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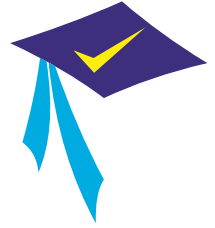
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**INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION  
THE DARDANIA COLLEGE, PRISHTINA**

**REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM**

Prishtina, March 2023



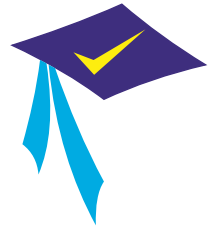
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Context

**Date of site visit:** February 20, 2023

**Members of the Expert Team:**

- *Dr. Drazen Vrhovski, Chair*
- *Prof. dr. habil. Anca Greere, and*
- *Mr. Christopher Bohlers, Student Expert*

**Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):**

- *Ilirjana Ademaj Ahmeti, KAA Officer, and*
- *Naim Gashi, Director of KAA.*

**Sources of information for the Report:**

Documents received prior to the on-site evaluation

- [1] *Self-Evaluation Report (SER) prepared and submitted by the Dardania College*
- [2] *Information obtained during the site visit on with the management of the institution, teaching and administrative staff, students, graduates, external stakeholders and employers of graduates*
- [3] *Dardania College Institutional Evaluation, Report of the Expert Team, 2019*
- *Self-Evaluation Report Appendices:*
  - [4] *CVs of Dardania College academic staff and visiting professors*



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- *Copies of Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) closed between the Dardania College and external partners:*
    - [5] *MoU – Accommodation Dodona (in Albanian)*
    - [6] *MoU – NGO Labyrinth (in Albanian)*
    - [7] *MoU – SOS Children’s Village (in Albanian)*
    - [8] *MoU – Directorate of Education Culture in the Municipality of Prishtina (in Albanian)*
    - [9] *MoU – Qendra per Inofrmim dhe Permiresim Social (in Albanian)*
    - [10] *MoU – IPKO Telecommunications L.L.C. (in Albanian)*
    - [11] *MoU – Municipality of Decan (in Albanian)*
    - [12] *MoU – Municipality of Istog (in Albanian)*
    - [13] *MoU – Municipality of Junik (in Albanian)*
    - [14] *MoU – Kosovo Judicial Council (in Albanian)*
    - [15] *MoU – Kosovo Ministry of Economy and Environment (in Albanian)*
    - [16] *MoU – Kosovo Ministry of Finance (in Albanian)*
    - [17] *MoU – Kosovo Policewomen’s Association (in Albanian)*
    - [18] *MoU – Trakya University Turkey*
    - [19] *MoU – Kosovo National Library (in Albanian)*
  - [20] *Academic Staff Development Plan (2022-2027), Dardania College, Prishtina 2021*
  - [21] *Alumni Evaluation Survey form (blank)*
  - [22] *Employer Questionnaire Form (blank)*
  - [23] *Sample copy of the certificate of attendance at the “Peacekeeping Missions and Challenges” conference organised by the Dardania College and held on 20 Feb 2021*
  - [24] *Sample copy of the certificate of attendance for a training entitled “Use and Practice of DMIS Data”*



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- [25] *Sample copy of the certificate of attendance for a training entitled “Problem Based Learning”*
  - [26] *Sample copy of the certificate of attendance for a training entitled “Career Development in the Labor Market”*
  - [27] *Dardania College Code of Ethics, Prishtina, 2021*
  - [28] *Sample copy of the teaching staff CV*
  - [30] *Electronic Information for Libraries, Association for Computing Machinery “Read and Publish” license confirmation certificate, 2022*
  - [31] *Administrative Employee Performance Assessment Form (blank)*
  - [32] *Intern Feedback Form (blank)*
  - [33] *Evaluation Plan for Academic Staff (in Albanian)*
  - [34] *Student Evaluation Questionnaire form (blank)*
  - [35] *Document entitled “Financial Planning” (unknown publishing details)*
  - [36] *Lecturer Observation Form (blank)*
  - [37] *Lecturer Self-Evaluation Form*
  - [38] *Full-Time Academic Staff Contract sample (blank)*
  - [39] *Part-Time Academic Staff Contract sample (blank)*
  - [40] *Besnik Boletini, Besa Kalaja: “Viktimat e kolegjeve private”, Preportr No 31, May 2020 (in Albanian)*
  - [41] *Dardania College Property Tax Bill, 2022*
  - [42] *QA evaluation for students’ input, process and output*
  - [43] *Quality Assurance Regulation of Dardania College, Prishtina, 2021*
  - [44] *Alumni Evaluation Questionnaire form (blank)*
  - [45] *Review evaluation committee for election, re-election and advancement of the academic staff report form (blank, in Albanian)*
  - [46] *Dardania College Regulation for Student Transfer, Prishtina, 2020*
  - [47] *Dardania College Regulation of Bachelor Studies, Prishtina, 2021*
  - [48] *Dardania College Regulation on Internal Organisation and Systematisation of Job Positions within the Administration, Prishtina, 2021*



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- [49] *Dardania College Regulation on Master Studies, Prishtina, 2021*
  - [50] *Dardania College Regulation on Research-Scientific Activity, Prishtina, 2021*
  - [51] *Dardania College Regulation on the Definition of Study Group in the Programs of the Academic Units for Lectures and Exercises, Prishtina, 2020;*
  - [52] *Dardania College Regulation on the Senate of the College, Prishtina, 2021*
  - [53] *Dardania College Regulation on the Work of the Steering Council, Prishtina, 2021*
  - [54] *Dardania College Request for Confirmation of Peer Observation sample form (blank)*
  - [55] *Dardania College Academic Staff Research Report (2018-2022)*
  - [56] *Dardania College Regulation on the Library, Prishtina 2021*
  - [57] *Stakeholder Survey form (blank)*
  - [58] *Dardania College Statute, Prishtina, 2021*
  - [59] *Dardania College Strategic Plan 2022-2027, Prishtina, 2021*
  - [60] *Terms of References of Employment Procedures of Academic and Non-Academic Staff, Dardania College, Prishtina, 2021*
  - [61] *Seminar Evaluation Sheet (blank, in Albanian)*
  - [62] *Workshop Exit List (blank, in Albanian)*
  - [63] *Agenda of the “Problem Learning” training held by the Dardania College Centre of Excellence in Teaching on 11-12 Oct 2020*
  - [64] *Agenda of the “The Application of Technology in University Education” training held by the Dardania College Centre of Excellence in Teaching on 19-20 Mar 2020*
  - [65] *Report on the “Problem Learning” training held by the Dardania College Centre of Excellence in Teaching on 11-12 Oct 2020*



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- [66] *Report on the “The Application of Technology in University Education” training held by the Dardania College Centre of Excellence in Teaching on 19-20 Mar 2020*

Supplementary documentation requested upon the on-site evaluation

- [67] *DMIS/DMS Student portal guest user account (login credentials)*
- [68] *At least 5 examples of the completed Stakeholder Surveys*
- [69] *At least 5 examples of the completed Alumni Surveys*
- [70] *An example of the summary document analysing collected feedbacks from the stakeholder surveys*
- [71] *Video material/images from the employer meetings claimed in the SER (p113) to have been organised as a means to improve institutional cooperation (4 meetings in 2019/2020)*
- [72] *Video/image/presentation materials from the job fairs held proving participation of the graduate students interviewed (according to feedback from the Graduate Students Session)*
- [73] *An example of the summary report analysing Kosovar labour market needs*
- [74] *Analysis report from survey with students; please also indicate percentage of response*
- [75] *Analysis report from survey with employers*
- [76] *Action plan with improvements proposed as derived from the student, alumni and employer surveys*
- [77] *Analysis report of staff appraisals – we were told there is a consolidated report produced*
- [78] *Evidence of the formal meetings held in preparation for the new Strategic Plan as suggested (meeting minutes, formal summary reports etc.)*
- [79] *Draft version of the Strategic Plan 2022-2027 that was sent to external stakeholders (eg. employers) for initial feedback*



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- [80] *Informal correspondence (eg. emails exchanged) providing evidence of the feedback received from external stakeholders contacted on draft Strategic Plan 2022-27(as suggested in the interviews held with the employers)*
  - [81] *At least 5 examples of the quarterly Strategic Plan Realisation reports (it may correspond to the time periods earlier than 2022)*
  - [82] *Copy of the partnership agreement closed with IPKO (it may be in Albanian. Feel free to hide all business-sensitive information)*
  - [83] *Copy of the partnership agreement closed with the RBA Kosovo which provided background for the research work commented in the feedback provided by Dr Albulena Kadriu and students participating in the project*
  - [84] *Copy of the formal or informal correspondence with the University of Chicago commented in the Teaching Staff session*
  - [85] *Regulations regarding plagiarism. Description of the process of plagiarism check and sanctions*
  - [86] *Statistics on plagiarism occurrence at the college*
  - [87] *Overview/Lists of contracts for the library which provides access to eBooks, journals and electronic databases*
  - [88] *Documents providing process descriptions / diagram for QM-System*
  - [89] *Document(s) providing statistics on study success, average study time, dropout rates, etc. of the study programmes for the last five years in a table*
  - [90] *Document(s) explaining how does the college collect student workload and how is it adjusted if in courses it is too high or too low. Please show the process and who is involved*
  - [91] *List of CPD training organized by the college in the past 3 years and attended by staff*
  - [92] *The Staff Development Plan does not propose concrete action – is there another document outlining exactly what will happen in 2023/2024? Are there any targets/measures of success for the Development Plan?*





