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Enhancing Scientific Research through External Quality Assurance Mechanisms

Thematic Analysis

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Thematic Analysis

Enhancing Scientific Research through External Quality Assurance (EQA) Mechanisms

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Kosovo Accreditation Agency, 2025

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Background and Purpose

Over the past two decades, Kosovo's higher education system has experienced considerable transformation, particularly in the development of external quality assurance (EQA) mechanisms aligned with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). Within this framework, scientific research has increasingly become a focus of evaluation, not only at the program level but also at the institutional level.

This thematic analysis seeks to assess the real impact of EQA mechanisms, particularly those implemented by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) on the development and strengthening of scientific research across higher education institutions (HEIs). The analysis moves beyond formal compliance and aims to understand how EQA processes influence research strategies, staff productivity, student engagement, number of publications and institutional support structures.

Methodology

The study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining:

1. **Document Analysis:**

   Review of over 60 accreditation and re-accreditation reports (2019–2024) across Bachelor (BSc), Master (MSc), and institutional evaluations for a representative sample of public and private HEIs.

2. Quantitative Survey:

A structured questionnaire sent to 16 HEIs gathered data on publication trends, funding, staff engagement, platforms used for publishing, and institutional support mechanisms.

The dual methodology allows for both comparative and trend analysis, evaluating the consistency of KAA standards implementation and their effectiveness in fostering a research-oriented culture.

Key Findings

1. Research Integration Varies by Level

MSc programs showed the highest level of compliance with KAA Research Standard Area[1], with clear improvements between two assessment cycles due to better documentation, such as Self-Evaluation Report, internal regulations, international cooperation, and structured research plans. BSc programs often remained partially compliant, with challenges in publication output and integration of research into teaching. Institutional-level assessments and re-assessments highlighted systemic issues such as the lack of dedicated research budgeting, underdeveloped infrastructure, and fragmented strategies.

2. Evaluation Gaps and Inconsistencies

Variations in compliance ratings of all the programs included in this analysis between the two accreditation cycles were noted, often due to inconsistent institutional documentation or evolving expert panel expectations. Identical institutions or programs sometimes received

[1] See Annex 2 Research Standard Area at Program and Institutional Levels

differing recommendations across cycles, indicating a need for a more harmonized evaluation framework.

3. Positive Impact of KAA Recommendations

All institutions surveyed reported that KAA's recommendations were useful, with many institutions taking concrete steps such as:

- Establishing research units (offices);
- Installing anti-plagiarism software;
- Allocating funds for publications;
- Encouraging student participation in research.

4. Research Output Is Increasing, but Progress Varies

The total number of scientific publications increased steadily from 2021 to 2024, especially in indexed journals like SCOPUS and Web of Science. However, major disparities remain between institutions in terms of funding, staff capacity, and access to databases.

5. Systemic Challenges Remain

Key barriers include:

- Lack of research funding;
- Insufficient access to journals and digital platforms;
- Low investment in research capacity development and infrastructure.

Recommendations

1. Revise the assessment methodology/guidelines for the Research Standard Area

Establish a unified and consistent approach to evaluating the Research standard area across all levels: Bachelor, Master, and institutional. A common monitoring framework should be developed that uses shared indicators and ensures vertical coherence between institutional policies and program-level implementation. This would allow for more accurate benchmarking, reduce subjective interpretation, and support fairer, more comparable assessments.

2. Strengthen and Institutionalize the Follow-Up Process on Recommendations

The Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) initiated a follow-up process on expert panel recommendations starting in 2024, marking an important step toward ensuring post-accreditation accountability. However, this process is still in its early stages and requires broader application, greater consistency, and formal integration into institutional reporting cycles. To build on this momentum, KAA should:

- Require all accredited institutions to report systematically on the implementation of recommendations on the program and institutional levels;
- Integrate follow-up reporting into annual quality reports or designated mid-cycle review mechanisms;
- Use this data to inform decision-making by the State Council of Quality (SCQ) and future evaluation cycles.

3. Strengthen Institutional Support

Incentivize the establishment of research offices, provide structured research funding schemes, and promote international collaborations. Many institutions still lack dedicated research units or functioning support structures for managing grants, publication tracking, and international cooperation. To address this, evaluation panels should place greater emphasis not just on the existence of policies, but on the actual functionality and outcomes of research offices. Accreditation should reward institutions that demonstrate:

- Clear institutional ownership of research (dedicated staff, budget lines, responsibilities);
- Effective internal grant management mechanisms;
- Evidence of international partnerships resulting in publications or project funding;

4. Improve Data Transparency and Documentation in Research Reporting

A recurring issue is the inconsistent and incomplete documentation of research activities across accreditation and re-accreditation reports. KAA should support the development of institutional research information systems, digital platforms where academic staff and research units can upload and update their outputs (publications, projects, collaborations). These platforms would:

- Improve data quality and transparency during evaluations;
- Reduce dependence on manually collected data or incomplete CVs;
- Help institutions monitor and analyze their own progress toward strategic research goals.

5. Strengthen Institutional Policy Coordination

Many challenges faced by HEIs, such as access to international databases, funding gaps, or unclear criteria for accepted journals, cannot be resolved by institutions alone. There is a strong need for better alignment between KAA, Ministry of Education, Science Technology and Innovation (MEST) and other bodies. This includes:

- Harmonizing definitions of recognized journals and impact metrics;
- Coordinating national research funding with the research-related requirements and focus areas outlined in accreditation standards.;
- Providing joint guidance on ethical standards, academic promotion, and research commercialization.

Conclusion

Kosovo's higher education institutions have made notable progress in strengthening scientific research. Increased publication activity, greater participation in international platforms such as SCOPUS and Web of Science, and the gradual improvement of research support systems all indicate positive institutional shifts.

In parallel, the evolving external quality assurance (EQA) processes introduced by KAA particularly the integration of the research standard area into accreditation procedures have played a significant role in shaping these changes. KAA's evaluation practices have encouraged institutions to place more emphasis on research outputs, quality, and international visibility.

Despite these developments, progress remains fragile. Gaps in consistency across evaluations, limited infrastructure, and uneven

research support persist. Strengthening the connection between EQA mechanisms and institutional research development will be essential to sustaining these gains and further aligning Kosovo with European standards for research excellence.

Section I
Context and Rationale

Over the past two decades, higher education in Kosovo has undergone a profound transformation. This process has not been merely technical or administrative but has often reflected deeper internal tensions regarding institutional identity, mission clarity, and the role of academic staff in shaping the future of higher education. At the heart of this journey has been quality assurance—not as a tool of control, but as a mechanism for building public trust, promoting accountability, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement among students, staff, and institutions.

Among the key components of academic quality, scientific research stands out as both the core mission of universities and the main driver of academic reputation. However, the reality across many higher education institutions in Kosovo remains challenging: underfunded research environments, limited access to international networks, fragmented internal strategies, and insufficient alignment between teaching missions and research goals. While quality assurance processes have become more robust, a central question remains:

To what extent, and in what ways, are external quality assurance mechanisms actually supporting and enhancing the development of scientific research?

In recent years, the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) has aligned its procedures with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). Within this framework, the "Research" standard area has become one of the most critical elements in both institutional and programmatic evaluations. The introduction of this standard area by KAA reflects an interpretation of ESG that emphasizes the link between education and research, ensuring that research activities contribute directly to teaching quality, curriculum development, and student learning outcomes. While ESG focuses on these connections, the KAA's approach also draws from broader European trends, such as those

promoted under the European Research Area (ERA) and the Bologna Process, which position research excellence as an integral component of higher education reform and international competitiveness.

This dual focus allows the KAA to both comply with ESG's emphasis on integrating research into the teaching and learning process and to incorporate additional benchmarks from European research policy frameworks. By doing so, KAA ensures that institutional and programmatic evaluations not only assess how research enhances educational quality but also encourage alignment with international standards for research performance, visibility, and impact.

However, there remains a notable gap in understanding how these evaluations are translating into tangible improvements in research performance at the institutional level. Therefore, this study offers a multi-layered analysis that includes the review of accreditation and re-accreditation reports, the comparative evaluation of the KAA's Research standard as applied at both institutional and study program levels, and the collection of quantitative data through a structured questionnaire. The aim is not simply to assess compliance with the KAA's research-related requirements, but to explore whether quality assurance mechanisms are fostering the conditions, incentives, and structures needed to grow a meaningful research culture.

The relevance of this study is heightened by the increasing expectations placed on higher education institutions to produce scientific output, engage in international collaboration, and contribute to national development priorities. As such, its findings are designed to support not only academic institutions, but also policy makers and stakeholders seeking to strengthen Kosovo's research ecosystem.

Purpose

This study aims to uncover the real role that external quality assurance mechanisms play in encouraging, evaluating, and strengthening scientific research. This perspective looks beyond what is stated in formal

documents or assessment reports and focuses on how these mechanisms are reflected in daily academic and institutional practices.

In this context, it is important to highlight that the KAA has built its evaluation system in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). ESG primarily emphasizes the link between education and research, ensuring that research activities contribute to teaching quality and student learning. The KAA has interpreted and expanded this approach by introducing a dedicated Research standard. This standard stands out as one of the most significant among the Accreditation Standards. It aims to reinforce the role of research within higher education while also drawing on broader European trends and benchmarks for research excellence.

Therefore, this analysis focuses specifically on how the Research standard area has been evaluated during the institutional and study program reviews by KAA—examining the evaluation process, the level of compliance, the recommendations provided, and most importantly, the consequences and effectiveness of these evaluations in enhancing research practices within higher education institutions. Through this lens, the study seeks to provide a realistic and evidence-based understanding of how external quality assurance contributes to the development of research, not just in theory but in real academic life.

The focus of this analysis is on examining how research has been integrated into accreditation standards by KAA, how the Research standard area has been interpreted and implemented by the institutions, and how it has been assessed by external experts at two key levels during accreditation and re-accreditation cycles:

1. At the institutional level, where strategies, funding, and support structures should be in place;
2. At the program level, where through CVs, publications, and other scientific activity, the staff reflects their research engagement.

Additionally, this analysis offers a valuable comparison between public and private institutions, aiming to understand not only the quality of outcomes but also the institutional capacity to build a research-oriented culture.

