



Institutional Review of Higher Education Institutions in Albania

**Report of the Institutional Review of
Polytechnic University of Tirana**

December 2016

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About this review

The overall aim of Institutional Review is to assess the extent to which each HEI meets the Albanian State Quality Standards which came into force in 2011. Institutional Review is a peer-review process with each review team composed of a mix of UK reviewers appointed by QAA and Albanian reviewers appointed by the Albanian Public Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (APAAL). The review team is led by a QAA reviewer.

The resulting reports will serve not only for institutional accreditation based on the extent to which the HEI meets the standards, but will also inform the HEIs, Albanian government, the public and students how each HEI meets the standards. This report also helps the HEI to identify priorities for enhancement (the process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which student learning is supported).

The Albanian State Quality Standards have been grouped under five Evaluation Areas: the Organisation and its Management; Resourcing; the Curriculum; Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research; and Students and their Support. This report identifies features of good practice, recommendations, affirmations of actions in progress and weaknesses for each Evaluation Area, together with a judgement as to how well the HEI meets the standards. The judgements that the reviewers may assign are: standards are fully met; standards are substantially met; standards are partly met; or standards are not met.

Finally, the reviewers conclude by recommending a summary judgement to APAAL's Accreditation Council. This overall judgement is one of four levels:

- **State Quality Standards are fully met**
- **State Quality Standards are substantially met**
- **State Quality Standards are partly met**
- **State Quality Standards are not met.**

As part of the report-writing process, QAA has provided expert support to the review team by ensuring that the team supports the findings made in the report with evidence, and also by proofreading and summarising the full report for the summary below.

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The context of this review

The Polytechnic University of Tirana (PUT) was originally founded in 1951 as a state chartered institution consisting of four engineering schools; Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Civil Engineering and, Geology and Mining. In 1957, the institution became the State University of Tirana and the existing schools were amalgamated to form the Faculty of Engineering. In 1991, the Polytechnic University of Tirana was created by the integration of the engineering faculties from Tirana University with those at the State University of Tirana, with a four faculty structure; Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Civil Engineering, and Geology and Mining. Further restructuring in 1994 reconstituted the faculties as departments which were divided into sections. A further two faculties, Information Technology and Mathematics and Physics Engineering, were incorporated in 2007 along with two scientific institutes; the Institute of Energy, Water and Environment and the Institute of Geosciences. The two institutes were subsequently integrated to form a single unit in 2011, the Institute of Geosciences and Energy, Water and Environment. The present seven faculty organisational structure was completed in January 2013 with the formation of the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning as a separate entity from the Faculty of Engineering.

In 2005, PUT restructured the portfolio of study programmes to take account of Bologna Educational Area expectations by implementing two-cycle study programmes at Bachelor and Master's levels. Second cycle programmes were classified as either labour-orientated Professional Master programmes or Scientific Master programmes which could provide access to doctoral level study leading to a third cycle qualification.

PUT is a member of a number of recognised European academic networks and agencies and has signed cooperation memoranda with universities in China, France, Greece, Italy, Japan, Romania, Spain and the USA.

Summary report

The Polytechnic University of Tirana (PUT) was originally founded in 1951 as a state chartered institution. The present structure, as of 2013, consists of seven faculties: Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Geology and Mining, Information Technology, Mathematics and Physics Engineering, and Architecture and Urban Planning.

A self-evaluation report was developed by a team at the University, which included senior managers, academic and support staff and a student representative. Drafts were circulated to a wider audience within the University before being finalised and approved by the Academic Senate.

The visit took place over three days between 14 and 16 September 2016. The review team was made up of four senior higher education reviewers from the UK and two experienced higher education members of staff from Albanian institutions. The review team was supported by the Review Manager and a note-taker provided by APAAL. The review team received a self-evaluation report and the portfolio of supporting evidence eight weeks in advance of the review visit, later supplemented by additional documentation requested. A wide range of supporting information provided by the University enabled the team to familiarise themselves with the structure, policies, management procedures and nature of teaching and research activity undertaken. Evidence included the Statute of the University, Academic Regulations, Annual Reports, admission and orientation procedures, list of external agreements and memoranda, examples of programme information and evidence of deliberative meetings.

The review team met with senior managers, students, lecturers, administrative and support staff, as well as external partners and employers during the review visit. Discussion supported the clarification of procedures, responsibilities and viewpoints. Notes were taken at all meetings. As part of a tour of the main campus the review team viewed the library, teaching areas, laboratories and offices.