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- [93] *List of all staff with name, discipline they teach, full-time/part-time, PhD – YES/NO, If Yes, in which discipline, Publications over the past 3 years*
  - [94] *Job description for the Head of Programme role, with outline of responsibilities*
  - [95] *List of international collaborations and the concrete activity delivered in the past 3 years under these collaborations, including research*
  - [96] *Employability statistics – how many graduates are employed, in total, per academic cohort and how many are employed in a job role which is aligned with their field of study, how many have continued education? Please indicate percentages and numbers, please break down by programme*
  - [97] *Minutes of meetings from the DC Council with participation by labour market representatives and students.*

#### Other supporting documentation

- [98] *Dardania College Mission, Vision and Objectives, [online], available at: <https://kolegjidardania.com/en/about-us/mission-values/> [Accessed 2 Mar 2023]*
- [99] *Dardania College Accreditation, [online], available at: <https://kolegjidardania.com/en/about-us/accreditation/>, [Accessed 2 Mar 2023]*
- [100] *Dardania College Regulations and Policies, [online], available at: <https://kolegjidardania.com/en/about-us/regulations-and-policies/> [Accessed 10 Mar 2023]*

Requested supplementary documentation listed above that has been received by the college includes all the reference documents but those listed under [67], [80] and [83]. In addition, the requested documentation referenced under [72], aimed to provide evidence on graduate students participation in college-held events such as job fairs and similar, is likely to be of nature different than the one requested given that both its title and the content correspond to mere lecturing or training circumstances rather than public events like job fairs. Finally,



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according to the college officials, feedback to the request outlined under [86] could not have been provided as the college so far has not encountered any plagiarism-related incident.

### Criteria used for institutional and program evaluations

- *Institutional evaluation standards of KAA.*
- *Dardania College Institutional Evaluation, Report of the Expert Team, 2019.*

#### 1.2. Site visit schedule

Time	Meeting
09:00 – 10:30	Meeting with the management of the institution
10.35 – 11.35	Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff
11:40 – 12:40	Meeting with Deans of Faculties (Head of Programmes)
12:40 – 14:00	Lunch break
14:00 – 14:10	Vising tour of the facilities and infrastructure (Part I)
14:10 – 15:00	Meeting with teaching staff
15:05 – 15:55	Meeting with students
16:05 – 16:55	Meeting with graduates
17:00 – 17:50	Meeting with employers and external stakeholders
17:50 – 18:30	Vising tour of the facilities and infrastructure (Part II)
18:30 – 18:40	Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts
18:40 – 18:50	Closing meeting with the management



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### 1.3. A brief overview of the institution under evaluation

The Dardania College (hereafter referred to as: **The College**) is a privately owned higher education institution which started its operations in 2004 after being formally licensed by the Kosovo Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST). In 2007 the College underwent its first institutional reaccreditation and in 2009 the College was accredited to run its first bachelor and master level study programmes.

The College has been founded by a single natural person, a private entrepreneur Mr Ismet Gashi, as a follow up to his successful business undertaking in other economy sectors through his Premier Holding company operating in Kosovo and abroad. The shared ownership and thus related tight liaisons with the company have provided the College with a relatively comfortable financial position and a network of useful contacts from the Kosovo business sector.

According to [1], the most recent study programmes the College has been running are the following bachelor and master level study programmes:

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Level</b>
1.	Political Science and Public Administration	BA
2.	English Language and American Studies	BA
3.	Applied Psychology and Managerial Studies	BA
4.	Social Care and Welfare	BA
5.	Public Administration	MA

In addition to the above listed programmes, the Colleges used to run a number of other study programmes [99], however, given that some of the programmes have failed to be reaccredited, it is not known which of the programmes have been available to the students at the time of this writing. According to [98], the College sees itself capacitated to excel in business, economy



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and/or research fields related to economic, juridical, political, and philological sciences, hence all the study programmes taught so far have been corresponding with these objectives/areas.

In 2019 the College underwent institutional accreditation procedure and has passed it with the overall compliance score set as Substantially Compliant. Nevertheless, to improve the quality of College's operations, the following recommendations were made [3]:

**Public mission and institutional objectives**

1. Make sure the process of development and communication of the mission with relevant actors of DC's operation is open, transparent, informative, and participatory.

**Strategic planning, governance, and administration**

2. Make sure strategic plan is realistic and concrete enough in all its aspects.
3. Use standard categories of planning: objectives, criteria, indicators, outcomes.
4. Make sure development and further work with strategic plan are a participatory process within the DC and beyond.

**Financial planning and management**

5. Consider possibilities to support more research and mobility

**Academic integrity, responsibility, and public accountability**

6. Obtain and use antiplagiarism software.
7. Make all internal regulations and relevant information (incl. self-evaluation reports) publicly available.

**Quality management**

8. Focus QA also on all main areas of the DC's operation.

**Learning and teaching**

9. Teaching staff needs to be additionally trained in order to imply different teaching methods.
10. Administer periodically surveys with employers in order to gain valuable feedback and to improve education of students.
11. Apply continuous follow up of students and monitor their learning process.

**Research**

12. Academic staff should increase number of publications.
13. Units for research (centre/s) needs to be better defined, with clear roles and responsibilities.
14. Research needs to be better intertwined in teaching and to involve students, in particular on master level.



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15. Infrastructure for research needs to be significantly improved.

**Staff, employment processes and professional development**

16. Staff should have an opportunity for gaining additional skills.

17. Trainings should be offered by the institution, both for academic staff and for administrative staff.

18. Periodical self-evaluation and peer evaluation should be introduced as a regular activity.

**Student administration and support services**

19. To collect regular data on students admission, progress and completion of studies.

20. To start improving conditions for disabled students.

21. Library needs to be updated and better equipped.

22. Classrooms need to be organised in a way to facilitate more flexible arrangements and to allow more up-date teaching methods.

**Institutional cooperation**

23. It would be useful to administer surveys and to collect regular feedback from the employers in order to further improve the education.

24.

In the given institutional evaluation procedure, all the above listed recommendations from the previous evaluation have been taken into account both in the undertaken interviews with the key stakeholders as well as in this report.

The College has got its seat in the city of Prishtina where it runs all its operations from.



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## 2. INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

The institutional evaluation consists of 11 subheadings (areas) through which the administration, organisation, and management of the institution, as well as teaching and research are assessed. In the following sections the Expert Team (hereafter referred to as: **the ET**) has provided evidence and analysis for the College compliance with the standards related to these areas.

### 2.1. Public mission and institutional objectives

The mission of the College has been communicated both to the general public via online sources such the college web site [98], as well as internally through key founding documents such as the actual strategic development plan [59]. Regarding the latter, it is however somewhat unexpected that the same has not been exercised in the college statute [58]. Nevertheless, even though it may be deemed the mission has still been sufficiently communicated to the interested parties, if the content of the mission is valued, it must be said that it has been formulated in a manner too complex and abundant to channel key unique identifiers of the College. As such, it would be more appropriate to call the content a mission description rather than a statement.

Moreover, even though the statement does address main pillars of College's academic undertaking, it may also be found generic and as such fit for a variety of possible academic and/or business outcomes. The mission hence does not suggest College's comparative advantages and unique discriminators on the market or academia, neither it implies its strategic orientation with respect to the geographic area of interest, research focus, target academic relevance or higher education market share. Given that in the globalised world any academic institution of today must “...*encourage interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary studies which enrich students' knowledge and skills, and enable them to become life-long learners...*”, or



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“...cooperate with scope organizations which provide commercial activities and offers services to the public and private sector, the government, the local communities and civil society institutions ...” [98], relying on such generic formulations instead of being unique in its content and the narrative used, makes the mission statement rather applicable to any higher education institution of today. Consequently, the mission remains largely unrecognised by the members of the academic community which was repeatedly demonstrated in the undertaken interviews. Thus, for instance, almost all the stakeholders struggled to verbalise key competitive advantages of the College and its desired strategic area of expertise and academic relevance. Indeed, some of them did highlight areas such as applied psychology and organisational psychology as target areas of desired excellence, but all these feedbacks were rather sporadic and inconsistent with other information received. For instance, although the interviewed study programme heads provided capacitated feedback on why modern psychology theory and practice should be seen as a College’s potentially lucrative area of expertise, especially in post-covid times, they were not able to explain how come that, if so, no revenue streams coming from providing the thus related expertise to the business sector in Kosovo and abroad has been foreseen in the generated strategic and financial plans.