The objectives of this analysis are:

1. To provide an overview of the QA system in Kosovo, with a particular focus on how research is positioned within it;
2. To assess how the KAA's accreditation standards at both institutional and program levels incorporate and reflect criteria related to research, and to examine how these standards support or limit the development of research, drawing on findings and recommendations from (re) accreditation reports.
3. To offer targeted recommendations for improving research capacities and performance in the field of higher education in Kosovo.

Key questions for this analysis include:

- What is the current state of the higher education system and quality assurance mechanisms in Kosovo, particularly with regard to research?
- How has research output evolved in recent years?
- To what extent do institutional accreditation standards effectively address research-related criteria, and how does this compare with assessments at the program level?
- Are there noticeable differences in the implementation of research-related standards between bachelor's and master's programs?

Methodology

This thematic analysis has been developed using a combined methodological approach, which includes both document analysis and quantitative analysis. The aim of this methodological approach is to provide a thorough and comprehensive assessment of the impact of quality assurance mechanisms on scientific research within higher education institutions in Kosovo. The scope of this analysis covers the evaluation of scientific research within the broader framework of quality assurance in higher education in Kosovo, with a focus on the period from 2020 to 2024.

1. Document Analysis

As part of this methodology, an in-depth review was conducted of final accreditation and re-accreditation reports, encompassing a broad and representative selection of higher education institutions and study programs in Kosovo. The analysis covered both Bachelor (BSc) and Master (MSc) level programs, with 22 BSc programs and 23 MSc programs examined across two evaluation cycles—initial accreditation and subsequent re-accreditation.

In addition to program-level evaluations, 15 institutional accreditation reports (covering both public and private institutions) were also thoroughly analyzed.

The goal was to compare how the “Research” standard area is addressed at both institutional and program levels and to explore how its interpretation and application may vary between the two levels and over time. This comprehensive approach enabled a comparative analysis across institutions, between program and institutional evaluations, and across different accreditation cycles.

The analysis was deliberately deep and detailed and aimed to uncover patterns, trends, and deviations in the assessment of research. Special attention was paid to:

- The evaluation of the "Research" standard area in accreditation and re-accreditation reports;
- The nature and focus of recommendations made by expert panels;
- The consistency or variation in judgments across different evaluation cycles;
- The extent to which program-level review outcomes align with those of the respective institutional reviews.

Compliance Scale Used in the Analysis

The assessment of higher education institutions and/or study programs by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) is based on a four-level compliance scale[2]:

1. Fully compliant;
2. Substantially compliant;
3. Partially compliant;
4. Non-compliant

In this thematic analysis, the comparison between accreditation and re-accreditation cycles is based on how programs and institutions were rated on this scale for the Research standard area. This allows for the identification of shifts in compliance, patterns of improvement or decline, and the relationship between panel recommendations and actual outcomes.

[2] See Annex 1 Methodological Framework and Compliance Scale

Classification of Recommendations

In order to analyze the recommendations in a systematic way, a classifier for areas of recommendations was developed through the analysis of the most recurring themes found in the evaluation reports. This process involved identifying, grouping, and categorizing recommendations into thematic areas, enabling a more structured comparison across institutions, programs, and accreditation cycles. This approach provides deeper insight into recurring issues and priority areas for improvement in research-related practices.

2. Quantitative Data Analysis

In addition to the document analysis, a structured questionnaire was developed to collect and process supplementary data that are not directly reflected in the official accreditation and re-accreditation reports. This instrument aimed to generate quantitative and qualitative insights into the real state of scientific research across institutions and constitutes the third section of this study.

The questionnaire[3] was distributed to 22 higher education institutions in Kosovo, of which 16 responded. These represent a substantial share of the total institutions operating in the country. The survey focused on several core areas, including the volume and nature of scientific publications, institutional support mechanisms, the perceived impact of external quality assurance processes, and challenges and needs faced by institutions. Specifically, it gathered data on:

- The number of scientific publications per academic year (2020–2024), including publications with international co-authors, those supported by grants, and those published in journals with an Impact Factor;

[3] Annex 3 Questioner for HEIs

- Trends in publication output over the past three years, along with contributing or hindering factors (e.g., internal research policies, KAA standards, involvement in international projects, academic promotion criteria);
- The platforms where academic work is published (e.g., Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, Academia.edu, Research Gate);
- The estimated percentage of publications appearing in indexed journals;
- The dominant scientific fields in which these publications are concentrated, etc.

In addition, the questionnaire explored the institutional infrastructure and support for research, including:

- Existence of internal strategies for research development;
- Availability of dedicated institutional funding for research, and average annual funding amounts;
- Presence of internal units or research councils;
- Mechanisms to encourage research activity (e.g., incentives, promotion systems, academic recognition).

The fourth section of the questionnaire focused on the impact of the accreditation process on research practices. Respondents were asked to assess:

- The degree to which external quality assurance (specifically by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency) has influenced research development;
- Whether institutional or programmatic accreditation reports included recommendations for research enhancement;
- Whether any concrete actions were taken in response to such recommendations.

Finally, institutions were invited to reflect on the main challenges hindering research advancement—such as lack of funding, access to journals, or absence of research training—and to identify specific forms of support needed from the Kosovo Accreditation Agency or other national stakeholders to strengthen their research capacities.

Development of Quality Assurance Mechanisms in Relation to Scientific Research in Higher Education in Kosovo: Practices and Comparative Analysis

Over the past two decades, Kosovo has made significant progress in reforming and developing its higher education system. At the core of this progress lies the establishment and consolidation of quality assurance mechanisms, particularly through the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA). With efforts to align with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), both internal and external quality assurance processes have become increasingly sophisticated and impactful.

Scientific research, as a core function of higher education institutions, plays a decisive role in academic quality, national development, and international recognition. However, its integration into Kosovo's external quality assurance (EQA) framework is still in progress. While progress has been made in evaluating teaching quality and the effectiveness of administrative processes against pre-defined accreditation criteria, the development of research capacity within institutions continues to be hindered by limited infrastructure, insufficient funding, and unstable institutional capacities.

The Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA), established in 2004, is the national institution responsible for external quality assurance. KAA operates as an independent regulatory agency and holds the mandate to accredit higher education institutions and academic programs, evaluate institutional performance, and promote a culture of quality through standardized procedures and periodic evaluations.

KAA's procedures are based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015), ensuring alignment with international best practices. KAA carries out the accreditation and re-accreditation process of institutions and programs (every 3–5 years), as well as continuous monitoring. The State Council of Quality (SCQ) sets the accreditation standards, establishes the corresponding evaluation criteria, makes decisions on accreditations, and gives final approval to reports and recommendations. KAA's quality assurance mechanisms foresee the evaluation of scientific research against these standards at both the institutional and program levels.

At the institutional level, quality assurance standards require higher education institutions (HEIs) to:

- Demonstrate a clear research strategy aligned with their mission and national priorities.
- Provide evidence of staff engagement in scientific research, including participation in conferences and publications in peer-reviewed scientific journals.
- Maintain institutional support mechanisms for research (e.g., research offices, funding schemes, partnerships).
- Regularly track and report research outcomes, including scientific publications, patents, and collaborative projects.

At the program level, standards related to scientific research are addressed more indirectly. While the primary focus is on the program itself, staff qualifications, and learning outcomes, it is expected that academic staff are engaged in relevant research within their field. KAA utilizes both quantitative and qualitative indicators to assess the scientific research of programs, including:

- The number of peer-reviewed publications per staff member.
- Participation in funded projects.
- Availability of infrastructure and services supporting research.

- Institutional policies promoting academic integrity and research ethics.

Evaluation panels, composed of international experts, assess these indicators during the program accreditation process. This analysis compares how these evaluations were conducted across the two accreditation cycles, accreditation and re-accreditation, and examines the resulting assessment outcomes for the same programs that have undergone both cycles. The aim is to identify evaluation approaches, the depth of analysis, and the outcomes for the relevant standards and indicators in each case and conclude on the consistency.

Section II

Comparative Analysis of the Assessment of the "Research" Standard

This section presents a comparative analysis of how the "Research" standard area by KAA has been evaluated across two accreditation cycles (accreditation and re-accreditation) for a selected group of study programs, as well as the evaluation of the "Research" standard area in relation to institutional accreditation. The primary objective is to analyze the approach used by the evaluation panels and the consistency in the interpretation and application of the standard's requirements, in order to identify improvements, discrepancies, or developments in practice.

The analysis covers a total of 21 study programs and 8 higher education institutions. For each program and institution, the reports from both accreditation and re-accreditation cycles were reviewed, resulting in the analysis of 22 BSc program reports, 23 MSc program reports, 15 institutional reports and 60 reports in total. The focus was on examining how the "Research" standard area was addressed, with particular attention to the consistency of assessment, the approaches taken by evaluation panels, and the depth of analysis across cycles with emphasis on:

- The assessments for each program's "Research" standard area;
- The assessments for "Research" standard area in each institutional accreditation;
- Compliance with the standard's requirements by programs and institutions;
- Changes in comments and recommendations between the two evaluations (accreditation and re-accreditation);
- Approach used by the panels in evaluating evidence and documentation.

For the sake of transparency and to maintain a neutral and objective approach, the higher education institutions included in this analysis have

been assigned coded identifiers such as: HEI-Pu1, HEI-Pr2, HEI-Pu3, and HEI-Pr4. The abbreviation "Pu" refers to public institutions, while "Pr" refers to private institutions. This coding method has been applied to avoid any potential bias and to keep the focus of the analysis on the content and outcomes of the evaluations, without directly identifying the respective institutions.

Assessment of the Research Standard Area – HEI-Pu1 – BSc

This section contains a comparative analysis of the evaluations conducted by expert panels during the accreditation of programs across two accreditation cycles (2021 and 2024) at the BSc level of the institution HEI-Pu1. The analysis focuses on Standard Area 6 (Research) and includes differences in assessments, compliance with the standard as well as comments and recommendations from the expert panels for each indicator.