The Standards for the Organisation and its Management are substantially met. PUT's governance and regulatory frameworks are designed to align with national legal requirements for higher education institutions. Existing management and administration arrangements, and for collegial decision making, work appropriately and are well understood by staff at all levels. However, reform is necessary if PUT is to address concerns raised by staff and students in surveys and during the visit, relating to the lack of an embedded quality culture among academic staff and students. Arrangements to support collegial discussion and debate are effective and work well for staff at all levels. Students generally displayed awareness of opportunities for representation but a programme of training for student members of Academic Senate, and faculty and department boards and councils will strengthen the effectiveness of student engagement and representation in its formal governance processes. Self-governance in University affairs extends to all organisational academic and administrative units. Strengthening of the effectiveness of University decision-making by developing a set of University priorities, supported by appropriate objectives and targets that faculties are required to address in their faculty and department plans would be beneficial. The absence of a coordinated process to undertake labour market research and the use of this data in programme planning is acknowledged. Similarly, the need for a centrally organised tracking of graduate employment destinations is recognised. There is no fully functioning Careers Office for providing comprehensive advice and support to its students. However, steps are being taken to implementing such a service and an office space has been identified. Plans to establish an Alumni Association to act as an interface between the University and its alumni have not been progressed. Through cooperation with state and private institutions various services are provided to the benefit of students. The

University recognises that its international profile would benefit from strengthening as there are modest levels of incoming and outgoing mobility, with incoming student mobility representing a particular challenge.

The Standards for Resourcing are substantially met. All duties regarding the management of human resources and implementing an appropriate and well-defined recruitment policy for academic and assisting lecturing staff are clearly defined. Appropriate mechanisms are in place to manage University assets. There is a strategic approach to ensure that all staff are provided with appropriate resources. All staff prepare an annual report on their teaching programme and research work, which is evaluated at department level. Performance of research work is overseen by faculty councils and the Internal Assurance Centre of Quality, and is discussed and approved by the Senate. There is no inclusive social development policy for all students and staff but it is acknowledged that social policies must be reflected in the new development. The University provides the necessary means to implement its financial policy which is based on an appropriate and well-defined transparent and legal framework. There is a coordinated information system and information is disseminated either in hard copy or in electronic format. However, the content and quality of information is inconsistent institution-wide with some faculty websites lacking information important to students or presenting out-of-date information. Activities in the field of technology are coordinated effectively. However, students reported in meetings and via surveys that in many cases laboratory equipment and computer hardware and software is out-of-date and unable to support module requirements. There is relevant storage and maintenance of academic, cultural and scientific heritage at the Scientific Library and the National Library. The improvement of laboratory facilities, addressing health and safety concerns and improving facilities for students with mobility difficulties are identified as priority areas for development.

The Standards for the Curriculum are fully met. Programmes offered by the University cover all three Bologna cycles and align with institutional strategy, and practical application of knowledge and skills is a core feature of the provision. The number of courses that may be described as continuing education is small, and the University should prioritise the development of study programmes that are designed to widen participation and attract returning adult learners. Collectively, processes ensure that study programmes are offered in accordance with institution development strategy and in line with local, national and international trends. That the University is taking action to optimise the number of students relative to institutional capacity, by taking control of student quotas and by developing its estate, is acknowledged. There would be benefit in developing and implementing a mechanism to ensure that all students are provided with reliable and up-to-date programme information, including learning objectives and assessment methods. Scrutiny of programme guides confirms the University's assertion that first cycle programmes are constructed to develop basic proficiency in key subjects, thereby building on knowledge gained in high schools. However, the University concedes that there is a lack of institutional structures to support the induction and orientation activities of new students, and an over-reliance on the initiatives of academic staff. There are a number of relevant measures in place to facilitate the mobility of Albanian students in Europe and beyond. Students value modules on entrepreneurship and business management. The Careers Office has an initiative to build on existing modules and introduce similar activities into a wider range of subjects and faculties.

The Standards for Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research are substantially met. There are appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure efficient organisation and documentation of study programmes. However, a mechanism to ensure that partnership arrangements are implemented as intended and that students are supported fully during internship or trainee placements would be of benefit. There are appropriate and effective policies and mechanisms in place to ensure that lecturers are assessed regularly and an appropriate support structure to promote continuous teaching improvement. Research

projects at the national, regional and European level are encouraged. However, the University does not have a published institutional research strategy to prioritise research activity which identifies priorities and a policy of evaluation and transfer of research outcomes. There are few agreements with other institutions interested in the results of University research, inside or outside the country, and the transfer or recognition of achievements in scientific research is superficial.

