND INTERDISCIPLINARY SCIENCE") with call for papers.

At the UFAGJ, to promote research and scientific work and the publication of their work, the management has undertaken several support measures for the academic staff, which are covered which refer to faculty research projects; participation in international scientific conferences; publication of scientific works in international scientific journals; expenses for co-financing – participation in regional and international research projects. In addition, the institution supports publication in international journals indexed according to the AI of MESTI, no. 01-2018 dated 19.01.2018, article 3, paragraph 1.1 and 1.2, exactly at: WEB OF SCIENCE and SCOPUS up to 1000.00 EURO per paper; during 2021-2023, UFAGJ has financially supported scientific publications of approximately 30,000 EURO (SER, p. 105). Therefore, ET considers that sufficient financial, logistic, and human resources are available for achieving the proposed research objectives.

Research at the UFAGJ is validated through scientific and applied research publications, artistic products, technological transfer through consultancy centres, scientific parks and other

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structures for validation. The institution has an internal Instruction to recognize the international peer reviewed journals with clear rules for staff and responsibilities, for example for the department which has to determine one scientific magazine equivalent to a coefficient of 0.55. Furthermore, the UFAGJ stipulates in the article 9, point 4 of the Regulation on Selection Procedures for Appointment, Reappointment and Promotion of Academic Staff in University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani", a special criterion for the evaluation of candidates, considers the works published in the field of expertise of the candidate or the fields that the candidate covers in the teaching process, as well as the scientific works published in journals which are indexed in the relevant academic platforms. According to this regulation, starting with October 2023, only scientific papers published in international scientific journals indexed on the Web of Science and Scopus platforms will be considered for academic staff evaluation. ET appreciates that the Rectors's decision no. 01/2014 dated 16.11.202 established a working group with the aim of creating a dynamic database of scientific research of academic staff with the UFAGJ affiliation as well as scientific papers published by current staff with different affiliations (SER, p. 109).

Each academic staff member at the UFAGJ has produced at least an average of one scientific/applied research publication or artistic outcome/product per year for the past three years. The Scientific research publication list was provided to the ET, as well as access to several Scientific Bulletins: Scientific Bulletin 1, Scientific Bulletin 2, Scientific Bulletin 3 (Appendices 10, 11 of SER). These documents include the summaries of the staff publications and a link to the full papers. They provide excellent evidence of staff engagement in research.

Expectations at the UFAGJ for teaching staff involvement in research activities are specified, and performance in relation to these expectations is considered in the individual performance review system and in promotion criteria. During the site visit, ET could notice that the staff is aware of the Manual on evaluation of performance which include a percentage of 25% based on research production: Evaluation by students: 25%; Intercollegiate assessment: 15%; Evaluation by the dean: 15%; Scientific publications and participation in conferences: 25%; Contribution to the university and contribution to the community: 20%. The academic staff report is clearly presented in SER (SER, pp. 111-112).

Teaching staff at the UFAGJ is very much involved in practical activity of the field of the discipline. They are encouraged to include in their teaching information about their research and practical activities that are relevant to courses they teach, together with other significant research developments in the field. During the site visit, students confirmed and appreciated the practice orientation of the teaching. Different study visits have been organized, for example, a study visit to the University of Korça by students of the Faculty of Education, program: Preschool and Primary; and a study visit of the students from the Faculty of Medicine which is regularly organized in the "Palliative Care" course at the Artevelde University of Applied

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Sciences in Ghent, Belgium. Several workshops with practical orientation are provided to students at the UFAGJ by the Career Development Office of the university (SER, p. 113).

"The management of UFAGJ (specifically the Vice-Rector for Scientific Research) together with the representative of the office for Scientific Research and Projects constantly analyze the situation related to staff affiliations through databases and published articles, drawing attention to vigilance and care in the adequate reporting of affiliation in accordance with the regulations and statute of UFAGJ" (SER, p. 115). ET has studied the publications, and the provided examples include academic staff which publish under the name of the UFAGJ, and are affiliated to as full-time staff, of different academic degrees.

At the UFAGJ, a Code of research conduct and research ethics clearly defines intellectual property policies and procedures for the commercialization of ideas by staff and students. It is not limited to the results of research in the form of data, inventions, notes, recordings, books, works, designs, works of art, music, software, business methods, schemes for processing and evaluating information and mathematical formulas. IP rights are the legal rights that protect IP from inappropriate use or exploitation by others. The forms of intellectual property law are limited and consist of patents; copyrights; database rights (form of copyright); registered or unregistered design rights; plant breeders' rights; registered and unregistered trademarks. The Regulation on intellectual property was adopted in 2021 and states important aspect on the use of the intellectual property, and confidential information, with obligations for staff and students (Appendix 27 of SER). During the site visit, all the participants confirmed that they were aware of this policy.