Standard (indicators)	Evaluation 2021	Evaluation 2024	Difference in Compliance	Differences in Comments/Recommendations
6.1	B	B	No change	Lack of clear objectives for the program in both years; mention of insufficient financial and logistical support
6.2	B	B	No change	Inclusion is emphasized in the documents, but details are lacking and implementation remains unclear.
6.3	A	A	No change	Regulations exist in both years; no change.

6.4	B	B	No change	Difficulty in verifying data in 2024; lack of a complete list of publications.
6.5	A	B	Decline	Lower evaluation in 2024 due to the absence of a complete list of publications
6.6	B	—	No clear evaluation	No complete evaluation in 2024; lack of information in the SER
6.7	B	C	Decline	Significant decline; the list of publications is incomplete and unformatted, raising concerns about quality
6.8	A	A	No change	Full compliance in both years.
6.9	B	B	No change	Evaluation based on interviews; potential for improvement remains.
6.10	A	A	No change	In both years, the law is mentioned; in 2024, the impact of artificial intelligence is also noted.
6.11	B	B	No change	No documented evidence, but involvement is mentioned by students in both years.

Table 1. Comparative Evaluation of Research Standard Area Compliance

Based on the comparative analysis of the research standard area for the accreditation cycles of 2021 and 2024, several significant differences are observed in terms of documentation, and the quality of the information presented, and subsequently, the evaluation. In both years, the lack of clear, specific research objectives for the program, as well as insufficient financial and logistical support, is emphasized. Although institutional policies regarding staff involvement in research are present, shortcomings in practical implementation and documentation of activities are evident in both cycles.

In 2024, a decline in evaluation was observed in several indicators, particularly in Standards 6.5 and 6.7, due to the lack of complete and structured lists of publications, as well as concerns regarding the quality of the reported sources. The evaluation of the standard for individual publications has dropped from "B" to "C," indicating a failure to meet the standard for the average annual publications per staff member.

Comparison of Expert Recommendations for HEI Pu1 – BSc

The following table presents a comparative summary of the recommendations provided by expert panels during the accreditation cycles of 2021 and 2024. The table identifies areas where recommendations have been repeated, as well as those newly introduced in 2024. This analysis serves to highlight institutional progress and the recurrence of weaknesses that require sustained attention.

Area of Recommendation	Recommendations 2021	Recommendations 2024
Individual research plans	Yes	Yes
Documentation of publications	No	Yes
Scientific competence and citation	Yes	No
Student involvement in research	Yes	Yes

Inclusion of early-career researchers	Yes	No
International engagement and cooperation with industry	No	Yes
Minimum number of publications	No	Yes

Table 2. Summary of Expert Panel Comments and Recommendations on Research Standard

Comparative Analysis of the Research Standard Area Assessment – HEI Pu1 – MSc

This section contains a comparative analysis of the evaluation of the Standard Area 6 during the accreditation process of MSc-level programs, between two accreditation cycles (2021 and 2024) for the same institution (HEI-Pu1). The analysis focuses on Research standard area (6) and includes differences in assessment, compliance with standards, as well as the comments and recommendations from expert panels for each indicator.

The table below summarizes the evaluations according to the indicators, changes in compliance with the standards, and the experts' comments and recommendations for each indicator.

Standard(indicators)	Evaluation 2021	Evaluation 2024	Difference in Compliance	Differences in Comments/Recommendations
6.1	C	B	Improvement	From a clear lack of objectives and support, in 2024, awareness and some financial efforts are noted, but clear

				forecasts remain absent.
6.2	B	A	Improvement	From a lack of transparency in 2021 to a positive perception of transparency and awareness in 2024.
6.3	A	A		Policies defined in both years.
6.4	B	A	Improvement	From weak evidence and unprepared CVs in 2021, in 2024, higher quality is mentioned and classification by impact factors is requested.
6.5	B	A	Improvement	From a moderate evaluation in 2021 to a clear presentation of scientific activities in CVs in 2024.
6.6	B	A	Improvement	From general mention in 2021 to a special focus on FAV engagement and high performance in 2024.
6.7	B	B	No change	Partial compliance in both years, but in 2024 the need for

				standard adherence by all is emphasized.
6.8	A	A	No change	The standard is fulfilled in both years according to checks in Google Scholar and SCOPUS.
6.9	B	A	Improvement	From potential for improvement in 2021 to the expert team believing the curriculum reflects research in 2024.
6.10	A	A	No Change	The same legal support mentioned in both years.
6.11	B	A	Improvement	From lack of evidence in 2021 to mandatory engagement in 2024.

Table 3. Comparative Evaluation of Research Standard Compliance (2021-2024)

Comparison of Expert Recommendations – HEI Pu1 – MSc

In the 2021 cycle, the recommendations focused primarily on improving staff competencies in scientific writing and the need for greater student involvement in research. The lack of structured CVs and the absence of verifiable data on publications were among the main concerns highlighted by the expert panel.

In 2024, the focus of the recommendations had shifted toward strengthening systemic mechanisms for research development. These

included securing additional funding for the program, improving the quality of publication presentation through impact factor evaluation, and meeting the standard of at least one publication per year for each staff member. This indicates a transition from operational recommendations to addressing structural and strategic issues.

While some of the recommendations from 2021 are not repeated in the 2024 reports, the progress made by the institution indicates that these earlier recommendations have been addressed, at least in part. The 2024 recommendations are clearer, measurable, and results-oriented, reflecting a positive development in the institution's approach to scientific research. For more details, see the table below.

Area of Recommendation	2021 Recommendations	2024 Recommendations
Scientific writing and correct citation	Yes	No
Student involvement in research	Yes	No
Securing research funding	No	Yes
Quality and presentation of publications	No	Yes
Meeting publication standards by staff	No	Yes

Table 4. Summary of Expert Panel Comments and Recommendations on Research Standard (2021-2024)

Comparative Analysis of Research Standard Area Evaluation – Institutional Accreditation – HEI Pu1

This section provides a comparative analysis of the evaluation of the research standard across the period of institutional accreditation (2020–2025) and the accreditation of two study programs (BSc and MSc) in the years 2021 and 2024 for the institution HEI Pu1. The analysis focuses on the level of compliance with the Standard 6, expert commentary, and

recommendations for improvement. Below is a summary comparison of findings for the three evaluation objects:

Area of evaluation	BSc (2021 and 2024)	MSc (2021 and 2024)	Institutional (2020–2025)
Research Focus	Limited to document-based evidence, with insufficient supporting materials and an absence of comprehensive inventories or datasets; stable or declining evaluations in several indicators	Significant improvement in most indicators; efforts toward systemic inclusion and better documentation.	Unclear strategy; research presented as a priority but without real support; lack of transparency in funding and administrative structures.
Summary assessment	Partially compliant; weaknesses noted in indicators 6.5 and 6.7.	Overall improvement; shift from "B" to "A" in most indicators.	Evaluated as partially compliant; lack of clear budget allocation and performance indicators.
Support Structures	Lack of clarity regarding institutional	Commitment from HEI mentioned,	Absence of a university-level research office;

	support for research.	along with efforts for improved structuring.	recommendation to establish a support structure for international projects.
Publications as Evidence of Research Performance	Issues with the quality and formatting of publication lists; lack of verification.	Improved quality and presentation of publications; classification by impact factor mentioned.	Increase in the number of international publications, but lack of annual evaluation indicators for staff.
Staff and Student Participation	Mentioned, but with doubts about effectiveness and lack of documentation.	Evidence of increasing involvement of students and young researchers in research activities.	Staff participation noted through international networks, but staff still perceived primarily as “teaching” rather than “research” personnel.

Table 5. Comparison of Compliance and Commentaries

The institutional evaluation provides a broader and more in-depth view of the institution's overall research capacity, highlighting systemic shortcomings such as the lack of a clear strategy, the absence of budget allocation, and the lack of necessary support structures. The MSc program demonstrates significant improvements between 2021 and 2024, reflecting efforts to enhance both the quality and documentation of research activities.In contrast, the BSc program shows

limited stability and even some regressions in evaluations, particularly concerning the documentation of publications and compliance with standards for research productivity.

Compared to the institutional evaluation, both programs share common challenges, such as the absence of clearly defined research objectives and documented support. However, the institutional assessment adds depth by identifying gaps in budget allocation, the preparation of support staff, and the establishment of performance indicators for research evaluation.

Evaluation Level	Year 2021	Year 2024	Overall Compliance Assessment
BSc Program	Partially compliant	Partially compliant, with regression in some indicators	Partially compliant
MSc Program	Partially compliant	Mostly compliant	Mostly compliant
Institution	-	2020-2025 (five year period of accreditation)	Partially compliant

Table 6. Comparison of Compliance with the “Research” Standard Area

The BSc program remains at the “Partially Compliant” level across both accreditation cycles, showing a tendency toward deterioration in 2024 due to incomplete documentation of publications and questionable

quality of some sources. The standard of one publication per staff member per year is not met. The MSc program, on the other hand, shows considerable progress between 2021 and 2024, reaching the level of "Substantially Compliant." This improvement is attributed to a clearer structure of evidence, enhanced staff CVs, and classification of publications based on impact factor. The institutional evaluation reveals systemic shortcomings that directly affect compliance with the "Research" standard. Despite improvements in the number of international publications, the lack of dedicated research budgeting, performance indicators, and support structures results in the institution being rated as "Partially Compliant."

The research standard evaluation for the MSc program was assessed as "Substantially Compliant", whereas the same standard at the institutional level was rated as "Partially Compliant." This discrepancy clearly indicates that research engagement and outcomes are more structured, better documented, and better supported at the program level than at the institutional level. In the case of the MSc program, the self-assessment documents and supporting evidence present a range of concrete research activities, including publications, student involvement in projects, financial support for research, and clear policies for academic development.

Research Standard Area Evaluation – HEI Pr2, BSc

This section contains a comparative analysis of the evaluations conducted by field experts during the accreditation of the BSc program at HEI-Pr2 in 2022 and 2025. The analysis focuses on "Research" Standard (6) and highlights differences in evaluation, compliance with the standards, as well as expert panel comments and recommendations for each indicator.

Indicators	2022 Evaluation	2025 Evaluation	Change in Compliance	Differences in Comments/Recommendations
6.1	C	B	Improvement	From a lack of financial support and limited engagement, in 2025 there is evidence of clear integration with the mission and the provision of practical operational support, such as facilities, equipment, and administrative assistance for research activities.