In addition to failing to identify College’s key competitive advantages and identifiers, the generic nature of the mission also leads to a setup where no concrete development framework is defined by the mission to underpin strategic planning. Such a setup is particularly unexpected given that the College prides itself to have been running all its strategic planning in close collaboration with external stakeholders from the business sector. As such, and given the feedback received, it may therefore be concluded that some planning has indeed been done through a consultation process with both external and internal stakeholders, but the nature of that planning is likely to have been more focused on operational rather than strategic context.

Finally, given that in the previous accreditation process, literally the same issues were found problematic, and the College was hence evaluated as non-compliant against the criteria 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 [3], it is fair to say that not much has been done in the meantime. Indeed, the College



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has taken into account the recommendation given in the evaluation report and an update to the initial strategic plan has been made. Nevertheless, instead of doing everything in its power to upgrade the process of strategic thinking and planning such that the mission and the follow up plans would go hand in hand, the College has exercised a “do minimum” attitude leading to the outcomes of the evaluation process remaining the same once again.

**Compliance level:** Partially Compliant

**ET recommendations:**

- 1. Streamline and simplify the college mission such that to articulate which concrete scientific, research and/or business area the college is intended to excel in. If possible, adjust the mission such that to indicate the institution's unique identifiers and strengths at the geography of the college's primary interest.*
- 2. Communicate the thus generated strategic orientation/goals clearly to both the internal stakeholders as well as the interested public. Given the importance of appropriate College profiling, if needed hire a professional marketing agency and set up a corresponding goal-driven marketing campaign.*
- 3. Update the Statute such that to include the (revised) mission. Update all other documents and sources providing communicating the mission both internally and to the general public.*





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## 2.2. Strategic planning, governance, and administration

As outlined in the previous section, as a follow up to the previous accreditation procedure, the College has come up with a new strategic plan targeting period from 2022-2027 [59]. Even though both the College Management and the interviewed external partners confirmed they worked closely in devising the plan, no concrete evidence has been presented proving such collaboration went beyond sporadic contacts typical for consultations addressing minor problem-solving matters. Thus, for instance, even though the College has provided the requested draft document of the strategic plan [79], the document has failed to demonstrate the iterative process of drafting and finalising the plan. In comparison to the draft plan, the final plan is thus only amended with sections on IT development and College internationalisation which both, in its nature, may be deemed appropriate and highly important. However, if the content of the sections is evaluated, it is clear the contribution of the “draft-to-final” iterative process is rather marginal. Even though it be would somewhat expected that in the 21th century line of IT development introducing state-of-the-art IT implementations would be planned for, the final plan provides only generic formulations which may hardly be seen as a roadmap for concrete realisations. Thus, for instance, the final plan for the given period sets the “*Implementation of a globally competitive information system*” as one of the objectives. However, if the corresponding action measures are consulted, it may be seen that by the rather pretentious “globally competitive information system” title only typical operational upgrading of the existing Student Data Management and Information System (DMIS) is considered. At the same time, from the brief tour around the College taken during the onsite visit, it was more than obvious that the College lacks some basic IT infrastructure. As such, it would be somewhat expected that any strategic IT development planning would go beyond standard DMIS maintenance and include other activities such as setting up a server room (or, alternatively, developing data-substantiated plans for IT outsourcing), IT rooms upgrading such that to feature modern instead of outdated computers, cabling and physical network deployment



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allowing students to use laptop computers in the classrooms, communication infrastructure deployment to facilitate most recent bandwidths and communication speeds, software licensing for study programme-specific software tools and many others. By not doing so, the demonstrated “draft-to-final” iterative process may hardly be found genuine as it would be somewhat expected that, at least, partners from the business sector would signal the College that setting up a highly capacitated IT infrastructure is critical to its future development.

Even worse misalignment between the content of the strategic plan and the feedbacks received may be found in the strategic objective aimed at setting up joint study programmes. Firstly, even if it would be assumed the College has got the capacity to kick off and run a joint study programme with a foreign university (it is not to be forgotten that, in the SER, the College repeatedly underlines lack of English proficiency at both students and staff as a weakness inhibiting further development, as well as the fact that in the undertaken interviews most of the staff needed an interpreter to communicate with the ET), it is entirely unclear what sort of internal/local deficit the College would aim to compensate by such joint undertaking. Equally so, in both the strategic plan and the feedbacks received no measurable justification has been provided as to what concrete market and/or scientific area would such a joint programme aim to address. Thus, for instance, in the undertaken interviews the College Management pointed out that a partner Turkish university is seen as the College’s counterpart in the planned joint undertaking, which would suggest prospective Turkish students are seen as the target population ensuring College’s future prospering. Nevertheless, on a direct question on which grounds/analysis undertaken/comparative advantages the College aims to attract these students to study in Kosovo rather than in Turkey, the management could not provide a straightforward answer. Pretty much the same sort of disputable strategic planning and governance has been demonstrated in justifying to the communicated strategic objective of setting up a new doctoral study programme.

In addition to the inconsistencies related to the process of setting up strategic development goals, the College has also exhibited discrepancies in the corresponding financial planning.



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Thus, for instance, in the actual strategic plan the College forecasts the current revenue coming from student tuition fees to more than double by 2027 [1]. Assuming the unit fee would not change dramatically due to the economic situation in Kosovo, this means the College expects a considerable influx of new students to be admitted. As this means the existing infrastructure is very much unlikely to be able to cater for the new students, the College has rightfully included new infrastructure developments (the so-called KD Campus) in its strategic development plans. Nevertheless, if the corresponding budget figures are analysed, a number of discrepancies and flaws may be observed. What is most important is that, as may be seen in the tables below, many forecasted figures presented in the SER (p 22-23) do not match the corresponding figures provided in the document entitled Financial Planning [35]. Moreover, if the budgeted figures are compared with the budget defined in the Strategic Plan (p 54), further discrepancies may be observed ([35] vs. [59] = €310.000 vs. €330.000, [1] vs. [59] = €89.000 vs. €330.000). It is therefore difficult to assess which of the forecasts/budgets is genuine and whether the strategic planning is really integrated with the budgeting process or not.

Funds for infrastructure development	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	2026 /2027
Cultural-sports activity of students	2000.00	2000.00	3000.00	3000.00	4000.00
Development of a master plan for KD Campuse	5000.00	40000.00	85000.00	90000.00	90000.00
Elevator	28200.00				
Completion and inventory	0.00	0.00	5000.00	12000.00	8000.00
Total funds for infrasructure development	35200.00	42000.00	93000.00	105000.00	102000.00

Table 1: Budget for the infrastructure development according to [35]

Funds for infrastructure development					
Cultural-sports activity of students	0.00	1000.00	1500.00	3000.00	3100.00
Development of a master plan for KD Campuse	0.00	5000.00	5000.00	30000.00	49000.00
Completion and inventory	0.00	0.00	2500.00	8000.00	12500.00
Total funds for infrasructure development	0.00	6000.00	9000.00	41000.00	64600.00

Table 2: Budget for the infrastructure development according to [1]

Even if the above depicted discrepancies are set aside, it remains unclear when does the College expect the new infrastructure to be built and how exactly will the doubled population of



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students be catered for in 2027 if by then only the master plan for the new campus is expected to be realised.

Unfortunately, the questionable practice in setting up the plans is also exercised in their monitoring. Although the Strategic Plan clearly defines a framework for plan realisation and performance monitoring, the proofs that have been provided to illustrate how the monitoring processes work in practice [81] may hardly be deemed hard evidence on successful strategic governance. Despite that the realisation monitoring reports were provided in Albanian only, if quickly translated by available online tools, it is clear they all showcase operational level of governance, analysing matters such as the successfulness of individual staff trainings held, or research publishing relevance, instead to focus on far more important and complex objectives such as, for instance, the realisation of the new campus or substantiating the setting up of the new doctoral study or joint study programme by thorough market analysis and forecasting. Furthermore, all of the documents provided are in the form of meeting minutes rather than reports, hence they only provide – from the process management point of view – basic procedural information instead of valuable summaries, analyses and efficiency indicators.

Unlike the strategic planning and governance, from the procedural and administrative point of view, the College may be seen as properly organised. The College has got defined and documented all mandatory procedures which enable typical operational practice to be followed. Most important regulations critical to successful operation of the College are all available online via the College Web site.

Finally, according to the feedback received from students and graduates, students get to member all the decisional, executive and consultative bodies of the College, and the College Management does not interfere with the election process. However, on a direct question what would happen if a representative who exercise alternative political, sexual, or other such views of sensitive nature would get elected, all the interviewees could not provide a qualified answer or an experience-based feeling whether this would be considered acceptable by the College authorities. Incidentally, a general feel is that the students (both current and graduated)



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somewhat idealise both the institution and the staff members. Although this may indeed be seen as something the College should be complimented for, nevertheless it does leave an impression that critical thinking has not been highly promoted by both the College procedures and regulations set, as well as the College Management and teaching staff.