The UFAGJ has the Code of research conduct and research ethics, where unacceptable behaviour is defined for the teaching and learning process, as well as for the research activity. Clearer aspects with principles in research are stipulated in Code of research conduct and research ethics elaborated in 2022. The documents do mention the importance of the research attitude but does not reveal how protection of data can be made; for example, regarding the plagiarism, there are objectives stipulated, but no concrete steps/actions on how these will be generated. There is room for improvement regarding the policies, procedures, and relevant structural units to ensure the safeguarding of ethical principles in research, proving that these documents are effective and generate the results they have been created for (Appendix 12 of SER).

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

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1. *Create a separate Strategic Plan for the Research Activity, with clearly specified indicators and benchmarks for performance targets, easily monitored; if this plan is decided to be still incorporated in the university Strategic Plan, it should be extended and detailed with relevant indicators and benchmarks;*
2. *Create at least one annual call for papers in the university journals (for example, the JOURNAL OF SOCIAL EDUCATION AND INTERDISCIPLINARY SCIENCE has a call since 2022 on the journal webpage);*
3. *Revise the Code of Ethics (the provided was adopted in 2017) and create a mechanism for all documents to be registered with Edition no. and Revision no. (otherwise, anyone could assume that even if approved recently, the document was for the first time elaborated);*
4. *Invest in the research infrastructure more to support the research productivity (this a weakness element recognized already – SER, p. 122).*

2.8. Staff, employment processes and professional development

The UFAGJ follows the national rules for the selection of academic and administrative staff. The institution has developed its own policies and rules on the processes of employment and professional development for teaching staff which include: REGULATION ON SELECTION PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTMENT, REAPPOINTMENT AND PROMOTION OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN UNIVERSITY OF GJAKOVA "FEHMI AGANI"; "REGULATION FOR THE INTERNAL ORGANIZATION AND SYSTEMATIZATION OF WORKPLACES AT THE UNIVERSITY 'FEHMI AGANI' IN GJAKOVË" . The former regulation describes the academic call and the criteria for the position and the latter regulation stipulates the level of qualifications needed for each position and the description of work duties. These documents include rights and responsibilities, recruitment processes, supervision, performance evaluation, promotion, support processes, and professional development.

The recruitment processes at the UFAGJ are based on the Statute of the institution, while the evaluation procedures and special conditions are specified in the Regulation on Selection Procedures regarding the Appointment, Re-appointment and Advancement of Academic Personnel, previously mentioned. The recruitment processes ensure equitable treatment of all applicants. Each academic year, the UFAGJ evaluates the needs for regular academic staff and external collaborators, which and organizes the appropriate competition procedures that begin with the publication of a public competition in which remains open for 15 days on the University website. The announcement of the competition is made by decision of the Senate of UFAG based on the proposals of the academic units. The expertise of the staff recruited at UFAG is based on their studies and experience which are related to the field of the disciplines, based on: academic teaching; scientific research; artistic creativity (SER, page 124). An important role relates to the duties of evaluation

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committee which in the end submits an evaluation report based on the candidates' files within 15 days after the competition closes; after submitting the assessment of the Review Committee on the candidates, through the Faculty Council, the report is sent to the Rector where the public bulletin becomes publicly available for other 15 days for any complain, if this would be the case.

Candidates for employment are provided with full position descriptions and conditions of employment. These are stipulated in contacts with the institution, covering: preparing and holding lessons, seminars, exercises and other forms of lectures; preparation of university texts and suitable literature for studies; mentoring of seminar papers, diploma papers for bachelor and master, dissertation papers and other student research papers; ensuring that the exams are held without hindrance during the exam periods; regularly participating in the meetings of bodies and commissions where they are appointed as members or perform such duties with dedication and sincerity, etc (SER, p. 125). The latest competition publicly available was organized in May 2023.

At the UFAGJ, new teaching staff are given an effective orientation to ensure familiarity with the institution and its services, programs and student development strategies, and institutional priorities for development. During the meeting with the teaching staff at the date of the site visit, participants confirmed that they benefited from adequate orientation and integration into the organizational aspects of the institution and well as into the team of the academic unit. This orientation is based on the availability of the rules and documents, but also on the collegial approach.

The UFAGJ has changed the teacher-student ratio compared to previous years by recruiting new staff and promoting teaching assistants. At the visit time, the UFAGJ had 3127 enrolled students and 68 full-time staff, and 60 staff engaged in the winter semester. The ratio between the number of students and the total number of staff is 24 students for one teacher. Regarding the teaching workload, this is 6 hours of lectures per week for a professor and 10 hours of practice per week for an assistant. Clear calculations, tables and diagram are provided in SER (SER, pp. 126-127). Therefore, ET appreciates that the level of provision of teaching staff (the ratio of students per full time staff member) is adequate for the programmes offered and that the teaching loads are equitable across the institution, considering the nature of teaching requirements in different fields of study.