6.2	B	A	Improvement	Ongoing staff involvement in research with expanded financial and professional support.
6.3	B	A	Improvement	Improvement in institutional policies and increased international collaboration.
6.4	B	A	Improvement	Better alignment of research with teaching; direct integration into the curriculum.
6.5	C	B	Improvement	More structured publications; conference participation noted, but limited experience in externally funded or contract-based research activities (e.g., EU-funded projects, etc.)

6.6	C	B	Improvement	Introduction of validation and technology transfer mechanisms, though more evidence is needed.
6.7	C	B	Improvement	Increase in staff publications, but still below the institutional target.
6.8	A	A	No change	Staff publications under the institution's name; full compliance.
6.9	B	A	Improvement	Effective integration of research into teaching, confirmed through interviews.
6.10	C	B	Improvement	Improvements in intellectual property structures and functioning of the Technology Transfer Center (TTC).

6.11	B	B	No change	Moderate student involvement in research; low numbers but acceptable for the BSc level.

Table 7. Comparative Evaluation of Research Standard Compliance

Comparison of Expert Recommendations – HEI Pr2, BSc Program

The recommendations provided during the first evaluation (2022) for the BSc program were primarily corrective and documentation-focused, aiming to address gaps related to research funding planning, formal representation of staff in projects, and the need for basic structures for reporting publications and academic profiles. At this stage, the expert panel adopted a reactive approach, with the goal of encouraging the institution to lay the groundwork for a culture of academic research and institutional representation.

In the 2025 re-accreditation, the evaluation reaches a more advanced level, reflecting an enhancement of the institution's strategic capacity. The 2025 recommendations are oriented toward sustainable development and long-term impact. They include the establishment of specialized research centers, the structuring of mechanisms for research commercialization, strengthening collaboration with industry, and the systematic inclusion of early-career staff in the academic advancement process. This transition signifies a shift from building basic institutional capacity to implementing a strategic research agenda, aimed at research excellence. The evolution between the two cycles reflects the institution's growing awareness of scientific research as a pillar for the sustainable development of the program and its relevance in both the academic and industrial markets.

Recommendation Area	2022 Recommendations	2025 Recommendations
Financial Planning for Research	Detailed planning of research funds – sources, amounts, and allocation	Expansion of participation in international funding and increased internal support
Project Documentation and Staff Involvement	Publication of project lists and staff participation	Establishment of a research center focused on robotics, AI, and specialized projects
Evidence of Publications	Summary of key publications from the past 5 years for each staff member	Structuring and categorization of publications for greater effectiveness
Staff Profiles on Research Platforms	Creation/updating of Google Scholar profiles for all staff	Support for mentoring and publication in high-impact journals
Incentive System for Research Excellence	Creation of a reward system for high-quality publications	Annual awards for best staff publications – starting from June 2026
Participation in Scientific Conferences	Encouragement to attend international conferences (with attention to visa limitations)	Increased engagement in international events and consolidation of international academic presence

Table 8. Summary of Expert Panel Comments and Recommendations on "Research" Standard (2022 – 2025)

Evaluation of the Research Standard Area– HEI-Pr2, MSc Program

This section presents a detailed comparison of compliance with research standards and the recommendations provided by experts for the Master's program at HEI–Pr2, based on the 2022 and 2025 evaluations. The comparison aims to highlight progress, changes in the institution's approach to research, and the deepening of expert analysis regarding research quality, student involvement, and the integration of international and industrial collaborations. The first table presents the compliance evaluation for each indicators, while the second table outlines the differences in recommendations given across the two cycles.

Standard (Indicators)	2022 Evaluation	2025 Evaluation	Change in Compliance	Comments / Clarifications
6.1	C	A	Significant improvement	From unclear resources and lack of detailed planning in 2022 to a clear structure and strong institutional support in 2025.
6.2	B	A	Improvement	From minimal engagement in 2022 to structured

				support, with allocated funding and time for research in 2025.
6.3	B	A	Improvement	From lack of clear policies to support for broad national and international collaborations.
6.4	C	B	Improvement	From limited field-related activities in 2022 to evident improvements in 2025, though not fully implemented across all staff.
6.5	C	B	Improvement	From low publication activity to increased participation in conferences

				and journals, though partial gaps remain.
6.6	C	B	Improvement	From the absence of validation structures to improvement through participation in projects and consulting initiatives.
6.7	C	C	No change	Achieving the standard of one publication per year per staff member remains a challenge.
6.8	B	B	No change	Publications under the institution's name remain consistent.
6.9	B	B	No change	Intellectual property policies exist but are not yet

				fully developed.
6.10	B	A	Improvement	From limited student involvement in 2022 to strong support for student publications and mentoring in 2025.

Table 10. Comparative Evaluation of Research Standard Area Compliance

Area of evaluation	2022	2022 – Content	2025	2025 – Content
Research Funding Planning	Yes	Planning mentioned but not detailed	Yes	Require detailed and transparent planning for research funding
High-Impact Publications	Yes	Require an average of 1 publication per year per staff member	Yes	Set a minimum number of quality publications per year with clear categorization by impact factor
Mentoring and Co-authorship with Students	Yes	Mentioned in general terms	Yes	Establish structured mentoring and co-authorship processes

				between students and staff
CVs and Document Standardization	Yes	Require detailed and unified CVs	No	Not emphasized in 2025
Staff Mobility	Yes	Require international mobility for early-career staff	No	Not emphasized in 2025
International Collaborations	Yes	Mentioned without specific targets	Yes	Require broad involvement in Erasmus+, Horizon, and similar international programs
Improvement of MSc Theses	No	–	Yes	Require use of top-tier journal literature and strong research methodology
Integration of Research into Teaching	No	–	Yes	Require course content to be updated regularly with recent research findings

Table 11. Comparison of Expert Recommendations for the Years (2022 and 2025)

An analysis of the two evaluations for the MSc program at HEI–Pr2 (2022 and 2025) reveals a shift from basic recommendations focused on meeting minimum research standards toward more structured, concrete, and quality-oriented recommendations by 2025. The 2022 evaluation highlighted gaps in planning, inconsistency in publications, and insufficient staff engagement in academic and international mobility. By contrast, the 2025 evaluation noted clear progress in aligning the program with the institution's research objectives, with a strong emphasis on

integrating research into teaching, involving students, and enhancing collaboration with industry. However, the 2025 expert panel's recommendations also indicate that, while the overall structure of the program has improved, further steps are needed to institutionalize a research culture, enhance the quality of publications, and strengthen the connection between staff and global research agendas. This reflects rising expectations and a more in-depth assessment in the second cycle, which focuses not only on compliance but also on performance and long-term impact.

Comparative Analysis of the Research Standard Area Evaluation – Institutional Accreditation, HEI–Pr2

This analysis compares research standard area evaluations for the Bachelor and Master programs at HEI–Pr2 with those conducted at the institutional level in 2019 and 2022, as well in2022and2025. The aim is to assess consistency, progress, or stagnation in meeting research standards across both programmatic and institutional levels, and to identify areas requiring further improvement.

Recommendation Area	BSc & MSc Programs	Institutional Accreditation 2019	Institutional Accreditation 2022
Research Strategy	Structured according to field and study cycle.	Broad objectives but lacks measurable indicators of progress.	Focused on three priority sectors, but limited to the year 2021.
Staff Involvement	Staff involved individually with clear publication obligations.	Staff expected to publish annually (2 per year).	Research output linked to academic promotion and performance-based evaluation.
Publications	Publications in indexed journals,	Mentions institutional journals and	Again mentions journals and the Knowledge

	conferences, professional books.	annual conferences.	Center as main publication channels.
Research Ethics	Partially defined procedures; lack of clearly established structures.	The Code of Ethics does not fully cover research; lacks monitoring structures.	No clear policies on intellectual property or research commercialization.
Research Funding	Limited funding, often obtained from external sources or self-financed	Considered adequate within the institutional context.	Only 4% of the institution's total budget was allocated in 2021; an increase was planned for 2022
Performance Evaluation	Linked to number of publications and academic promotion.	Not included in individual evaluations at the time.	A new system is under development, aligned with academic ranks.

Table 12. Comparison of Research Standard Evaluations

The analysis shows that between 2019 and 2022, efforts were made to improve compliance with the Research standard, particularly at the institutional level, through the formalization of internal policies and the establishment of structures for research management. However, many of the challenges identified in 2019 persisted into 2022, especially those related to research ethics and the commercialization of research outcomes. It is worth noting that the evaluations for the BSc and MSc programs provide more detailed insights into specific areas, while the

institutional accreditation presents a broader analysis, reflecting strategic development trends at the institutional level.

During the 2019 review, the expert panel emphasized the need to develop an individual performance evaluation system that includes research activities. The experts also recommended drafting and adopting clear regulations on ethical principles in research, along with establishing a dedicated structure to oversee their implementation.

In the 2022 review, although progress was acknowledged in increasing publications and in motivating research through academic incentives, the institution still lacked formal policies on IP and established procedures for research commercialization. Therefore, the recommendations focused on:

1. Developing policies on intellectual property rights and procedures for idea commercialization, and

2. Further strengthening research through financial measures and clearer expectations for staff, including during recruitment and annual performance reviews.

The comparison between the two assessment outcomes indicates progress in the structuring and management of research activities, while also highlighting the need for continuity and consolidation of regulatory and ethical frameworks.

Cycle / Program	Compliance Level	Key Observations
Institutional Accreditation 2019	Substantially Compliant	Lack of clear policies on research ethics and no established system for

		performance evaluation.
Institutional Accreditation 2022	Substantially Compliant	Improvement in motivation for publications; however, IP and commercialization policies still absent.
BSc Program	Partially Compliant	In most cases, absence of indexed publications by full-time staff; minimum standard partially met.
MSc Program	Substantially Compliant	Higher compliance compared to BSc; staff publications considered acceptable, though not systematically documented.