**Compliance level:** Partially Compliant

**ET recommendations:**

- 1. Set up a process aimed at closer involvement of the external stakeholders in the planning and development activities which is not going to rely solely on voluntarily informal communication but rather be a clear goal-driven undertaking. Meetings with the stakeholders should be held on regular basis and substantiated by not merely the typical administrative means such as meeting minutes and similar but also by dedicated agendas and plans reflecting the targeted objectives.*
- 2. Correct the figures in the key planning documents such that to match the corresponding figures set forth in the financial plan. Introduce a single point of budget information sourcing such that to prevent future misalignments in budget communication.*
- 3. Revise thoroughly the forecasted figures on the expected number of students based on hard evidence and data driven analyses. Align the strategic objectives accordingly.*
- 4. Introduce quarterly, semestral or annual reporting processes and practices which would provide management-cantered statistics enabling effective realisation of the strategic goals set. Feel free to decrease the reporting frequency to semestral or annual reporting only.*



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### **2.3. Financial planning and management**

As argued in the previous section, a number of discrepancies and inconsistencies may be found in the financial planning related to reaching the strategic development objectives of the College. Unfortunately, the same practice is visible on the operational level too. Even if the inconsistencies commented in the previous section are set aside and treated as a minor misalignment between two sources, it is still fairly clear that the generated budget(s) may hardly be found realistic and corresponding closely to the College potentials. Thus, for instance, despite the fact that the College showcases as many as 46 cooperation agreements closed with partner institutions and companies from Kosovo and beyond [1], in the budget presented, absolutely no revenue is forecasted to be generated through these cooperations. At the same time, the feedbacks from both internal stakeholders such as the Programme Heads and renowned external partners like IPKO Telecommunications LLC imply a massive potential remains untackled. The former thus speak very highly about the College expertise in business-related psychology able to be applied in a variety of economy sectors, and the latter complements such a College reputation by stating that the highest number of graduated student employed by the company comes from the College, both of which may be channelled to facilitate opening up a new lucrative revenue stream.

As can be seen from the College organisational chart and according to the SER, College finances are run operationally by the Financial Service Office and supervised by the Rector's Office and the Steering Council. Although this would suggest proper financial management has been maintained, evidence of questionable practices have been observed. Firstly, the financial plan shows entries which are similar in nature and hence the corresponding total expenditure for a given cost category may not be as transparent. Examples of such a practice include entries such as "Establishment of international strategic partners", "International cooperation", "Cooperation with the Public and Private sector" and others. Given that in the undertaken interviews both the College Management and the QA representatives interviewed



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could not provide a straightforward answer as to the specifics of these similar expenditures, there are reasons to believe such a practice is very easy to lead to dubious outcomes.

In addition to questionable cost categories, the financial planning and management processes may also be found susceptible to improper perception of long-term sustainability. Thus, for instance, in all discussions held on financially related matters, the interviewed representatives have demonstrated an over simplified and highly questionable understanding of the importance of ensuring financially sustainable operations. As such, many times an attitude like “if we’d struggle financially, the owner will give us the money” has been exercised. Given that such an attitude even implies the lack of basic understanding of accounting standards, which is rather bizarre given the profile of the College and its staff, it may hardly be deemed that appropriate efforts have been taken to ensure sound and economically viable financial operations of the College based on promoting responsible spending culture.

**Compliance level:** Partially Compliant

**ET recommendations:**

- 1. Introduce a cost breakdown structure which would group similar expenditures across different operational areas and/or strategic objectives.*
- 2. Introduce realisation monitoring practices which go beyond standard accountancy procedures required by the corresponding laws and regulations.*
- 3. Make key business performance data available to the public and thus build the College profile further.*



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#### **2.4. Academic integrity, responsibility, and public accountability**

Dardania College has a Code of Ethics [27] which was presented as evidence to the ET. The Code applies to all community members of the College, i.e. teachers, researchers, students and administrative staff. The Code covers elements of academic integrity and intellectual independence, including diversity, and safeguards academic behaviour to ensure breaches are, ideally, prevented, but if they do occur, that they are relevantly identified and consistently dealt with. Article 7 of the Code is explicit about what constitutes a breach and clearly lists behaviours which will be penalised, while Article 25 constitutes a list of disciplinary measures to be taken in case of breach. The Code highlights stipulations in respect of Teaching, Learning and Community Engagement, i.e. behaviour outside of the College environment, and gives full detail on the operation of the Committee of the Code of Ethics.

As per the Code of Ethics, the Committee of the Code of Ethics to oversee ethical matters is nominated by the Steering Council of Dardania College, by proposal of the College Senate. There is also an Appeals Commission which is appointed by the Scientific-Teaching Councils of the Academic Units. Article 27 also talks about the Disciplinary and Complaints Commission which is subordinate to the Committee of the Code of Ethics.

Where plagiarism is specifically mentioned in the Code of Ethics and considered a breach, there is insufficient clarity of where instances of plagiarism are first heard, as the number of Committees with a disciplinary function is at least three and the ET has not had any terms of reference to understand how responsibilities are distributed. The ET identifies the risk that neither students nor staff are clear on where they may need to go for any disciplinary cases. As such, this should be made more straightforward. Also, the College should consider if all these committees are necessary to serve in a unified manner the ethical perspectives the College adopts. The more committees are proposed, the more difficult it is to gain consistency and with





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the College not being a large institution, it is important that the committee structure is maintained fit-for-purpose.

The ET was presented with guidance documentation which emphasises the approach to plagiarism, especially in relation to the bachelor's and the master's theses. Indeed, students confirmed that they are aware of these stipulations and that they find out about them via plagiarism prevention briefings which are held from the beginning of their studies, when the syllabi are introduced, and that they know exactly how to act in the academic context to uphold academic integrity principles. However, they were unable to say how teachers may check for plagiarism and they did not have at their disposal a tool to check themselves before submitting an assignment. Students whom the ET met were aware of citing and referencing requirements and indicated that they were careful to follow these. The College management indicated that no plagiarism software was in use at the time of this writing and teachers confirmed that if they have any doubts they may use internet-based searches to test a plagiarism suspicion. However, this was not used consistently as an approach, and it serves little solid guarantee that students would not plagiarise or would be duly identified if plagiarising. It was indicated to the ET that for assignments in Albanian there was no reliable software in usage at the time of the review. The College noted that it was waiting for the MEST to roll out a plagiarism tool appropriate for Albanian and that this had been delayed multiple times. In its absence, the College confirmed that they would wait rather than propose an institutional approach for plagiarism detection. Without a plagiarism tool and without a consistent approach to plagiarism in the absence of such a tool it is difficult for the College to demonstrate that all internal stakeholders act consistently to avoid plagiarism in research, teaching and assessments. Importantly, the College needs to realise that plagiarism, if more prominent in bachelor's and master's theses, does also occur in other essay-based assignments and regulations would need to cover all assessments where citing and referencing may pose problems.



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The ET asked about statistics on plagiarism cases which might have been heard by the Committee for the Code of Ethics. The College indicated that none were identified and, as such, there is no publicly made information to this effect.

Conflict of interest is not defined in the Code of Ethics. The only mention is in relation to activities external to the College (art 18), i.e. in the wider community. However, there is no reference to avoidance of conflict of interest within internal activities of the College, and what safeguards can be in place for a wide range of such activities which could potentially generate conflict of interest. Clarity is provided exclusively for the recruitment process for which the Statute of the College under Article 64.2 refers to how selection committee members are appointed and indicate that the spouse, partner or close family cannot form a part of the recruitment committee.

The main internal regulations are published on the website. However, the website does not present any section to include self-evaluation reports or decisions of the governing bodies. In respect of analysis reports from student surveys, students confirmed that these are posted on the internal notice board, physically, and they can and do consult them, however, none are presented on the website of larger public consultation.

The website currently lists the ‘program’ tab to be under construction and offers no links to the bachelor’s or master’s descriptions, as such no details about learning outcomes or the anticipate qualifications to be obtained are presented for public view. Employment data is presented simply as a percentage figure (83%) with the description “of our students successfully graduate and begin their career development.” This description is confusing as it does not indicate if students are employed or in further education or are still seeking for employment, at what time after graduation and what breakdown for the various programmes. Student numbers are not presented. Indeed, evidence presented on request shows 4 programmes with employability between 49.59% and 58.66% g for students who graduated in the last five years, with an average across the 4 programmes of 54.22%, i.e. 28.77 points below the advertised percentage. This is particularly misleading to the public and prospective students and the College should



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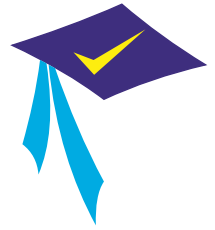
correct this information urgently. In the response of the College on the draft report it is indicated that the figures presented online represent cohorts between 2004-2017, with 83% not relating to the employability of graduates in the past five years. The ET maintains that this is highly misleading and creates misrepresentation. Anyone accessing the website now, irrespective of whether it is under construction or not, will understand the figure of 83% to be current, not past, and definitely not past from 6 years to 20 years ago. The website should present accurate information, current information which is a trustworthy representation of College performance at the time of consultation of the website. Prospective students will be making decisions based on what they believe the situation is currently, not on what the College could demonstrate 10 or 20 years ago. Scholarship information is presented and an application form included but not directly under the ‘Students’ tab; fees are not made explicit.