Furthermore, all staff employed in the institution (academic, scientific, administrative) hold the relevant qualifications so that they can effectively manage educational, scientific, research, creative activities, and administrative processes. According to institutional regulations, study programmes leading to a BA and MA degree require that for each group of students and for each 60 ECTS credits of the programme, the institution must have at least one staff with a regular employment relationship with a PhD title from the field of study programme. In

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addition, at the UFAGJ there are 35 administrative personnel with the necessary professional qualifications determined according to the national and institutional regulations, previously mentioned.

Criteria and processes for performance evaluation are clearly specified and made known in advance to all staff. A clear summary report on teachers' performance was provided to ET for the academic year of 2021-2022 with pertinent and useful conclusion for future improvements; the purpose of this research is to measure the performance of the academic staff. According to the manual for the assessment of academic staff performance, it consists of: Student assessment; Peer assessment; Assessment of contribution to the university and society; Assessment of scientific publications; Assessment by the dean (Appendix 3 of Quality section, Appendix 51 of SER). During the site visit, the teachers confirmed that they knew from the very beginning their rights, their obligations and criteria to promote.

The UFAGJ has several questionnaires used in the process of evaluation and managed by the Office for Quality Assurance: Questionnaire for bachelor degree students - Template A; Questionnaire for bachelor degree students - Template B; Questionnaire for bachelor degree students – Template C; Questionnaire for bachelor degree students - Template D; The questionnaire for students of bachelor and master studies – QATEK (E); The questionnaire for student of bachelor and master studies – reviewed model by students (F); The questionnaire for student of bachelor and master studies – reviewed model by CCQA (G); Questionnaire for students of bachelor and master studies – exercise evaluation (H); Self-assessment form for professors and assistants of UGJFA; Questionnaire for the academic staff (teachers') self-evaluation; Assessment Report by the Dean – A; Assessment Report by the Dean - B; Evaluation report for Scientific publication; Questionnaire for inter-collegial evaluation; Assessment report on university contribution and contribution to society; Questionnaire for employer; Questionnaire for graduate students – Alumni; Questionnaire for the evaluation of the mentoring process of the diploma topic by students; Form for students during the graduation process 2019; Form for evaluation of administration by students; Questionnaire for university administrative and support staff; Academic staff evaluation is done at least through self-evaluation, students, peer and superiors' evaluations, and occur on a formal basis at least once each year. Therefore, the evaluation criteria and the percentage of them are: Evaluation by students 25 %; Peer evaluation 15 %; Evaluation by the dean 20%; Scientific publications and participation in conferences 25 %; Contribution to the university and contribution to the community15% (SER, p. 130). The results of the evaluation are made publicly available under the form of a useful summary report on the evaluation process.

During the site visit, the discussion with the quality assurance representatives revealed that the institution is closely monitoring the improvements in staff activity, especially in the segments underlined during the evaluations. They mentioned a case when a warning was necessary, and

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the staff member improved his/her performance during the next 3 years. ET could observe the interest of the management in the staff performance and their continuously development. In case of poor performance (1.00-2.99), the clear measures are initiated against the academic staff, depending on how many times this poor performance was obtained, according to the stipulated rules in the Regulation of Quality Assurance and Evaluation at the University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani" and the Manual for the evaluation of performance, already mentioned in previous paragraphs.

The UFAGJ has a clear plan for staff professional development, a structured approach in identifying such needs, and allocates appropriate resources for its implementation. The Didactic Centre for Teaching Excellence organizes different training, for example, for the academic staff in 2021-2022 or for young assistants in 2020 from the Department of Nursing. Other examples of training organized in 2022 are provided in SER (SER, p. 134).

At the UFAGJ, staff are given appropriate and fair opportunities for personal and career development, with special assistance given to any who are facing difficulties. The UFAGJ has reorganized the professional development system of the academic staff by linking this development with contemporary performance standards and academic standards of the staff. The opportunities for staff include international support for mobilities, research publication and acquisition of books; in 2022, the value of the books purchased for the Faculty of Philology was 5199 EURO and for the Faculty of Medicine of 8,900 EURO. The UFAGJ during the year 2021-2023 has financially supported the academic staff for scientific publications in the amount of 30,000 euros (SER, p. 125).