Table 13. Comparison of Research Standard Evaluations

HEI-Pr2 has demonstrated consistent Substantially compliance with the "Research" standard across both evaluation cycles. While improvements have been made—particularly in terms of supportive structures such as research centers and policies related to academic titles advanced policies on research ethics, intellectual property, and the systematic integration of research into performance evaluation are still lacking.

At the program level, MSc program show higher levels of compliance than BSc program, as they typically set more rigorous requirements and have more research-engaged staff. However, there is still a lack of clear evidence and formal institutional support to ensure that staff can consistently meet research-related criteria.

Evaluation of the Research Standard Area– HEI Pu3, BA Program

This section presents a comparative analysis of compliance with the research standard area for the BA program at HEI-Pu3, comparing two evaluations: in 2021 and 2024. The evaluation focuses on indicators related to research activities, institutional policies, staff and student engagement, and support for research. For each indicator, the level of compliance and recommendations for improvement are provided, reflecting changes and trends across the two cycles.

Standard (indicators)	Evaluation 2021	Evaluation 2024	Change	Comments / Recommendations
6.1	Yes	No	Decline	Decline in resources and clarity of research objectives.
6.2	Yes	No	Decline	Lack of clear expectations for staff and research-teaching interaction.
6.3	Yes	Yes	No change	Formal definition of research exists but implementation is partial.
6.4	Yes	Yes	No change	Some staff's research performance is

				below the required level.
6.5	Yes	No	Decline	Limited publications and low participation in activities.
6.6	Yes	Yes	No change	The formal standard is met, but more methodological involvement is needed.
6.7	Yes	Yes	No change	Minimal compliance with requirements – some staff are underperforming.
6.8	Yes	Yes	No change	Publications produced under the institutional name.
6.9	Yes	No	Decline	Limited integration of research and teaching in practice.
6.10	Yes	Yes	No change	Intellectual property is guaranteed by institutional awareness.
6.11	Yes	Yes	No change	Student participation in research is modest but present.

Table 14. Comparative Evaluation of Research Standard Area Compliance

In comparing the re-accreditation outcomes in 2021 and 2024 for the BA program, a clear regression in compliance with research standards is evident. In 2021, the program demonstrated strong engagement from academic staff in research activities, with concrete plans and active international collaborations, achieving considerable compliance with most of the standards. However, in the 2024 evaluation, despite continued efforts, a lack of clear focus on research objectives, insufficient resources, and limited staff participation in research are observed, reflecting a lower level of compliance. This highlights the need for a return to a more strategic approach and more sustainable investments in scientific research.

Recommendations 2021	Recommendations 2024
1. The university should establish a research development unit (at the university level). 2. The strategy of the Department should ensure student involvement in research.	1. Intensify research efforts. 2. Increase research publications. 3. Integrate current research results into the teaching process.

Table 15. Summary of Expert Panel Comments and Recommendations on Research Standard (2021 and 2024)

In 2021, the recommendations focused on the creation of institutional structures to support research and the involvement of students in research activities, indicating a positive environment with high developmental potential. In 2024, the recommendations highlight substantial shortcomings in the implementation of research policies, the need for

more publications, and the integration of research into teaching. This reflects a decline in research performance, as well as the need for stronger engagement from academic staff in structured research activities.

Evaluation of the Research Standard Area — HEI Pu3 MSc Program

This section presents a comparative analysis of the evaluation by field experts during the accreditation of the MSc program at HEI Pu3 in2021 and 2024. The analysis focuses on Standard Area 6 (Research) and includes differences in evaluation, compliance with indicators, as well as comments and recommendations from expert panels for each indicators.

Standard (indicators)	Evaluation 2021	Evaluation 2024	Difference in Compliance	Differences in Comments/Recommendations
6.1	C	B	Improvement	Clearer definition of research objectives in the strategic plan. Increased logistical support and documentation.
6.2	B	B	No change	Clear involvement in staff evaluation, but practical support for industry collaboration remains a challenge.
6.3	B	B	No change	Research indicators are defined, but there is no direct definition of research.
6.4	B	B	No change	Alignment of research topics with the program. Some minor deviations.

6.5	B	A	Improvement	Increased international involvement. All staff have publications and Google Scholar profiles.
6.6	B	B	No change	Validation through conferences and publications. Other structures are lacking.
6.7	B	B	No change	On average, one publication per year for each staff member. No decline.
6.8	A	A	No change	Publications in the name of UPZ.
6.9	C	C	No change	Lack of structures for the commercialization of research.
6.10	C	B	Improvement	Greater student involvement in research projects and strategic objectives.

Table 16. Comparative Evaluation of Research Standard Area Compliance

During the 2021 evaluation, the MSc program had certain gaps in documenting and structuring research objectives and mechanisms for their commercialization. In 2024, improvements were noted in several indicator's such as 6.1 and 6.5, reflecting greater strategic clarity, higher international participation, and better involvement of students. However, the aspect of industry collaboration and the structures for the commercialization of research outcomes remain a challenge and require further institutional effort.

Area of Recommendation	Recommendations 2021	Recommendations 2024
Research Objectives	Clear definition of MSc program objectives	Definition of research priorities in two main areas
Industry Collaboration	Establishment of a structure for collaboration with companies	Development of a strategy for collaboration with the industrial sector
Commercialization of Research	Establishment of a research commercialization center	Procedures for intellectual property ownership still missing
Student Involvement	Increase student involvement in research projects	Plans for involvement in projects with industry

Table 17. Comparison of Expert Recommendations

The recommendations made in 2021, emphasized the lack of a structure for research development and support for commercialization. In 2024, improvements are evident in the definition of priority areas and student involvement, but clarity on commercialization and formal collaboration with industry remains underdeveloped. The institution has made steps towards institutionalizing research, but it is still in the transitional phase towards fully meeting the standards.

Comparative Analysis of the Research Standard Area Evaluation – Institutional Accreditation – HEI-Pu3

This section presents a comparative analysis of the evaluation of the research standard area between the institutional accreditations in 2020 and 2023 and the accreditation of the two study programs (BA and MSc) for the HEI-Pu3 institution. The analysis focuses on the level of

compliance with the Research standard, the comments and recommendations given by experts, as well as the trends in research developments over the time for this institution.

Area of evaluation	BA (2021 and 2024)	MSc (2021 and 2024)	Institutional (2020 and 2023)
Focus on Research	Decline in objectives and institutional support; regression in several indicators.	Improvement in strategic clarity and international engagement.	Initially ambitious vision; later lack of financial support and decrease in compliance.
Summary assessment	Partially compliant with noticeable regression in 2024.	From "partially" to "substantially compliant" with clear improvements.	Initially "fully compliant" (2020), then "partially compliant" (2023).
Supportive Structures	Lack of a research unit and structural support.	Identification of support mechanisms and plans for industry collaboration.	Development of documents and structures, but lack of practical implementation.
Publications as Evidence of Research Performance	Decline in quality and quantity of publications in 2024.	Increased involvement and publication classification by impact factors.	Increasing publications, but lack of indicators and budget transparency.
Staff and Student Participation	Limited student involvement	Improvement in student involvement in	Emphasized as a recommendation

	and staff below expectations.	research projects.	for greater student involvement.

Table 18. Summary of Expert Panel Comments and Recommendations on Research Standard Area

The above analysis shows that the MSc program has made significant progress in meeting the research standard, moving to the "substantially compliant" level, while the BA program shows a noticeable regression in compliance. The institutional evaluation presents systemic challenges, with a decline from full compliance to partial compliance due to the lack of budgetary support and supportive structures.

Evaluation Level	Year 2021	Year 2024	Overall Evaluation
BA Program	Partially compliant	Partially with regression	Partially compliant
MSc Program	Partially compliant	Substantially compliant	Mostly compliant
Institutional	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Partially compliant

Table 19. Comparison of Compliance with the Research Standard

Based on the evaluations for the programs and the institution, it can be concluded that there has been progress in the MSc program, regression in the BA program, and a challenging sustainability at the institutional level. The institution must focus on better coordination of policies, budget, and research engagement to achieve full compliance with the research standard.

Research Standard Area Evaluation – HEI-Pr4, BSc

This section contains a comparative analysis of the evaluation by field experts during the accreditation of the BSc program at HEI-Pr4, between the 2019 and 2024 evaluations. The analysis focuses on Standard Area 6 (Research) and includes differences in evaluation, compliance with standards, as well as comments and recommendations from the expert panels for each indicator.

Indicators	Evaluation 2019	Evaluation 2024	Differences and Comments
6.1	C	B	In 2024, there are clear objectives, funding, and involvement of Nursing in the research plan.
6.2	B	B	Staff involvement in research, including promotion and performance evaluation.
6.3	C	A	Updated policies for defining research in line with international standards.
6.4	B	B	Evidence of alignment between research topics and the field of teaching.
6.5	C	A	Publications in relevant journals, participation in scientific events.
6.6	C	B	Validation through publications in WoS/Scopus and intellectual property policies.
6.7	C	A	Publication of one article per year for staff, a new standard from 2019.
6.8	B	A	Mandatory publications under the institution’s name.

6.9	C	C	Integration of research into teaching and updating subject content.
6.10	C	A	Student engagement through projects and guided seminars.

Table 20. Comparative Evaluation of Research Standard Compliance

Area of Recommendation	Recommendations 2019	Recommendations 2024
Research criteria and indicators	Inclusion of research indicators in promotion criteria	Intensive development and strengthening of research activity
Publications	Publication of collective monographs in the Albanian language	Encouragement of joint publications with European academics
Strategy	—	Development of a specific strategy for the program
Staff training	—	Continuous methodological training for the program's staff
Focus of research	—	Focusing research within the program as a scientific field
Involvement of stakeholders	—	Inclusion of clinical mentors and students in applied research
Interdisciplinary/joint research	—	Development of joint research across all health programs

Mobility	—	Increase in academic staff mobility (incoming and outgoing)

Table 21. Summary of Expert Panel Comments and Recommendations on Research Standard Area

In 2019, the evaluation of the BSc program focused on establishing the foundation for scientific research. However, there was no separate assessment for each indicator, as the expert's panel did not provide in their report the scale of compliance for individual indicators. The description highlights challenges related to the lack of financial resources and the limited time staff have to engage in research. Despite these challenges, the institution has shown commitment to continuous improvement through support for doctorates, conferences, and collective projects. Recommendations were oriented towards formalizing research requirements in promotion criteria and publications in the Albanian language.