Staff information is available for 32 members of staff, with 25 of these presenting full downloadable CVs. Some of the ones not presenting CVs also do not have a description with the website development tool text still active, i.e. Lorem Ipsum Intro Text, and repeated, where text should be inserted. Research information is not systematised and can only be found if going individually through the CVs of staff members, which makes this information insufficiently accessible. The format of the CVs is not the same and information headings contained will vary, making it difficult for readers to compare performance. The list received by the ET with full-time and part-time staff at the College indicates 27 full-time staff members and 12 part-time staff members. Hence 9 staff members are not represented at all on the website.

**Compliance level:** Partially Compliant

**ET recommendations:**

1. *Streamline the committee structure to ensure consistency of approaches and fitness-for-purpose.*



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2. *Clarify and delineate responsibilities across the various committees which can hear disciplinary cases.*
  3. *Develop an approach to plagiarism detection which can give safeguards that plagiarism is avoided consistently and, where not avoided, it is identified and can be appropriately penalised as a breach.*
  4. *Extend regulations on plagiarism to go beyond bachelor's and master's theses and include any essay-based assignments which student submit as part of their course requirements.*
  5. *Define conflict of interest for activities internal to the College and indicate clear mechanisms to safeguard against conflict.*
  6. *Revise and update the website so that it contains relevant information, which can be deemed accurate, current and trustworthy, and is accessible via intuitive tab labels.*



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## 2.5. Quality management

The College has implemented a quality assurance policy centred on continuous monitoring and management, aligned with its strategic orientation. This strategic approach adheres to the internal quality assurance standards and guidelines that outline the "Policy and Procedures for Quality Assurance," including the adoption, monitoring, and periodic review of programs and titles. As a higher education institution, the College has formally established mechanisms for the adoption, periodic review, and monitoring of its programs.

The College has formally adopted a regulation outlining the implementation of its quality assurance policy [43]. This document comprehensively describes the institutional quality assurance system, including the mechanisms, data collection, analysis, and reporting instruments. Additionally, the regulation establishes timelines and periodic monitoring cycles while determining the level of engagement required from each individual and unit involved in the quality assurance process at the College.

The institution has established the Commission for quality assurance system which consists of the appointed head, and the heads of all the study programs, as well as the student representatives. The Commission for assuring the quality system has determined the KPI (Key Performance Indicators) which are consistent for the entire institution, and, in accordance with the findings of the Quality Assurance Office, the respective bodies of the College compile documents with the goal of its continuous improvement.

In 2007, the College established the Quality Assurance Office as a part of its administration. The office employs four officials.

As discussed earlier, the College has created the DMIS, a centralised system for recording student admission, progress, and completion data. The system is regularly maintained which is visible from both the strategic plan and the corresponding budget.



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In collaboration with the management and academic staff, the Quality Assurance Office has created mechanisms such as questionnaires, interview protocols, and evaluation reports for assessing the quality of academic activities, student services, administration, and other related areas. These mechanisms follow a standard questionnaire structure and are designed by representatives from each academic unit. After gathering data from surveys, reports are generated for all members of the college community, including academic staff, students, administrators, graduates, and employers.

The College takes action in response to inadequate or inconsistent student grading, based on statistical reports and in accordance with established standard policies and procedures approved by the Senate. All data is sourced from DMIS and analysed, and a report is subsequently shared with the College management.

Evaluation of students is conducted in accordance with publicly available, continuously applied criteria, regulations, and procedures.

The College has established mechanisms for selecting qualified academic staff with competencies in teaching, research, and practical work. These mechanisms are available to committees responsible for analysing applicants' files and compiling reports for appointing academic staff. Creating a functional system of quality assurance is a mandatory task for all members of the college community.

During the on-site inspection, however, it became apparent, particularly from discussions with those responsible, that the quality control loops have not yet been fully closed. For example, relevant documents could not be provided, such as protocols showing that the PDCA cycle is closed. That is, the identification, the action and the control. Appropriate action plans and how monitoring was done were missing. A corresponding quality management manual is available, but the ET gained the impression that the previous quality management system is not yet fully functional. In particular, the responsibilities are stated in the report, but it was often not clear from the interviews how the responsible parties implemented this.



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Likewise, the ET gained the impression that quality assurance is not yet fully integrated into the planning process. On this point, the answers to these questions were evasive. Therefore, the ET could not see how evaluations take into account inputs, processes and outputs and pay particular attention to the quality of results. The ongoing routine activities are recorded, but the corresponding point for the strategic goals is missing. From the documents provided and also in the interviews it could not be seen how the evaluation contributes to how a continuous improvement of the performance takes place.

A final point to mention is the lack of transparency and the corresponding deadweight loss for a closed cycle in quality assurance. The corresponding results of the course evaluation are not discussed with the students. Thus, the students cannot enter into a dialogue with the lecturers. With regard to a common understanding of quality, this gap also still needs to be closed.

Unfortunately, it turns out that many of the corresponding quality reports cannot be found on the homepage. Therefore, there is still a deficit in how the public is informed about the quality in the college.

The critical self-reflection on the own quality assurance system is also missing. Here, the SER only mentions the external accreditation by the KAA and no further development by external experts or a further external observation outside of the accreditation.

**Compliance level:** Partially Compliant

**ET recommendations:**

- 1. The institution should make efforts to develop and implement a quality management system which is (1) grounded in a widely accepted quality management framework, (2) ensures proactive involvement of all stakeholders following a PDCA-cycle approach and (3) will be implemented with testable action plans for improvement.*



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2. *The tasks and functions in the area of quality management may be defined, but it does not seem to be lived practice. Therefore, this should be emphasised more strongly.*
  3. *Publish evaluation results from the general surveys. Provide summaries of these results to the public. In particular, make clear what changes have been brought about by evaluation results.*
  4. *Discuss the course evaluation results with the students. The lecturer can discuss the results with the students and present them during the course. This should promote the dialogue between the students and the lecturer.*
  5. *Quality management should also be subject to appropriate self-reflection as well as external evaluation, apart from the state accreditation that needs to be done. For example, through an external quality advisory board, which can provide assistance here.*





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## 2.6. Learning and teaching

As outlined in the SER, the overall goal of College's learning and teaching activities is to ensure the sustainable advancement of study programs by incorporating contemporary knowledge and European and global scientific achievements. This is achieved through the introduction of new multidisciplinary content.

The specific goals and objectives as stated in the SER for improving modern study programs includes:

- Providing course content in English and creating opportunities for students to achieve learning outcomes effectively.
- Emphasising the importance of scientific research in addition to academic training for their chosen profession.
- Encouraging students to participate in practical training to showcase their professional competence.
- Regularly reviewing course syllabi to incorporate up-to-date content based on advanced teaching methodologies, best practices, scientific research, and practical training.
- Training students to search for materials and scientific resources both physically and electronically to facilitate self-directed and lifelong learning.

According to the SER, continuous evaluation is carried out to ensure the enhancement of graduates' quality with respect to the knowledge and skills they have acquired, and their suitability for the job market. The evaluation covers learning and teaching, academic staff, student support services, learning resources, learning outcomes, as well as the assessment of students' knowledge and skills.



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In the SER it is described that the College has established policies and procedures that apply to all academic programs and continuously monitors their effectiveness. The institution has implemented key performance indicators to ensure high-quality academic work, research, practical skills, and services, which affect overall performance. These policies are reviewed annually by academic officials, the Quality Assurance Office, and high-level academic bodies. The review process covers the Statute, regulations, policies for evaluating teaching and academic staff, evaluation questionnaires for students to provide feedback on teaching staff, observation forms for monitoring and peer observation, and questionnaires for evaluating institutional services for students.

There is a need for improvement in performance monitoring, as there is generally no uniform procedure for establishing key performance indicators, examining and addressing quality disparities among programs, and implementing a coherent cycle of actions to ensure that all programs meet the required performance standards.

The study programs at the College are documented in a series of documents that outline their mission, general and specific objectives, learning outcomes, and program curriculum. The curriculum includes both mandatory and elective courses, with ECTS credits allocated and distributed across semesters as appropriate.