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Make sure the institution updates the information on the website regarding the report on the trainings organized in the previous academic year (the most recent information at the visit date is since 2022);*
2. *Create a 1–2-page document with concrete need analysis-based topics for future trainings in the coming/current academic year (a clear plan with dates, objectives of the training, number of participants and trainer's profile).*

2.9. Student administration and support services

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The admission of new students is done based on the Regulation on primary studies of the respective unit and Regulation on Master Studies. The Article 7 of the University Statute outlines a commitment to fostering equal opportunities for all students. However, Regulation on Master Studies contradict this commitment. Under these regulations, students who have previously attended Gjakova university are given priority over those from other institutions, regardless of their academic performance. Additionally, in cases where the number of applicants falls below the announced quota, students with grades below 8.0 may be admitted, but they must pass an entrance/qualification exam based on criteria established by the relevant faculty. This policy raises questions about fairness, particularly regarding whether prioritizing applicants from the university itself aligns with the institution's stated commitment to equal opportunity and non-discrimination. From a perspective of equality and non-discrimination prioritizing applicants solely based on their previous attendance at the university could be considered unfair, as it may disadvantage students from other institutions who are equally qualified and capable. The university may argue that prioritizing its own students serves legitimate aims such as incentivizing students to enroll and remain at the university for their entire academic career, but this practice of admission inadvertently perpetuates inequalities and limit diversity within the student body. Generally, fairness is a complex concept, and the university might consider whether there are compelling justifications for this policy and whether it disproportionately impacts certain groups of students. Additionally, examining whether there are alternative methods to achieve the same goals without disadvantaging certain applicants could be valuable. To address this issue particularly in admission to MA programs and make the process more fit-for-purpose, the university could think of ways to eliminate preferential treatment for internal candidates, and implement a holistic review approach where admissions committees consider various aspects of an applicant's profile, including academic achievements, personal experiences, and socio-economic background, to ensure that their profile is aligned in best way with the program and that they can benefit most from the study program. This approach ensures a comprehensive evaluation and promotes diversity within the student body.

The panel also noted that information on transfer of credits from previous studies are not indicated in the information on admissions. The Student Handbook (p. 12) mentions that when changing the study program, the student is legally allowed to start the new study program if at least fifty percent (50%) of the exams have been passed successfully during the old study program. The requirement to wait two years before transitioning to a new study program may seem restrictive, especially if a student realizes early on that their current program is not suitable for them. This waiting period can indeed be seen as a potential barrier to timely academic progress and personal fulfillment. From a fairness perspective, it may not align with the principle of allowing individuals to pursue their educational goals efficiently and without unnecessary delay. To address this concern the institution could consider reviewing its policy to allow for more flexible transitions between study programs. For example, implementing

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procedures for expedited program changes or providing guidance and support to help students make informed decisions about their academic paths early on could mitigate the need for lengthy waiting periods.

The university website offers valuable information for prospective applicants, including details about various programs and courses. However, crucial information regarding program requirements and scholarship opportunities is scattered across different categories of the webpage, making it challenging for applicants to locate this essential information before applying for admission. To enhance user experience and ensure that applicants have access to all pertinent details in a streamlined manner, the university should consider consolidating program requirements and scholarship opportunities within the same category as program listings. By centralizing this information, prospective students can easily access comprehensive details about each program, including admission criteria, prerequisites, and available scholarships. Additionally, implementing a user-friendly search function and clear navigation pathways can further simplify the process of finding relevant information, thereby improving transparency and accessibility for all applicants.

The university annually organizes orientation programs for incoming students, facilitating their integration into the academic community. These programs include opportunities for new students to connect with peers from previous years and receive introductions to faculty leadership, including the Dean, Vice Dean, and academic staff. Students are also informed about their rights, obligations, and available resources. To enhance the orientation program, the university could consider developing online resources and virtual orientation sessions to accommodate students who are unable to attend in-person events or prefer remote access to information.

According to the webpage https://uni-gjk.org/en/faqe/89/bursa the institution provides scholarships support to prospective students wishing to start studies at Gjakova University. However, there is no differentiation made between scholarships as means of rewarding students' performance and as means of supporting them financially, potentially leading to inefficiencies or barriers for students seeking both types of assistance. To obtain the scholarship students should be in the second year of studies or above, not have a repeated year of studies, have passed all the exams of the respective previous year of studies in September and have an average grade of studies according to the Decision of the Steering Council. According to this description all scholarships are merit-based but it is not clear whether these are sufficient to address students' financial needs. The SER mentions that to financially support students with disadvantaged backgrounds, they are exempted from tuition fees. But also according to the SER, pursuant to Article 30, paragraph 1, 2 and 3 of the Law on High Education in the republic of Kosovo, all students who start studies for the first time are exempted from fees. Students, particularly with disadvantaged backgrounds may need

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additional support than exemption from paying the tuition fees. So, it is essential for the university to ensure that the criteria for identifying students from disadvantaged backgrounds are clear and support services or resources are provided to further enhance academic success and overall experience of students at the university. To align with 9.4 standard, the university needs to streamline application procedures and ensuring transparency in eligibility criteria for need-based scholarships. Additionally, the university could expand its scholarship offerings and explore alternative sources of funding to increase support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The institution monitors student progress continuously each academic year, showing consistent improvement over time. Comparing passing rates from the last three years, the panel of reviewers observed a steady increase, with a positive result rate of 48.41% in 2020/2021, 51.24% in 2021/2022, and further growth to 51.24% in 2022/2023, which demonstrates a positive trend in student performance and development.