In 2024, the evaluation was noticeably more structured and based on measurable indicators. The institution developed a methodological framework for assessing research capacities, including elements such as infrastructure, collaborations, staff empowerment, and dissemination of results. Improvements are evident in financial support, clear publication policies, and student involvement. However, the main challenges remain in strengthening research directly related to nursing, increasing collaborations, and joint publications with international academics.

Comparative Analysis of the Evaluation of the Research Standard Area HEI Pr4 – MSc

This section contains a comparative analysis of the evaluation by field experts during the accreditation of the MSc program in HEI Pr4 in2019 and 2022. The analysis focuses on Standard Area 6 (Research) and

includes differences in evaluation, compliance with indicators, as well as comments and recommendations from expert panels for each indicator.

Indicators	Evaluation 2019	Evaluation 2022	Variation in compliance	Comments / Key Differences
6.1	Yes	Yes	No change	Structured funding for research; improvement of infrastructure
6.2	No	Yes	Improvement	Clearer definition of staff involvement in research
6.3	Yes (partially)	Yes	Improvement	Clearer policies and higher compliance with international standards
6.4	Yes (partially)	Yes	Improvement	Better correlation between teaching and research
6.5	No	Yes	Improvement	Broader participation in publications

				and conferences
6.6	No	Yes	Improvement	Clearer evidence for research validation
6.7	Yes	No	Decline	Weaker performance in regular publications by staff
6.8	No	Yes	Improvement	All publications under the institution's name
6.9	Yes	Yes	No change	Active inclusion of research results in teaching
6.10	Yes	Yes	No change	Development of policies for intellectual property rights
6.11	Yes	Yes	No change	Active student participation in research projects

Table 22. Comparative Evaluation of Research Standard Compliance

From the comparison of evaluations in 2019 and 2022, an overall improvement is evident in most of the research indicators for this program. Nevertheless, several indicators (6.1, 6.9, 6.10, and 6.11) show no change in compliance level, while indicators 6.7 even indicates a decline. This suggests that, although progress has been made in strengthening research capacity, there remain areas where further attention and consistent development are required. Noticeable improvements have been identified in staff involvement in research activities, clearer policies regarding what is considered research, higher alignment of research with the field of study, as well as increased student participation in research projects. However, Standard 6.7 remains problematic in 2022 due to a significant portion of the staff being unable to meet the criterion of publishing one paper per year. This indicates the need to strengthen capacities and strategies to support academic research.

Area of Recommendation	Recommendations 2019	Recommendations 2022
Publications Criteria	Reformulation of publication criteria; focus on quality rather than quantity	Development of a strategy to increase the number of staff publications
Partnerships & Collaboration	—	Improvement of partnerships and clarification of staff responsibilities

Table 23. Summary of Expert Panel Comments and Recommendations on Research Standard Area

The recommendations from 2019 were focused on stopping low-value publication practices and emphasizing quality research in recognized international platforms. In 2022, the focus shifted towards improving the research structure, broader staff involvement, and creating a clear

strategy to increase research outputs. This reflects a greater institutional awareness of the importance of quality research and the need for sustainable long-term strategies.

Comparative Analysis of the Research Standard Area – Institutional Accreditation HEI Pr4

This section presents the analysis and comparison of the research standard area for the HEI P4 institution at the institutional level, for the evaluations in 2022 and 2024.

Indicators	Evaluation (BSc 2019 and 2024)	Evaluation (MSc 2019and 2022)	Institutional 2022	Institutional 2024	Variation in compliance	Comments / Key Differences
6.1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Improvement	Clearer institutional integration; better planning and budgeting mechanisms.
6.2	Yes –	No	Yes	Yes	Improvement	MSc showed gaps in staff involvement; institutio

						nal level strengthened regional collaborations.
6.3	Yes –	Partially	No	Yes	Improvement	Weakness at MSc and 2022 institutional stage, but improved coherence and thematic links by 2024.
6.4	No	Yes	No	Yes	Improvement	Institutional support became more systematic by 2024 after earlier resource shortages.
6.5	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Improvement	Quality and

						categorization of publications improved at institutional level (2024).
6.6	No	No	No	Yes	Improvement	Persistent gaps at program level, improved institutional enforcement by 2024.
6.7	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Improvement	Full institutional integration by 2024 after inconsistent application.
6.8	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Improvement	Institutional level reaffirm

						ed involvement through training and clear practices.
6.9	No	No	No	Yes	Improvement	Institutional policy linked publication under institutional name with financial support.
6.10	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Improvement	Institutional framework clarified and formalized (2021–2024).
6.11	Yes –	Yes	Yes	Yes	Improvement	Consistent compliance across cycles; institutio

						nal procedures strengthened but not a major shift.

Table 24. Comparative Evaluation of Research Standard Compliance

In 2022, institutional-level research performance was assessed as partially fulfilled, with a compliance level of 55%. The research strategy was limited in duration and lacked sufficient financial support. In the MSc program, although efforts were made to develop research policies, there was a noticeable lack of compliance with standards regarding annual publications and international involvement. The BSc program in the same year also faced similar challenges, with a low level of indexed publications and unclear research objectives.

In 2024, HEI Pr4 demonstrated improvements in the development of the research strategy, with approved documents for research management and funding. The establishment of Research Institutes and units was evaluated as good practice, but active student involvement and mentoring for young researchers were lacking. Meanwhile, international collaboration was more prominent compared to 2022 through networks and regional partnerships. This indicates an increase in the institutional research capacity.

Year / Level	Recommendation 1	Recommendation 2	Recommendation 3
BSc (2019)	Inclusion of research indicators in promotion criteria	Publication of collective monographs in the Albanian language	—
BSc (2024)	Intensive development	Encouragement of joint	Development of a specific

	and strengthening of research activity	publications with European academics	strategy for the program; Continuous methodological training for staff; Focusing research within the program; Inclusion of clinical mentors and students in applied research; Development of joint research across all health programs; Increase in academic staff mobility
MSc (2019)	New, easily implementable research topics: drug use, rational behavior	Publications should be indexed in PubMed/Web of Science (WoS)	—
MSc (2022)	Increase the number of staff with publications meeting the criteria	Preparation of CVs only for MSc staff, detailing teaching and publications	Development of a strategy to increase publications
Institutiona l (2022)	Provide more incentives for research activities	Review of the allocation of research budgets	Development of a long-term strategic plan for research
Institutiona l (2024)	Involvement of students in research activities	Support of young researchers	Development of joint research projects

Table 25. Summary of Expert Panel Comments and Recommendations on Research Standard Area

The recommendations given in the evaluations for BSc, MSc, and institutional assessments show a continuous evolution in the approach to scientific research. On the other hand, the institutional recommendations have addressed more structural and strategic issues, including budget allocation, creation of long-term plans, and incentives for involving students and young researchers. A positive trend is the engagement with international journals and the establishment of a regulatory infrastructure for research management.

Program/ Accreditation	Year	Level of Compliance
Program BSc	2019	Substantially Compliant
Program BSc	2024	Substantially Compliant
Program MSc	2019	Substantially Compliant
Program MSc	2022	Substantially Compliant
Institutional Accreditation	2022	Partially Compliant
Institutional Accreditation	2024	Substantially Compliant

Table 26. Comparison of Compliance Levels with the Research Standard

Across all program evaluations, both in 2019 and in the subsequent ones (2022 and 2024), the Research Standard Area was assessed as 'Substantially Compliant,' indicating a satisfactory level of research implementation in direct academic practice. In contrast, the institutional accreditation in 2022 was rated as 'Partially Compliant,' reflecting

significant challenges related to support structures, strategic planning, and institutional resources for scientific research. Although an improvement was achieved in 2024 with a "Substantially Compliant" rating, it remains clear that program-level evaluations have been more consistent and positive compared to institutional-level assessments. This suggests that research efforts are more concentrated within academic units rather than in overall institutional policies and organizational frameworks for research and related policies.

Section III

Analysis of Scientific Publications in HEI

This section of the analysis focuses on the evaluation of research activity in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Kosovo during the period 2021–2024, with a particular emphasis on scientific publications and their impact on internal institutional development, as well as on meeting external requirements stemming from quality assurance standards. Research activity is a fundamental component for the academic legitimacy and strategic development of HEIs, directly influencing their ranking, international reputation, and ability to attract collaborations and external funding.

The analysis includes data collected through a structured questionnaire, which was distributed to all higher education institutions in the country. Responses from 16 representative institutions, both public and private, were included in this process. The aim of the questionnaire was to generate measurable evidence on the research performance of HEIs. This analysis seeks not only to address academic production quantitatively but also to explore how this activity translates into internal institutional progress and impact on external quality indicators. In this context, research activity is viewed as a key factor interrelated with the professional development of academic staff, the enhancement of institutional capacities, and the strengthening of HEIs' positioning in global education and science networks.

Special attention is also given to the challenging context in which these institutions operate, including the lack of advanced research infrastructure, budgetary constraints, and the absence of long-term policies for systematic research support. Nevertheless, good practices

have also been identified, particularly in institutions where concrete steps have been taken to integrate research into the institutional mission and to incentivize academic staff to participate in international projects, publications, and professional networks.

Through this analysis, the aim is to draw well-founded conclusions about the progress and existing barriers in the field of scientific research, offering useful recommendations for institutional policies, strategic decision-making, and continuous improvement of quality standards in higher education.

Summary Table of Scientific Research (2021–2024)

This table summarizes the data on scientific research for the years 2021–2024, including the number of publications in journals with impact factor, international co-authorship, and funded projects. These data were collected through the same questionnaire that was distributed to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Kosovo, as referred to above.

Year	Publications in Impact Factor Journals	International Co-authors	Funded Projects (Grants)
2021-2022	165	99	99
2022-2023	170	111	108
2023-2024	264	117	134

Table 27. Scientific research publications (2021–2024)

The data collected from questionnaires distributed in Kosovo's higher education institutions clearly indicate an upward trend in the number of scientific publications in recent years. According to the results, 76.5% of respondents declared that there has been growth, while only a small portion (17.6%) consider it stable or declining. This overall perception of growth indicates an improvement in the research culture within institutions, as well as a positive response to new demands for academic quality and performance.