The College aims to offer education that is centred around the needs of students. Nevertheless, the definition of student-centred education was not explicitly clarified in relation to the entire educational process. As per the SER, the teaching techniques should be tailored to meet the students' needs in order to achieve the desired learning outcomes. This can be achieved through the distribution of teaching and research responsibilities to group work.

The College has invested substantial efforts in enhancing teaching and learning procedures, resulting in noticeable positive changes over time. Nevertheless, some initiatives appear to be merely declarative, and not all staff members are equally informed and involved in efforts to



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enhance teaching skills. To ensure a positive flow of relevant information, it is necessary to better integrate the top-down and bottom-up approaches.

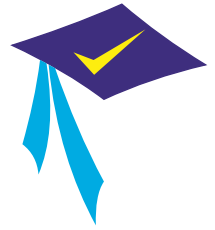
It is apparent that certain models and types of teaching methods remain unfamiliar and seldom employed. In essence, teaching methods must be modernised and adapted to incorporate technology in the classroom, both for teaching and learning purposes.

Implementing a cumulative grading system could enhance the learning process, facilitate student monitoring, and potentially contribute to a reduction in drop-out rates and an increase in completion rates.

**Compliance level:** Partially Compliant

**ET recommendations:**

- 1. Develop a detailed overarching didactic concept which provides teachers and students with information which teaching concepts will be used to support achievement of the learning outcomes both at the program level and at the course level.*
- 2. Derive quality criteria for teaching and learning progress and implement these criteria in the QA framework.*
- 3. Put the results of recommendations 1 and 2 together in a “profile”, publish it at the website and distribute it to teachers, students, QA team members and all relevant academic units.*
- 4. Review the monitoring system for assessing performance at the study program level. This should involve establishing and tracking key performance indicators, analysing and identifying disparities in quality among programs, and taking necessary measures to ensure that all programs meet the required performance standards.*



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5. *Enhance the professional development of academic staff by introducing activities specifically aimed at improving teaching effectiveness.*
  6. *Improve the practical skills and competences component within study programs, and intensify work-based and work-related learning.*



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## 2.7. Research

The Strategic Plan of Dardania College for 2022-2027 [59] includes as one of its strategic areas for development: Scientific Research Work with four specific objectives listed, including the increase of research publications and the development of staff research competences. The Action Plan which underpins the Strategic Plan indicates action lines; however, for the area of research none of these are quantifiable. The Action Plan indicates the need to report on an annual basis in respect number of publications, number of conference and number of research groups; however no performance targets are proposed, hence no measures of success are elaborated. This means that the College will not be able to effectively monitor performance or performance trends to ensure it is fulfilling the strategic area of Scientific Research.

The Strategic Plan indicates that 15% of the budget will go towards the research objective. This budget was confirmed by the management team at the College. The College also allocates funds for the Dardania Magazine, a publication which allows researchers to disseminate their work should they fail to do so in other more renowned local or international journals. Additionally, the College tries to incentivise research activities via the “Researcher of the Year” award which also has a distinct budgetary allocation with the best researcher being able to gain up to 20% extra on their net annual salary.

The College adopted a Regulation for Research activities and the development of the Centre for Scientific Research is prominent as part of this Regulation. The Centre organises conferences, training and supports researcher with individual research needs, e.g. if they want to participate in conferences abroad or if they need any additional resources for their research. Staff members confirmed that funding was sufficient and they could access funds for any research activities they may deem relevant to their research projects. Still, the research output presented to the ET is fairly modest, with the management of Dardania College recognising that efforts need to be intensified before they can be satisfied with research outputs. In the



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summary presented to the ET there are merely 12 international publications, with 8 by distinct authors, from 2018 to 2022; clearly some authors are focussing their own efforts more strongly on research having managed to present two or even three international-level publications in the 5 year timeframe. This demonstrates that staff are trying to balance their research activities but this is a longer term process. Whereas the financial capacity and the logistical components are in place, the College may need to intensify its staff development in respect of research and/or hire more staff with research competencies. This is also because the output in local journals is low, 15 publications in 2018-2022. Eight books have also been published, however the evidence presented to the ET fails to identify the publishing house, so it is difficult to ascertain if these are readers or monographies, published with renowned, independent publishers or via the College's own publishing arrangements, used also for the College Journal.

The list provided by the College with details of full-time and part-time staff indicates that only 9 full-time staff out of 27 and only 1 part-time staff out of 12 displaying a publication between 2018-2022.

The College indicates that it had been part of two Tempus projects, however this seems to have been before 2018 as they do not feature in Table 4 of the file Research Activities. The table presented subsequently (evidence 27) also demonstrates modest project contributions. It is important to note that research collaboration, especially cross-national, can allow staff competencies to develop and do give a better chance for international publications.

Staff confirmed that research came into play when promotions were considered and that they knew what research requirements there were for promotions. The College Statute [58] lists from Article 57 onwards the requirements, with assistant professors needing to have one major work published in international journals, associate professor three major works, while full professors five major works across their entire career.

In respect the evaluation process for staff performance, although the Quality Assurance Regulation, Art. 11 details the evaluation process for staff and suggests that lecturers are



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reviewed for scientific research activities also, the ET was provided proof of evaluation processes for teaching alone (via the Lecturer self-evaluation form and the Lecturer observation form); however, it did not receive a form for overarching performance to see how research may be quantified. The ET did receive a form for administrative employee performance assessment form, but nothing similar for teaching staff. Whereas the forms presented for lecturers clearly target teaching performance, it is important to have evidence of an appraisal system which considers all components of staff activities, conscious of the fact that teaching staff will also be performing research activities, community-facing engagements and administrative duties. The Model of Academic Staff Contract presented to the ET also does not list any specific requirements in relation to research and research only features as an add-on to another bullet point on examinations: Article 2, 4th bullet point reads “Holding of examinations as well as engaging in research activities for the academic years”.

Teaching staff indicated that as far as possible they did try to make room for discussions on their own research or newly emerging research in the field as part of their normal class hours. Some staff members present a string professional profile and discussions of the realities on the ground for their professions were also a feature of classroom interactions. Students confirmed and noted that they value these interventions, especially the professionally oriented ones.

The ET was not able to verify how the affiliation is presented on all publications which are listed, this is because they were presented as screenshots and not active links to permit verification. However, for the publications where this was possible, it was observed that there is variation in how staff members indicate their affiliation, sometimes referred to as Dardania University or Dardania University College (even where there is shared authorship on the same publication), or there is no affiliation indicated or there is a different affiliation indicated, even for a full-time member of staff. These issues should be address. In the response to the draft report the College explains that in 2011 due to legislative changes the title “university” was removed from a number of institutions, including Dardania, and the designation Dardania College was used from 2012 onwards. The ET accepts that this was a situation out of the control



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of the College, however notes that the publications reviewed under the evidence submitted as part of this accreditation process all cover the period of 2017-2022, with the publication exemplified above listed as 2022 (<https://ccpa-journal.eu/index.php/ccpa/article/view/252>).

The SER notes that there is a Copyright and Related Rights Regulation; however this was not presented to the ET and it is not displayed on the website. The SER claims that this Regulation together with the Code of Ethics sufficiently cover intellectual copyright stipulations for the College. The ET could not find any specific mention to copyright or intellectual property in the Code of Ethics. It is important to note that Standard 7.10 refers as much to protection the copyright and intellectual property via robust anti-plagiarism approaches as well as protection for the intellectual property of the members of the teaching staff who produce original materials which are the result of their intellectual production. This is even more pertinent now when so much is shared via online/electronic mechanisms.

Given issues noted under Standard Area 4, plagiarism policies are still far from being implemented consistently and robustly to guarantee the relevant level of protection.

Finally, the ET would like to note the availability expressed by employers to enter research contracts with the College under spin-off arrangements. In the SER, the College indicates as one of the threats the fact that there is lack of interest by the business community to finance research projects that address their needs, which may mean that the College is not addressing the right businesses with their research proposals, as interest was evident in the meeting with the ET.