A student handbook includes information required for all phases of the student „life cycle", it also includes information student appeal procedure, which allows students to challenge decisions related to admission, grades, and other academic matters. The effectiveness of the appeals procedure, however, may vary depending on factors such as transparency, accessibility of information, timeliness of responses, and the impartiality of decision-makers. Regular feedback mechanisms and improvements in process transparency can enhance the overall effectiveness of the appeals procedure.

The institution addresses academic misconduct, including plagiarism and other forms of cheating, through a comprehensive set of regulations and procedures outlined in both the Regulation on disciplinary procedures for academic staff and the student handbook. The institution utilizes anti-plagiarism software, which requires students to upload their papers upon completion of their thesis. The panel of reviewers, however, found it concerning to find that the institution has not implemented any proactive measures (besides what is described in documents) to address the problem of cheating during exams coming from student feedback in summarized evaluation report of administration by students https://uni-gjk.org/upload/dokumentet/1702023854-Raport%20p%C3%ABrmbledh%C3%ABs%20i%20vler%C3%ABsimit%20%20i%20t%C3%AB%20administrat%C3%ABs%20nga%20student%C3%ABt%20-%202022%20-eng.pdf.

The institution offers students a range of services aimed at supporting their academic and professional journey. These services include administrative support through centralized offices through which students can access essential documents and certificates, receive guidance on academic matters, and access financial assistance such as scholarships etc. The report on effectiveness of administrative services - https://uni-gjk.org/upload/dokumentet/1702907001-

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Evaluation%20of%20Academic%20Staff%20Administration%20and%20Services.pdf,
provides valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of instructors regarding various aspects of administrative services within the university. In 2022 the Quality Assurance Office prepared evaluation report of administration by students which complements evaluation of effectiveness of administrative services by the institution. The strategic development plan of the university also mentions specific actions related to the development of student support services. These are - training for student service administration officials, upgrading IT capacities and access to popular digital libraries serving students' needs and provision of online student services.

The University Center for Psycho-Social Advising and the Office for Career Development play integral roles in supporting the holistic development and success of students. The Center for Psycho-Social Advising is dedicated to enhancing students' psychological and social well-being, ensuring they can realize their full academic and personal potential. Meanwhile, the Office for Career Development offers comprehensive guidance and resources to students as they navigate their transition from academia to the professional world. Through a range of services including counseling sessions, informational workshops, and collaborative initiatives with industry partners, the Office equips students with the skills, knowledge, and opportunities necessary for a successful career path. From offering guidance on CV writing and interview preparation to facilitating internship placements and networking opportunities, these services strive to empower students to thrive both academically and professionally, ensuring they are well-prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the future. The Office for Career Development plays a role in guiding students towards academic success within the context of their broader career aspirations.

The extracurricular landscape of the institution is vibrant and dynamic, showcasing the active engagement and initiative-taking spirit of its students. Additionally, the Career Office fosters collaboration with institutional organizations and local NGOs, offering diverse training opportunities on topics ranging from digital skills to job placement. Notably, collaborations with international partners enable students to partake in specialized training programs and immersive experiences abroad.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *To address inequalities in the admission process particularly to MA programs and make admission process more fit-for-purpose, the university should think of ways to eliminate preferential treatment for internal candidates and implement a holistic review approach where admissions committees consider various aspects of an applicant's*

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profile, including academic achievements, personal experiences, and socio-economic background. This approach ensures a comprehensive evaluation and promotes diversity within the student body. Additionally, the institution may consider implementing outreach programs targeting underrepresented groups to encourage applications from diverse candidate;

2. *It is recommended to develop policy that allows for more flexible transitions between study programs, to mitigate the need for lengthy waiting periods;*

3. *To enhance user experience and ensure that applicants have access to all pertinent details in a streamlined manner, it is needed to consolidate program requirements and scholarship opportunities within the same category as program listings. By centralizing this information, prospective students can easily access comprehensive details about each program, including admission criteria, prerequisites, and available scholarships. Additionally, implementing a user-friendly search function and clear navigation pathways can further simplify the process of finding relevant information, thus improving transparency and accessibility for all applicants;*

4. *To enhance the orientation program, the university could consider developing online resources and virtual orientation sessions to accommodate students who are unable to attend in-person events or prefer remote access to information;*

5. *It is recommended to streamline application procedures and ensure transparency in eligibility criteria for need-based scholarships. Additionally, the university could expand its scholarship offerings and explore alternative sources of funding to increase support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, along with defining criteria for identifying students from disadvantaged backgrounds (as all students are already exempt from tuition fees according to the Law and according to the SER, exemption from paying tuition fees is the only support service offered by the university to students with disadvantaged backgrounds).*