At the center of this growth are several key factors repeatedly identified by participants. Criteria from the KAA are mentioned as one of the most influential factors, as stricter standards for accreditation and academic

advancement have pushed institutions and staff to focus more on quality publications and journals with impact factor. In this context, academic promotion and internal regulations for advancement have been highlighted as important drivers creating positive pressure and motivation for scientific publication, often directly linked to career benefits.

Another significant factor is the increasing involvement in international projects, which not only contributes to the increase in the number of publications through collaborations, but also enhances the exposure and professional standards of academic staff. Many institutions report that through engagement in such projects, they have gained access to resources, research networks, and indexed journals like SCOPUS and Web of Science, which are objective indicators of research quality.

On the other hand, internal institutional policies have proven important in this process. Some universities and colleges have adopted special regulations for research funding and support of publications, including funds for publishing, bonuses for staff, and small projects serving as incentives for research engagement. In some cases, digital platforms for recording and monitoring research performance have been mentioned, increasing transparency and making progress more measurable.

However, despite this progress, a small number of institutions report temporary decline or stagnation, identifying a range of obstacles. These include lack of research infrastructure, insufficient number of regular academic staff, and lack of sustainable financial resources for scientific research. Some representatives have emphasized that although the overall number of publications has not decreased, there has been a shift towards publishing more seriously in journals with higher impact, which naturally might be accompanied by a more limited number of publications in short-term periods.

Platforms for Publishing Scientific Papers

The data from responses shows a clear dominance of internationally indexed platforms in recent publications. The most used platform is SCOPUS, where respondents indicating its use, reflecting institutions' orientation toward sources with internationally recognized impact factors. Following SCOPUS is Web of Science another credible source for high-level scientific publications.

A significant percentage reported publications on Google Scholar, often used for easier access and broad academic visibility. Research Gate and Academia.edu are also present, although more as distribution platforms rather than primary sources for publications with impact factor. About one quarter of respondents mentioned other platforms, possibly including journals with limited indexing or in local languages, which still contribute to the research profile of staff.

Scientific Fields of Publications

Publications are spread across a wide range of academic fields, reflecting the multidisciplinary structure of higher education in Kosovo. From the data, the main dominant fields are identified as:

1. Social Sciences and Economics

These are the most represented fields, including education, law, management, psychology, social work, and political sciences. This corresponds with the wider program offerings in many institutions.

2. Engineering and Technology

A considerable number of publications belong to fields like computer engineering, mechanics, food technology, and architecture. This shows increased research activity in technical fields traditionally requiring more laboratory and infrastructural support.

3. Natural and Medical Sciences

Some institutions reported publications in medicine, veterinary sciences, sports sciences, and biology. This is significant for public universities or institutions with well-organized research centers.

1. Applied Sciences and Arts

Architecture, tourism, and other applied arts were mentioned especially by institutions with specialized programs. These combine theoretical research with practical production (e.g., design work or cultural analysis).

2. Interdisciplinary and Specialized Fields

Some responses included fields such as Albanology, religious studies, and philology, which, although not among the largest in publication volume, represent important contributions to cultural heritage.

Analysis of Strategies, Regulations, and Support Mechanisms for Scientific Research in Kosovo's HEIs

A significant number of higher education institutions in Kosovo have taken concrete steps toward developing and institutionalizing scientific research as a key component of their academic mission. Data from the survey show that 77.8% of institutions have an internal strategy for the development of scientific research, representing a relatively high percentage and indicating sustained awareness of the importance of research in institutional and academic development. However, a portion (22.2%) still lacks a well-defined strategy, marking a gap in long-term research planning.

Positively, 100% of institutions report having internal documents or regulations that govern research procedures. This means that even in the absence of a broad institutional strategy, there are operational regulatory frameworks supporting research activities at a practical and operational level.

A crucial aspect of research development is financial support. According to data, 88.9% of institutions declare having dedicated funds for scientific research, while only a small percentage (11.1%) lack such support. However, average annual fund values vary and are not always clearly specified. Some institutions have considerable budgets like 70,000–100,000 euros per year, while others operate with very modest funds (e.g., 500–6,000 euros). Some institutions provide funds per publication depending on the platform, offering support ranging from 300 to 1,200 euros per article, and others allocate 2–3 annual grants per academic unit. This indicates a significant mismatch in financial capacities between institutions, which can directly affect the quality and sustainability of research output.

Regarding motivational mechanisms, the situation appears similarly positive: 88.9% of institutions have specific policies to encourage scientific research, including academic promotions, monetary rewards, and other administrative facilitations. Academic promotion is often conditioned directly on publications in indexed platforms like SCOPUS and Web of Science, while some institutions offer special awards such as "Researcher of the Year," internal grants, or workload reductions for

active publishers. In some instances, detailed regulations and guidelines related to research performance and funding criteria are mentioned, reflecting a high level of formalization of research policies.

Impact of External Quality Assessment by KAA on Higher Education Institutions

Analysis results show that the external quality assessment process carried out by KAA is widely perceived as useful and positively impactful on higher education institutions. 78.9% of institutions consider it "very useful," while only a small percentage (5.3%) express skepticism or see it as ineffective. This confirms the legitimacy and importance of this process in building and improving quality in higher education in Kosovo. The surveyed institutions regarded the recommendations of external experts as useful in 100% of cases. Descriptions from respondents highlight that recommendations have served as guidelines for strategic development, curriculum improvement, advancement of research practices, and strengthening institutional management. They have helped increase academic quality, promote cooperation with industry and community, and improve student experience. Some institutions reported concrete steps taken as a result of recommendations, such as approval of regulations for financing scientific papers, establishment of research institutes, facilitation of academic promotions, and increased training for staff and students.

Impact of External Evaluation on Scientific Research

A particular focus of this analysis is the impact of external evaluation on the development of scientific research. According to data, 63.2% of institutions consider this impact as "very useful," while 31.6% see it as moderate. This demonstrates that KAA experts have exerted a tangible influence in strengthening research as a fundamental component of institutional quality.

In 94.7% of cases, accreditation reports have included specific recommendations for the development of scientific research. Concrete examples include the implementation of anti-plagiarism software, increased financial support for research, inclusion of students in research projects, creation of platforms for monitoring publications, and enhancement of international collaborations. In some cases, the importance of publishing journals with impact factors and the

development of policies for knowledge transfer to industry were emphasized.

Institutions have taken direct actions in response to these recommendations, including installation of anti-plagiarism programs, creation of research institutes, increased funding for projects, organization of research training, and active involvement of students in research projects. Some institutions have developed new regulations for financing scientific publications, revised research strategies, and built new international partnerships as part of efforts to implement recommendations.

Key Challenges in the Development of Scientific Research

Higher education institutions in Kosovo face a range of structural, financial, and operational challenges that hinder the sustainable development of scientific research. The lack of funding has been reported as the most widespread challenge, mentioned in nearly every response. Institutions report that current funding—both at the institutional level and through national schemes—is insufficient to cover the actual costs of modern research, particularly in fields such as engineering, technology, medicine, or laboratory sciences, where research requires advanced equipment, samples, and materials.

Another serious challenge is the limited access to internationally recognized scientific journals and databases, especially Scopus, Web of Science, and other indexing platforms. Many institutions lack sufficient budgets for subscriptions or pre-paid access, forcing researchers to rely on limited or not always reliable sources. This creates a gap between what is required for accreditation and academic advancement and what is realistically accessible to the academic staff.

In addition, the lack of advanced training in research methodology has been highlighted, as well as the absence of institutes, functional laboratories, and supporting infrastructure that would enable the development of in-depth research. This impacts the lack of a research culture in some institutions and makes it difficult to develop genuine and long-term research projects.

The Need for Institutional Support and Intervention

The majority of institutions seek prioritized support from the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI) (68.4%), as the body responsible for educational policies and the science budget. Only a small portion (21.1%) request direct intervention from the KAA, while the remainder refer to other state institutions or international partners.

According to the analysis of the responses, the specific support requested to improve scientific research includes:

- Increased public funding dedicated to research projects, including subsidies for publications and research equipment.
- Advanced training for academic staff in research methodology, access to scientific journals, and development of international projects.
- Provision of access to international scientific databases and subscriptions to high-impact journals.
- Simplification of procedures for obtaining grants and recruiting research staff, enabling greater administrative flexibility.
- Creation of mechanisms to reward high-quality research outcomes, including grants for publications in indexed journals and bonuses for international collaborations.
- Harmonization of standards and regulations between MASHTI and AKA, particularly regarding the classification of questionable journals and the interpretation of indexing platforms.

Furthermore, some institutions are seeking specific support in drafting Research Activity Regulations (RAR) and a clear interpretation of research evaluation standards. They emphasize the need for a unified and transparent approach that fosters development rather than hindering it.

Section IV

Conclusions

Similarities and Differences in the Evaluation of the Research Standard Area across BSc, MSc, and Institutional Assessments

A comparative analysis of accreditation reports reveals a clear distinction in how research is evaluated across BSc and MSc programs and institutional-level assessments. In BSc programs, the evaluation of research often focuses on the minimal inclusion of research components within the curriculum and the absence of research-based thesis topics. For instance, some Bachelor-level programs have been noted for lacking modules on research methodology training as well as suitable infrastructure to support research projects. In contrast, MSc programs generally receive more favorable evaluations due to the inclusion of research-based theses and, in some cases, student involvement in institutionally supported projects. In several instances, MSc programs have been described as drivers for the development of institutional research capacities.

On the other hand, institutional evaluations typically concentrate on the overall level of infrastructure, the total number of publications, the functionality of research centers, and participation in international projects. As a result, an institution may receive a positive institutional rating for developing new laboratories and publishing staff research in SCOPUS and Web of Science, even though these same elements may not be reflected in the evaluation of individual programs. This fragmented evaluation approach creates a systemic misalignment that can misrepresent an institution's actual progress.

It is strongly recommended to establish a harmonized approach to evaluating the research standard, ensuring that BSc programs, MSc programs, and institutional assessments are guided by interlinked indicators. A unified monitoring instrument for research activities could help eliminate these inconsistencies and ensure a fairer and more data-driven evaluation process.