**Compliance level:** Partially Compliant

**ET recommendations:**





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- 1. Introduce quantifiable indicators for research activities in the Action Plan supporting the Strategic Plan so as to be able to measure performance.*
- 2. Intensify research collaborations, development of staff competencies and international research output.*
- 3. Make clear in the contract what research requirements apply to the post staff occupy.*
- 4. Extend the performance appraisal process beyond the teaching component to include other activities which staff engage in, importantly research, community work and administrative tasks.*
- 5. Address issues of affiliation on publications by full-time staff.*
- 6. Ensure explicit copyright and intellectual property stipulations for the protection of original output teaching and research materials by staff members.*
- 7. Make explicit stipulations about the safeguarding of ethical principles in research conducted by staff members at the College.*
- 8. Diversify research opportunities by seeking to engage businesses in local or national research collaborations.*



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## 2.8. Staff, employment processes and professional development

Dardania College has issued Employment Procedures of Academic and Non-academic staff, which are aligned with the provision of the Law on Higher Education in Kosovo. This coupled with the Statute of the College offer the details for recruitment, responsibilities, workload and employment arrangements. The recruitment process is via public competition for both academic and non-academic roles and employment is made as full-time or part-time staff, with full time staff having a workload of 36 hours per week with a distribution between: teaching 10 hours, preparation for lectures 10 hours, research 6 hours, other activities 10 hours, while for part-time staff the workload is quantified as 50% of the above. The Statute details the requirements for all academic roles and safeguards against conflict of interest in selection committees, thus ensuring equitable treatment of candidates. The Model Contract for Academic Staff is clear on what the job description is; however, the ET found that research is fundamentally downplayed in the description of the role, making it difficult for staff to know that they are, in fact, required to publish at least one publication on average in a three year timeframe. (see Standard 7 and Recommendation 3)

Details about the performance evaluation of staff will form part of the Quality Assurance Regulation, according to Article 11. It is noted here that all activities of staff including teaching and research are to be evaluated, however the ET was only presented with forms (Lecturer self-evaluation form and Lecturer observation form) which demonstrate a strong emphasis on teaching performance and no indicators for research, community engagement or administrative tasks (see also Standard 7 and Recommendation 4). The ET evaluated all documents which it had direct access to, without exception. The forms presented exclusively highlight teaching evaluations. In the response to the draft report, the College notes that the Regulation on appointment, reappointment and promotion, contains all the relevant indicators and rubrics. However, the ET was only presented with this Regulation in Albanian and although it is



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referred to in the SER and subsequently, the College did not offer a translated version, nor did it provide the forms which result and are in use from the Regulation.

Whereas the information required for staff exists and is well detailed, the ET must note that it is contained in multiple documents rather than presented in one unified Handbook for staff and that this may generate some difficulty in finding the information and relating to it comprehensively.

Staff confirmed that when they were recruited, they received a detailed orientation allowing them to familiarize themselves with the institution and its services.

The staff currently employed possess the relevant qualifications for their respective roles, with only 4 out of 27 full-time members of staff not holding a PhD qualification. Three out of the 4 are PhD candidates. Eight part-time staff members have PhDs, 2 are PhD candidates and 2 hold master's degrees. There are 8 full professors across both full-time and part-time employment contracts.

The noted staff-student ratio is held at a maximum of 1 to 28. The ET was told that this ratio is closely monitored via the student admission and staff recruitment processes. The ET was provided with the following calculation: current enrolled students on all accredited programs are 720 while staff members are 39 according to the list supplied on request (evidence 27), which indicates a 1 to 18. The lower ration is explained by the fact that the College is currently in teach-out with its bachelor programmes as it awaits the results of its accreditation process, as such no academic year one was recruited to. The College has indicated that it intends to enroll 160 students in the first year and recruit 12 more members of staff to be able to continue to conform to an acceptable staff-student ratio. Importantly, the ET was told that lectures are organized with groups of 40 students and seminars with groups of 25 students and that electives will be run with very low numbers of students, as there is no financial restrictions on electives.



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Staff confirmed that the workload was acceptable and they had the chance to negotiate across areas of activities to main a good balance. Staff also found that they were well supported in taking leave and/or sabbaticals where they required time for development or research.

As noted above, performance evaluation is regulated via the Quality Assurance Regulations and includes, with evidence provided to the ET, a process of self-evaluation, peer/management evaluation and student evaluations. The ET saw the forms, but concluded that they were heavily calibrated towards teaching and not sufficiently covering research activities or any of the other activities any given staff member might be required to look after. As such the performance process did not appear comprehensive, but is conducted by collection of feedback from multiple sources, mainly on the teaching experience. Research requirements are made explicit in terms of promotions as the various academic posts requirements are detailed, but not in relation to annual appraisal processes. (see Standard 7 Recommendation 4) Students confirmed that they had access to the results of the evaluation process via analyses that were made public on the notifications board in the College hall. Students indicated that they did consult these and found that they aligned with the feedback that they had provided. Staff also confirmed that the process was helpful in setting development goals and that they individually considered what they could do to improve on their performance.

The College has indicated that less satisfactory performance results in training, monitoring and finally dismissal, if improvements are not satisfactory. The option for dismissal is made clear in the Statute, for both teaching and administrative roles. However, the ET noticed that not all staff have published to the required level and this would normally attract some disciplinary measures if research were contained more prominently in the performance appraisal processes. The College management is aware that more needs to be done in the area of research and is providing strong support. The ET believes it could be helpful to diversify training also towards publication approaches.

The list of trainings organised by Dardania College in the past three years is comprehensive and covers pedagogical, technological and domain-specific content. Out of 39 members of



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staff, 32 have been listed to have participated in the trainings organised, which demonstrates commitment to development agenda.

Staff indicated that training organised by the College were helpful in driving career opportunities, and noted that these could be easily supplemented with individual initiatives where they would identify opportunities themselves and seek approval from the College to fund their participation. A number of staff members confirmed they had successfully gained funding for conferences or trainings abroad which contributed positively to their teaching or research activities.

The College has presented the ET with a Staff Development Plan which clearly outlines budgetary allocations for development activities, including for the various centres and the “researcher of the year” award. However, this Plan does not set any strategic development directions nor is backed up by a detailed action plan which can give a clear sense of activities to be implemented short-, medium- and long-term. While the College has presented, on request via evidence 26, a list of workshops to be organised by the approval of the Quality Assurance Office, this is far from constituting a comprehensive approach to the planning of staff development and does not demonstrate that staff development is in any way geared in alignment with strategic goals set.

**Compliance level:** Substantially Compliant

**ET recommendations:**

- 1. Group all information relevant for staff in one place for increased accessibility.*
- 2. Diversify training opportunities with content related to publication approaches.*
- 3. Extend the Staff Development Plan with an explicit action plan that outlines key areas for strategic development and performance indicators to measure success.*



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## **2.9. Student administration and support services**

The College has established policies for the administration of students, which comply with the standards set by the Law on Higher Education, the College Statute, and the Regulations for BA and MA studies. Additionally, the College has developed support services to ensure the implementation of these policies.

Each academic year, the College provides specifications on enrolment criteria and requirements for accredited programs, required documentation, facility locations, application time period, and deadlines. The Student Affairs Office officials are knowledgeable about the student admission process and are available to provide advice to potential candidates throughout the admission process.

The College makes all necessary information regarding its programs and their requirements, administrative services, opportunities for academic support, study grants, tuition fees, administrative charges, and other pertinent information required for enrolment available to the public in both electronic and printed forms, including through a public call for application in electronic and print media.

The institution arranges a range of extensive activities to orientate high school graduates who are prospective students. The aim is to furnish them with necessary information on study programs, admission criteria, application requirements, forms of study subsidies, as well as the rights and responsibilities that they will acquire upon registration.

The College's Regulation of Studies [47] includes various financial measures to encourage and support students in their studies, including those facing financial hardship. The first category of students eligible for financial support are outstanding students in their first year of study, who are awarded a stipend. These students may continue to receive the stipend in subsequent years if they maintain their outstanding academic performance. The second category of eligible



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students includes those from families receiving social assistance from the Ministry of Work and Social Welfare, as well as families of martyrs and war invalids. The Office for Student Services of the college regularly monitors these students throughout their studies, following established timelines.

Students have the right to appeal disciplinary measures in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the relevant regulations. The regulations specify the criteria, reasons, and legal mechanisms for using the right to appeal at different levels. The appeals are reviewed by a commission consisting of relevant experts who are different from those involved in the previous level, in order to ensure fair and impartial treatment.

The services catering to students' rights are encompassed within several documents, namely the Law on Higher Education, the College Statute, Code of Ethics, and Regulations on Studies. The College creates a plan for enhancing student services based on internal evaluations of quality and subsequent findings. The implementation of the plan is closely monitored to ensure that services keep pace with dynamic changes.

A Career Office has been set up by the College to offer students appropriate resources for academic guidance, career planning, employment counselling, and psychological support services.

The College is focused on enhancing all aspects of student life, and has implemented several measures to facilitate their admission, provide them with accurate and relevant information, and offer support throughout their educational journey.

Despite efforts to improve student support, data collection remains an issue, hindering accurate assessment of student dropout and completion rates, and impeding proper monitoring.

While students are provided with improved resources such as booklets and regulations related to admission procedures and ethical behaviour, the College currently lacks adequate services





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and support for disabled students. Physical barriers such as stairs without elevators are also present and difficult to remove.

The MEST has identified the need for anti-plagiarism software, and the College is collaborating with other higher education institutions to offer such a program. Although there is no national anti-plagiarism program at the MEST, individual professors use an online tool available at [plagiarismcheck.com](http://plagiarismcheck.com) for their respective courses. The relevant regulations regarding a plagiarism check are in place, but it is a voluntary system so far. Therefore, it should be established that in the future all students' elaborations are automatically checked.