2.10.   Learning resources and facilities

The total budget of the university increased year by year during 2021-2024 and estimation show that it will continue to increase (SER, p. 179, Appendices 18, 19, 20 of SER). Adequate financial resources are provided for acquisitions, cataloguing, equipment, and for services and system development. Equipment and services at the University are also financed by donations from various local and international projects. In 2022, equipment for the Faculty of Education

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was financed by the QATEK project with laptops and other. Equipment financed by the DRIVE Project for Simultaneous Interpretation and IT covered the needs for the rectorate and other 3 faculties in 2021. At the same time, within the budget, the UFAGJ has the category of Capital Investments through which the university can build constructions, make renovations, purchases of inventory and various medical laboratory equipment and information technology. The university has also signed a contract with an economic operator for the maintenance of the server room. The UFAGJ currently has sufficient space for the development of the learning process. The institution offers conditions and facilities for work, for students and for academic staff. The UFAGJ has currently four available locations: Rectorate building; Building of the Faculty of Philology & Education and the Faculty of Social Sciences; Building of the Faculty of Medicine; The laboratory building in building 2 of the rectorate; Spaces for laboratories in the "Isa Grezda" General Hospital. Clear tables were provided in SER (SER, pages 180-188). During the site visit, ET was capable of observing the buildings and laboratories and could notice the openness of the staff to show their lates investment. Other relevant projects must be considered: the UFAGJ has managed to sign a framework contract (3 years) for laboratory equipment necessary for the running of administrative and academic work - "Supply of necessary equipment for the Department of Public Health, master's degree in Health Management and for the chemistry laboratory "; the UFAGJ has managed to contract the company for the renovation and maintenance of the internal and external spaces of the buildings and academic units, worth about 300,000 Euros with a duration of 3 years, the implementation of which has started in November 2023. The construction of the University campus is expected to begin in 2024 - after all the tendering procedures have been completed, and the winner has been chosen for signing the contract. The projected value of the Campus is 22,400,000.00 EURO. This project includes the buildings of the academic units of the UFAGJ, the Rectorate, various amphitheatres, recreational fields for students, dormitory, etc. (SER, page 188).

Books, journals and other materials are available in Albanian and English (or other languages) as required for programmes and research organized at the institution. The UFAGJ, at the date of the visit owned 2047 titles and 4493 copies of books, considering the Faculty of Philology and Education with 8598 copies of books, the Faculty of Medicine with 300 titles with 1250 copies, and the Faculty of Social Sciences with 241 titles and copies. Furthermore, Uthe FAGJ has a cooperation agreement with the Regional Library based on which students are allowed to use the spaces of the library with a daily capacity of 450 seats, 18582 number of books, individual and group rooms. Students are also allowed to utilize the literature and all other assets necessary for them that recently the university received based on a donation of 14,000 book titles, mainly in fields relevant to the needs of the faculties which are in the process of registration (SER, page 189).

During the site visit, the discussion with the teachers and students showed that the institution provides access to relevant databases, for example: EBSCO, ACM digital library, Elgaronline, IOPscience, ASTM Compass, MSP Publication, IMF eLibrary, Cambridge e-Journal, Duke University Press journal, Z Library, Prelego. The UFAG staff and students may access e-books (more than 300,000 e-books) in various fields of study. Interesting is that the institution uses a system – University Management System (SMU) where teachers upload various materials for students such as: presentations, various materials, lectures, scripts or any document in the formats like PDFs, Docs, Excel sheets, and PowerPoint presentations etc. From their SMU accounts, students have the option to download a user manual. This manual contains details about effectively utilizing SMU, including insights into navigating the platform and efficiently downloading course materials. (SER, p. 190).

The UFAGJ includes two libraries which serve the academic community. One is used by the community of the Faculty of Medicine, while the other occupies shared spaces among the Faculties of Education, Philology, and Social Sciences. In addition to the physical placement of literature and other teaching aids, these library spaces are also equipped with spaces with adequate infrastructure for individual and group work. Therefore, the physical environment stimulate team work between students and between them and staff. At the Faculty of Education, a simulation room is equipped with computers and relevant infrastructure to facilitate and support the learning process and the search for another knowledge. All computers are maintained and updated with licensed software by the responsible staff for the IT office at the UFAGJ. Several examples can continue. Although ET did not have enough time to cover all the documents and locations, the explanation of the participants during the site visit explained the facilities and the opportunities they had access to.

The libraries at the UFAGJ are open during 08:00 to 16:00 for reading in the hall, but during the examination period this is extended until 8:00 p. m. Students can use books during working hours and have access to electronic resources through computers. More staff would be important to work at the libraries, as on the visit date just 2 of the 2 libraries were observed. Reliable systems are used for recording loans and returns, with efficient follow-up for overdue material. Effective security systems are used to prevent loss of materials. There is more room for improvement for the comfort and the friendly atmosphere in the libraries (Appendix 28 in the Regulation section, Appendices 14, 15, 16, 17 of SER).