Consistency Over Time and the Development of Evaluations

A more detailed review of accreditation cycles across different time periods reveals a lack of full consistency in the evaluation of the scientific research standard, both at the institutional level and at the program level (BSc and MSc). In some cases, institutions with similar outcomes in terms of publications, participation in research projects, and institutional research strategies have received different evaluations across accreditation cycles. For example, an institution that in 2021 was rated as fully compliant due to a well-developed research strategy and a significant number of publications in Scopus, received a lower rating in the 2024 cycle due to the lack of updated data and published evidence. This highlights a key challenge related to the mechanisms of data collection and interpretation during evaluations, as well as the institutions' own capacity to document sustainable development. To avoid inconsistent evaluations and ensure reliability across accreditation cycles, it is recommended to establish a standardized mechanism for measuring progress, along with a shared digital platform that transparently and verifiably documents developments and relevant evidence.

The Role and Content of Recommendations from the KAA

The recommendations provided by experts during the accreditation process have played an important role in encouraging institutional reforms in scientific research. However, analyses show that the content of these recommendations has not always been consistent or synchronized across accreditation cycles and levels. In some cases, identical programs at the BSc and MSc levels have received different recommendations regarding the same area, such as access to scientific journals or the inclusion of students in research. Additionally, at some institutions, recommendations have been repeated without indicating whether they had been addressed in the previous cycle. On the other hand, in several cases, the recommendations have been instrumental in driving internal transformation within institutions. For example, a recommendation to create a platform for monitoring scientific

publications was implemented by several institutions, which later demonstrated improvements in research performance and reporting transparency. To ensure greater impact of the recommendations, it is suggested that KAA develop a unified system for tracking their implementation, incorporating this as a mandatory component in post-accreditation reports and annual institutional reports.

Perception of HEIs and the Role of the KAA

The third section of the analysis highlights how higher education institutions perceive their own role and that of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency in fostering scientific research.

The data clearly show that scientific research in Kosovo's higher education institutions has entered a more structured and sustainable phase of development in recent years. The increase in the number of publications in high-impact journals, the growth of international collaborations, and the rise in funded projects are concrete indicators of this positive trend. This progress is not accidental, but the direct result of several factors tied to internal institutional policies and external demands for academic quality and accountability.

One of the most important drivers behind this improvement has been the external quality evaluation process carried out by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA). Higher education institutions view this process as highly beneficial, as it has provided clear and practical guidance for the strategic development of scientific research. The recommendations from external experts have been used to shape new policies, improve existing regulations, and enhance the transparency of research performance. In many cases, concrete steps have been taken, such as the installation of anti-plagiarism software, the creation of research institutes, the inclusion of students in research projects, and the allocation of new funds for high-quality publications.

Additionally, the introduction of new criteria for academic promotion, now closely tied to research performance, particularly publications in internationally indexed journals has had a major impact. This has created positive pressure and increased the motivation of academic staff to engage in serious and impactful scientific research. Participation in

international projects has also opened new opportunities for collaboration, access to important databases, and resources that were previously inaccessible.

However, despite this progress, challenges remain present. Many institutions report that lack of funding, limited access to scientific databases such as SCOPUS and Web of Science, lack of well-equipped laboratories, and insufficient training in research methodology hinder further development. This creates significant disparities between institutions with greater opportunities and those facing serious structural and financial limitations.

In this context, institutional support from the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST) proves to be essential. Most institutions request an increase in the public research fund, simplification of grant procedures, and easier access to international resources. Additionally, there is a need for better coordination between MEST and the KAA, especially to unify regulations related to publications, indexing platforms, and the evaluation of research quality.

Ultimately, the progress made so far shows that with sustainable policies, clear support, and fair demands for quality, it is possible to create a functional research culture in Kosovo. However, to maintain and strengthen this momentum, continuous investment in people, infrastructure, and institutional cooperation is required. Scientific research is not a luxury – it is a necessity for development, knowledge, and building a higher-quality education system that is better connected with the world.

Annex 1: Methodological Framework and Compliance Scale

This thematic analysis is based on program and institutional accreditation and re-accreditation reports submitted to the KAA between 2019 and 2024. For clarity, accreditation decisions in Kosovo are issued separately for each program, location, delivery form, and language of instruction. Each of these is treated as a distinct case, which explains why the same institution may appear multiple times across the dataset.

Research-Related Standards

The analysis focuses on the Research Standard Area within the KAA Accreditation Manual. At the time of the 2019 evaluation, expert panels provided overall compliance levels without assigning grades to individual indicators. In later cycles (2021, 2022, 2024), compliance was assessed at the indicators level, allowing for more detailed comparison. To enable longitudinal analysis, indicators grades for 2019 have been reconstructed based on the narrative and recommendations of the expert panels.

Compliance Scale Applied by KAA

All program and institutional evaluations apply the KAA's four-level compliance scale:

- Fully compliant (A): All requirements are met.
- Substantially compliant (B): Most requirements are met; only minor improvements are necessary.
- Partially compliant (C): Significant requirements are missing; major improvements needed.
- Non-compliant (D): Requirements are not met; the minimum threshold is not achieved.

Annex 2: Research Standard Area at Program and Institutional Levels

Program Level (BSc/MSc)
Standard 6: Research

6.1 The study program has defined scientific/applied research objectives (on its own or as part of a research centre or interdisciplinary program), which are also reflected in the research development plan of the institution; sufficient financial, logistic and human resources are allocated for achieving the proposed research objectives.
6.2 Expectations for teaching staff involvement in research and scholarly activities are clearly specified, and performance in relation to these expectations is considered in staff evaluation and promotion criteria.
6.3 Clear policies are established for defining what is recognized as research, consistent with international standards and established norms in the field of study of the program.
6.4 The academic staff has a proven track record of research results on the same topics as their teaching activity.
6.5 The academic and research staff publish their work in speciality magazines or publishing houses, scientific/applied/artistic products are presented at conferences, sessions, symposiums, seminars etc., and contracts, expertise, consultancy, conventions, etc. are provided to partners inside the country and/or abroad.
6.6 Research is validated through: scientific and applied research publications, artistic products, technological transfer through consultancy centres, scientific parks and other structures for validation.
6.7 Each academic staff member and researcher has produced at least an average of one scientific/applied research publication or artistic outcome/product per year for the past three years.
6.8 Academic and research staff publish under the name of the institution in Kosovo they are affiliated to as full-time staff.
6.9 Policies are established for ownership of intellectual property and clear procedures set out for commercialization of ideas developed by staff and students.
6.10 Students are engaged in research projects and other activities.

Institutional Level (HEI)
Standard Area 6: Research

6.1 The higher education institution has defined scientific/applied research objectives in line with its mission and strategic development plan, supported by adequate financial, logistic, and human resources.
6.2 Clear policies and expectations for staff involvement in research and scholarly activities are defined and systematically included in staff evaluation and promotion criteria.
6.3 The institution has established clear policies for defining and recognizing research, aligned with international standards and disciplinary norms.
6.4 The institution demonstrates a consistent track record of research results across faculties and departments, with research activities aligned to their teaching portfolios.
6.5 Academic and research staff actively publish and disseminate their work nationally and internationally, through conferences, peer-reviewed journals, and applied or artistic outputs.
6.6 The institution provides mechanisms for research validation, including peer review, publication, technological transfer, consultancy centres, and partnerships with scientific parks or other relevant structures.
6.7 The institution ensures that academic staff produce at least one publication or equivalent recognized research outcome per year, averaged across the staff body.
6.8 Staff consistently publish under the institutional name, strengthening visibility and international reputation.
6.9 The institution has established regulations on intellectual property rights and ensures clear procedures for commercialization of research outputs.
6.10 The institution systematically involves students in research projects and creates opportunities for their participation in the academic research community.

Annex 3. Template of Questionnaire for HEIs

Questionnaire for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
Purpose: To collect data on research activities and the impact of external quality assurance (QA) evaluation on the development of research in HEIs in Kosovo.
SECTION 1: General Information
Name of the institution: _____
Type of institution: ☐ Public ☐ Private
Contact person and position: _____
SECTION 2: Data on Scientific Publications
Please fill in the number of scientific publications for each academic year in the table below:

Academic Year	Total Publications	With International Co-authors	With Funding (Grants)	In Impact Factor Journals
2021–2022				
2022–2023				
2023–2024				

Has there been an increase in publications in recent years? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Remains the same
If yes, which factors influenced this increase?

(e.g. internal policies, KAA criteria, involvement in international projects, academic promotion, etc.)
If there has been a decline or stagnation, what are the main reasons?
On which platforms were these publications published? (check all that apply): ☐ Scopus ☐ Web of Science ☐ Google Scholar ☐ Academia.edu ☐ Research Gate ☐ Other
In which scientific fields were these publications concentrated? (e.g. Natural Sciences, Engineering, Medicine, Social Sciences, Economics, Arts, etc.)
SECTION 3: Institutional Support for Research
Does the institution have an internal strategy for research development? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you have a document/regulation for research procedures? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Are there dedicated institutional funds for research? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, indicate the average annual value: _____
Does the institution have mechanisms to encourage publication (e.g. rewards, academic promotions, etc.)?
SECTION 4: Impact of the Accreditation Process
How do you evaluate the impact of external QA evaluation (by KAA) on your institution? ☐ Very beneficial ☐ Moderate ☐ Low ☐ Not at all

Do you consider the experts' recommendations useful for your institution? If yes, please describe:
How do you evaluate the impact of external QA evaluation (by KAA) on the improvement of scientific research in your institution? ☐ Very high ☐ Moderate ☐ Low ☐ Not at all
Have recommendations for scientific research been included in institutional/program accreditation reports in recent years? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, specify an example:
Have actions been undertaken to improve research in response to these recommendations? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, specify:
SECTION 5: Challenges and Needs
What are the main challenges your institution faces in developing scientific research? (e.g. lack of funds, access to journals, lack of training, etc.)
From which institution do you need support? ☐ KAA ☐ MESTI ☐ Other
What concrete support would positively influence the improvement and development of research?