**Compliance level:** Substantially Compliant

**ET recommendations:**

- 1. Make plagiarism check a standard routine for all seminar papers, research proposals and bachelor/master theses.*
- 2. The conditions for disabled people should be improved. This should include installing at list one elevator, build access ramps and guiding paths and similar).*
- 3. Systematic collection of regular data on enrolment, progress, and completion, as well as corresponding measures of the student life cycle, is unfortunately still lacking on a full scale.*



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## 2.10. Learning resources and facilities

The College operates its educational and research activities in a conducive environment, situated in the heart of Prishtina's city centre. The College has got one building consisting of two annexes connected to each other. Despite the claims that the building was built purposely, it is fairly clear it was originally designed as a multifunctional building able to cater for a variety of purposes (eg. as a conference venue). As such, the premises lack some features typical for academic institutions.

Spanning across a total area of 4.800 square metres, and additional 400 square metres in the so-called "Qafa" Complex, the building provides a setting for teaching, learning, and research. It may be deemed that the premises are maintained, complying with Kosovo's health and safety legislation as they are furnished with equipment standard for such purposes. The College also boasts ample space, including two amphitheatres to host cultural events and other extracurricular activities.

According to the SER and the feedback received, in the near future, an enlargement of the office space available is planned for in the so-called Kodra e Trimave and Gërmia districts of Prishtina which are expected to provide an extra space of ca. 9.000 square metres. It is not however known whether these plans are yet another construction project of the College founder and its holding company, or a purposely built premises aimed at supporting College's strategic development. Moreover, as discussed in Section 2.2, the presented financial planning documents imply that the above mentioned construction projects are not a part of the strategies presented in this evaluation process.

The College Library offers physical books, journals, and other printed materials related to various study fields, available in both Albanian and English languages. These resources are organised and catalogued for easy access, and there is also an electronic library available. The



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library continuously expands its resources based on requests from academic staff to support course delivery in various programs.

The College facilitates access to internet resources via the Association of Electronic Libraries of Kosovo (ABEK), which can be accessed through computers. ABEK has made seven different providers' electronic sources available through a donation from EIFL.

As commented earlier, the College is planning to significantly expand its facilities in the near future, which is expected to enhance the quality of both student and academic life. While the College currently has an adequate number of lecture rooms and auditoriums that are equipped with basic technology, there is a need to improve the tele-teaching and conferencing options to better support internationalisation efforts.

During the on-site visit, some of the computers were very old, i.e. over 10 years old, which no longer corresponds to modern and adequate equipment.

In the rooms, it is noticeable that the tables and chairs are in a fixed seating arrangement facing forward towards the blackboard or projector. For example, the tables and chairs are connected to each other. A dynamic reorganisation of the seating arrangement during the event is not possible to enable group tables, discussions or group work. In a modern learning environment, the flexibility of the seating arrangement is therefore essential in order to be able to adapt to a situation.

Overall, the facilities at the college are clear to have been sparse. These include lack of practice rooms, only one or two rooms which may be considered as IT rooms but featuring rather outdated technology, no power outlets in the lecture rooms to enable student's use of their own laptops, no blinds on the windows to avoid glare when working on computers and others. In addition, access to the building is rather tight and does not allow any installations such as bicycle racks, parking spaces, or access ramps for disabled persons. The building also features narrow corridors and staircases which may raise some safety issues in cases of



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emergency. The only common room available to students is the cafeteria which is found unacceptable, especially given that the layout of the bar with bottles of alcoholic beverages being openly displayed may suggest alcohol is being served at the premises.

Staff facilities, such as staff cabinets and administration offices may also be considered rather small in size and as such, in some cases, unable to accommodate mentoring activities for more than a handful of students.

Finally, the library remains the weakest of the College facilities visited as it provides a very modest collection of books, limited access to journals, and features rather outdated working spaces. The library is operated by untrained staff which, coupled with the sparse bibliographic resources, generates significant adverse effects to the learning process as a whole, leaving students heavily reliant on teachers and outside sources for reading study materials and relevant literature.

**Compliance level:** Partially Compliant

**ET recommendations:**

- 1. Initiate the enhancement of conditions for students with disabilities, wheelchair accessibility should be provided at a minimum.*
- 2. Augment the quantity of physical resources in the library, available in both Albanian and English languages, and expand the online access to databases, research materials, and journals.*
- 3. Upgrade the IT infrastructure as computers that are over 10 years old are no longer considered adequate to underpin the academic processed. Typically, computers should be replaced after 5 to 6 years.*



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4. *The library requires modernisation and improved equipment.*
5. *The classrooms should be adapted to enable more flexible configurations of the seating layouts and to accommodate modern teaching techniques and practices.*
6. *Install smoke detectors in the toilets.*
7. *Promote teetotalism and ensure the cafeteria does not promote alcohol consumption in any shape or form.*
8. *Rearrange the layout of the ground floor such that to accommodate a common area for students and staff to meet, discuss and network on the expense of the cafeteria.*



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### **2.11. Institutional cooperation**

Although the College Strategic Plan covers to a certain degree issues having to do with cooperation and internationalisation, it may hardly be seen as providing a sound and merit-focused framework for College's stronger international footprint. As a result, the College has indeed closed partnerships with a number of renowned institutions and organisations different in size, ownership and operating sector, nevertheless, the majority of them do not participate in College operations in ways other than internships and mobility related activities. Moreover, it remains entirely unclear which guidelines are followed when choosing a partnering organisation. As such, concerns may be raised suggesting the majority of listed partnerships have not been a part of a well thought off strategy but rather a consequence of mere arbitrary undertaking of interested individuals. Thus, for instance, although the interviewed lecturers pointed out a cooperation with the University of Chicago as an illustration of College's internationalisation efforts, from the received evidence [84] it is clear that the given case is far from systematic planned academic undertaking that has been aligned with College strategic goals.

Indeed, internationalisation as a term exists in a number of College's official documents (eg. [50], [59]), however none of these documents provides information on the strongholds and/or portfolio of services and capacities of the College any cooperation would be benefiting from. As a result, as was the case with selecting which organisations to cooperate with, unclear strategic objectives as to the areas of College's desired excellence have led to a rather opportunistic practice in organising professional events too. As such, even though the College claims to have been involved in events like international conferences, projects and similar, the provided evidence [95] may hardly be seen as substantiating such claims beyond any doubts. It is hence deemed that some level of activity focused on College internationalisation has been accomplished, but the volume and magnitude of such activities was far from enough to make



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any significant impact on the College visibility, regardless of the impedance caused by Covid-19 pandemic.

As commented earlier, the College maintains practice in which its industry partners assist program delivery. This has been confirmed both by the feedbacks received from the undertaken interviews, as well as the documentation presented. However, regarding the former, all the interviewed partners confirmed they are more focused on operational execution of the programmes, rather than on participating in the work of structural units aimed at defining and monitoring College strategic development. The interviewees thus do not participate in the work of the Advisory Board even though this would be somewhat expected given the reputation of the companies they are coming from and the positions the interviewed representatives hold within them.

**Compliance level:** Partially Compliant

**ET recommendations:**

- 1. Define areas of specific business-relevant expertise and a portfolio of corresponding services College is able to provide to the industry partners. Promote the portfolio through different channels and keep the industry partners regularly informed on the most important breakthroughs.*
- 2. Define target institutions critical for meeting the key academic and research objectives of the College and, if needed, adjust the existing contractual documents such that to reflect on these expectations.*
- 3. Amend existing cooperation agreements such that to include clauses stimulating and governing partner activities of commercial nature.*



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- 4. Introduce incentivising mechanisms for academic staff to take more significant part in promoting College international visibility. Promote the start-up and spin-off way of thinking among the academics.*





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### 3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND JUDGEMENTS OF THE EXPERT TEAM

As shown above the compliance levels per general areas are:

General area (from the KAA manual)	Compliance level
1. Public mission and institutional objectives	Partially Compliant
2. Strategic planning, governance and administration	Partially Compliant
3. Financial planning and management	Partially Compliant
4. Academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability	Partially Compliant
5. Quality management	Partially Compliant
6. Learning and teaching	Partially Compliant
7. Research	Partially Compliant
8. Staff, employment processes and professional development	Substantially Compliant
9. Student administration and support services	Substantially Compliant
10. Learning resources and facilities	Partially Compliant
11. Institutional cooperation	Partially Compliant



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*The expert team considers that Dardania College Prishtina is “**Partially Compliant**” with the standards included in the KAA Accreditation manual and, therefore, recommends **not to accredit** the institution for now. The present report suggested a series of relevant recommendations that would bring the college closer to the KAA standards and these should be implemented by the college before another future request of accreditation is made.*

#### Expert Team


##### Chair

	<b>Dr Dražen Vrhovski</b>	<b>23.03.2023</b>
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

##### Member

	<b>Prof. dr. habil. Anca Greere</b>	<b>23.03.2023</b>
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

##### Member

	<b>Christopher Bohlens</b>	<b>23.03.2023</b>
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)