The institution provides an adequate, clean, attractive, and well-maintained physical environment of both buildings and grounds. All the facilities of the UFAGJ have suitable facilities that meet the requirements for carrying out the process and learning activities. Also, the facilities have premises maintained and cleaned by an external economic operator contracted by the UFAGJ. The university employed a gardener responsible for maintaining outdoor spaces by tasks such as grass mowing and tree pruning. The UFAGJ monitors and

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maintains its infrastructure through accountable officials. As an internal mechanism, academic units submit requests for renovations and maintenance, which, upon approval by the management, are carried out by responsible operators. The UFAGJ also has security cameras that are installed in university facilities and monitor all premises 24/7. It must be added that the UFAGJ has constructed ramps at building entrances to facilitate easier movement for individuals using wheelchairs. Additionally, these faculties include ground-floor classrooms, providing more accessible spaces for students with special needs. ET could observe all these during the campus visit.

Quality assurance processes used include both feedback from principal users about the adequacy and quality of facilities, and mechanisms for considering and responding to their views. Concretely, at the UFAGJ: the academic staff provide feedback on spaces and conditions for teaching and the number of students in relation to the available space capacity; students express their opinions in two different questionnaires about the spaces in the two separate reports; the administrative staff in the framework of the assessment of working conditions, internet and hygiene includes questions related to working conditions (SER, p. 193, Appendices 1-16 of the Quality section).

Complete inventories at the UFAGJ are maintained of equipment owned or controlled by the institution including equipment assigned to individual staff. Space utilization is monitored and when appropriate facilities reallocated in response to changing requirements. The IT office manages the process of maintenance of IT equipment. The request of any unit is uploaded in the E-Wealth system (https://epasuria.rks-gov.net/). All equipment and inventory also have barcodes through which it becomes easier to identify them. At the end of each year, equipment and inventory are inventoried through certain commissions established by the university administration.

Technical support is available for staff and students using information and communications technology. Training programmes are provided to ensure effective use of computing equipment and appropriate software for assessments, teaching and administration, for example the manual for the SMU system which is published on the university website. Other support examples are: the establishment of an information technology office which performs all work related to IT services, including technical support for staff and students, administration and maintenance of the university website, administration of the University Management System – SMU, the administration and maintenance of the computer network at the University, the creation of ID cards for the academic and administrative staff and for the students of the University, etc (SER, p. 198).

Compliance level: Fully compliant

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ET recommendations:

1. *Allocate / purchase more computers in the libraries;*
2. *Invest in the comfort of the readers accessing the libraries;*
3. *Hire more staff for the libraries.*

2.11.   Institutional cooperation

The institution as outlined in its Strategic Plan for 2020-2025, places significant emphasis on internationalization and networking as its fourth priority objective. This strategic commitment is further reinforced through partnerships such as the QUADIC project, financed by the EU - ERASMUS+, aimed at expanding international cooperation for educational and scientific advancement. The "Strategy of the University of Gjakova 'Fehmi Agani' for Internationalization 2020-2025" delineates concrete actions to facilitate student and staff mobility, joint study programs, and research collaboration, aligning with European initiatives like Horizon 2020 and Erasmus +. To operationalize these efforts, the university has established a comprehensive "Regulation for Internationalization and Mobility," defining processes and responsibilities for engaging with international entities. Additionally, the university has chosen a Vice-Rector for International Cooperation, who has the role and responsibility to encourage, promote and advance the university's internationalization processes. By actively participating in networks like EUA, BUA, and AUF, the university ensures a multifaceted approach to international collaboration, underscoring its commitment to integrating international perspectives across its academic and research landscape.

The institution is committed to fostering international partnerships both within the academic sphere and the broader economic environment in which it operates. The university has successfully cultivated collaborations with numerous institutions worldwide, spanning 17 universities and higher education organizations by 2020 and an impressive addition of 77 new agreements signed up to October 2023. These partnerships are multifaceted, encompassing exchanges of academic staff, joint research initiatives, student and expert exchanges, collaborative program development, and various academic activities such as workshops and conferences. Notably, the university has also forged significant alliances beyond academia, engaging with businesses, NGOs, government offices, and other stakeholders in the community.

The institution stands as a notable partner in numerous international projects. Notably, the university's involvement in ERASMUS+ projects underscore its commitment to fostering

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cross-border cooperation and knowledge exchange. The university actively engages in various international visibility projects and plays role in organizing and co-organizing numerous conferences, providing valuable opportunities for both staff and students. Additionally, university's involvement in numerous international summer schools facilitates cross-cultural learning and collaboration and international partnerships.

The university of Gjakova encourages international collaboration among its staff through a multifaceted approach. The university facilitates exchanges through participation in programs like ERASMUS+ and bilateral agreements with universities abroad, joint research projects and academic initiatives, as well as self-fund mobility. Additionally, according to the Regulation on selection procedures for appointment, reappointment, and promotion of academic staff the promotion of the academic staff is done if the individual has made publications in international scientific or artistic journals. Active participation in international conferences is another criterion that has been determined for advancement. For encouraging advancement of partnerships by academic staff, it is recommended to include community service too (along with publications in international journals and participation in international conferences) in promotion criteria. It is also recommended to implement robust evaluation methods, to provide tangible evidence of the community impact of the institution and ensure accountability and transparency in the efforts of the institution to foster positive change.

Engagement in international cooperation and contributions to the community are included in staff performance review. The Performance Evaluation Manual of the academic staff determines that cooperation activities with public and private partners at national, regional and international level will be part of the assessment of academic staff performance.

Establishment of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Board aimed at offering insights on market demands, updating current programs, and devising new ones aligned with labor market needs is commendable. But the newly appointed members have not yet reviewed the content of the programs they are tasked with advising on, which highlights potential gaps in orientation or training for board members. This underscores the importance of training for newly appointed members and engaging them in in-depth discussions around programs to ensure they can effectively fulfill their roles and responsibilities within the innovation and entrepreneurship board. Addressing these issues will be crucial in ensuring that boards can adequately advise on program updates and contribute to the university's ongoing efforts to enhance academic offerings and relevance.

The university communicates with its alumni, ensuring they stay updated on institutional developments and inviting their engagement in various activities. The establishment of the ALUMNI organization further strengthens this bond, with a focus on facilitating employment opportunities for graduates. It is commendable that the university empowers its alumni to

contribute to the university's growth while supporting their professional and academic development. Additionally, the Alumni Office operates as a civil society organization, providing a platform for alumni to collaborate on initiatives spanning research, education, economic development, advocacy, and more. This multifaceted approach underscores the UFAGJ's commitment to integrate expertise and experience of its alumni network for positive institutional change and broader societal impact.

The UFAGJ partners with local businesses, governmental bodies, NGOs to align programs with labor market demands. During COVID-19, students aided vaccination efforts and organized events for healthcare workers. Collaborations with NGOs like BONVET provide valuable non-formal education internships. Students and faculty contribute to community welfare through healthcare services, awareness campaigns, and support for vulnerable groups. The university supports sports clubs, activities for special needs individuals, and environmental initiatives. The institution has concluded over 127 cooperation agreements with health and educational institutions ensure comprehensive student training. To enhance partnerships and community engagement, the next step could be expanding international collaborations for global learning, and encouraging interdisciplinary projects, by involving local communities for fostering mutual learning and addressing pressing issues effectively. Another direction can also be encouraging collaboration across faculties and external partners to tackle complex societal challenges.

Commitment of the UFAGJ in assessing its impact on the community is commendable, but there is a lack of concrete evidence of actual measurement and evaluation and of specific outcomes of the evaluation process. It is commendable that the institution is emphasizing continuous improvement and social responsibility but without clear benchmarks it is difficult to ascertain the extent of the UFAGJ's positive impact. Moving forward, it is recommended to implement more robust evaluation methods, to provide tangible evidence of its community impact and ensure accountability and transparency in the efforts of the institution to foster positive change.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *For encouraging advancement and initiation of partnerships by academic staff, it is recommended to include community service too in criteria of promotion of academic staff (along with publications in international journals and participation in international conferences);*

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2. *It is recommended to implement robust evaluation methods, to provide tangible evidence of the community impact of the institution and ensure accountability and transparency in the efforts of the institution to foster positive change;*

3. *Provide orientation training for newly appointed members and engage them in in-depth discussions about contents of programs to ensure that they can effectively fulfil their roles and responsibilities within the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Boards. Addressing these will be crucial in ensuring that boards can adequately advise on program updates and contribute to the university's ongoing efforts to enhance academic offerings and relevance.*

OVERALL EVALUATION AND JUDGEMENT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

As shown above the compliance levels per general areas are as follows:

Standard 1: …………………………………. Substantially compliant
Standard 2: …………………………………. Substantially compliant
Standard 3: …………………………………. Fully compliant
Standard 4: …………………………………. Fully compliant
Standard 5: …………………………………. Substantially compliant
Standard 6: …………………………………. Substantially compliant
Standard 7: …………………………………. Substantially compliant
Standard 8: …………………………………. Fully compliant
Standard 9: …………………………………. Partially compliant
Standard 10: ………………………………….Fully compliant
Standard 11: ………………………………….Fully compliant

Overall compliance: …………………………. Substantially compliant

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that University "Fehmi Agani" Gjakova is **substantially compliant** with the standards included in the KAA Accreditation Manual and, therefore, **recommends accrediting it for the period of three years.**

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Expert Panel

Chair

| **Milan Pol** |
| (Signature) | (Print Name) | (Date) |

Member

| **Magdalena Iordache-Platis** |
| (Signature) | (Print Name) | (Date) |

Member

| **Lali Giorgidze** |
| (Signature) | (Print Name) | (Date) |

Member