The Standards for Students and their Support are substantially met. Students for first cycle programmes are recruited directly from Albanian high schools. Second and third cycle programmes are advertised on faculty websites and in faculty premises. The University's website provides general information and each faculty has its own website to provide students and staff with relevant information. Students confirmed that the information they receive is sufficient to their needs. Disabled students, students with disabled parents, students who are orphans, students suffering from financial hardship, students who are children of police officers fallen in the line of duty, and also Roma and Balkan Egyptian students are supported by the availability of scholarships to the full amount, or part of, their tuition fees. A priority area for infrastructure development is the improvement of facilities for disabled students and staff. There is a shortage of up-to-date textbooks in all libraries and no availability of e-books or online journals. For first cycle students there is no formal system for the allocation of individual tutors in place across the University. There is not a high level of student engagement with its deliberative and decision-making processes. The assistance students get from academic staff in finding employment after graduation is variable and is normally based on the strength of personal contacts. External partners were unanimous in expressing satisfaction with the relationship they have with the University. Internships for students are ad hoc in nature as there is no formal system in place. The creation of an Alumni Association would be a positive step forward for the University in formalising its links with commerce and industry in order to improve student employability and create opportunities for aligning curricula more closely with market requirements.

In reaching these judgements, the review team identified five areas where the University has recognised that further development is required and has affirmed the University's proposed action. Finally, the review team has made a number of recommendations for the University to consider as a means of further securing the quality and standard of its programmes and of enhancing further the learning experience of its students.

PUT undertook the review in accordance with APAAL guidelines. The review team acknowledges the University's level of engagement with the process and the cooperation provided to the review team throughout the visit phase.

The review team concludes that the Quality Standards are fully met in one area and substantially met in four areas.

Summary of findings

Good practice

The review team did not identify any features of good practice.

- None identified.

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weaknesses:

- the absence of a coordinated process to undertake labour market research and the use of this data in programme planning (paragraph 1.9)
- the absence of a centrally organised tracking of graduate employment destinations (paragraph 1.10)
- a lack of progress establishing an Alumni Association to act as an interface between the University and its alumni (paragraph 1.12)
- the lack of an inclusive social development policy for all students and staff (paragraph 2.4)
- the content and quality of information is inconsistent institution-wide with some faculty websites lacking information important to students or presenting out-of-date information (paragraph 2.8)
- in some cases, laboratory equipment and computer hardware and software is out-of-date and unable to support module requirements (paragraph 2.9)
- the absence of robust management of partnership agreements (paragraph 4.1)
- the lack of a coordinated institutional policy to prioritise research activity and to support the evaluation outcomes (paragraph 4.4)
- the inadequate provision of textbooks of suitable quality and in sufficient quantity (paragraph 5.8).

Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendations:

- develop and implement a mechanism which encourages the promotion and ownership of a quality culture across all units and all levels and the development of appropriate academic quality monitoring and review procedures (paragraph 1.2)
- provide a programme of training for student members of Academic Senate, and faculty and department boards and councils (paragraphs 1.4 and 5.10)
- ensure that the new Development Strategy identifies a set of University priorities, supported by appropriate objectives and targets that faculties are required to address in their faculty and department plans (paragraph 1.6)
- develop an annual survey of local and regional labour market needs and use the outcomes to review and improve academic provision (paragraph 1.9)
- a centrally organised mechanism is introduced to enable graduate employment destinations and outcomes to be tracked centrally (paragraph 1.10)
- establish as a matter of some priority an Alumni Association for its graduates (paragraph 1.12)
- strengthen its strategic approach to internationalisation by developing a long-term policy for increasing the number of incoming international students and academic experts in all departments and faculties (paragraph 1.15)
- develop and implement an inclusive social development policy for students and staff (paragraph 2.4)

- develop and implement an institution-wide information management process which ensures that faculty websites provide information which is accurate, complete and clearly presented (paragraphs 2.8, 3.7 and 5.2)
- develop and implement a University-wide process which ensures that module requirements continue to be supported fully by appropriate learning resources, including laboratories and technology (paragraph 2.9)
- in accordance with the European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning, prioritise the development of study programmes that are designed to widen participation and attract returning adult learners (paragraph 3.2)
- develop and implement a mechanism to ensure that all students are provided with reliable and up-to-date programme information, including learning objectives and assessment methods (paragraphs 3.7, 5.2 and 5.5)
- develop and implement a more structured approach to student induction and orientation, including coordinating and supporting the initiatives of members of the teaching staff (paragraphs 3.9, 5.2 and 5.5)
- develop and implement a policy to ensure that partnership arrangements are implemented as intended and that students are supported fully during internship or trainee placements (paragraph 4.1)
- develop and implement a strategic approach to scientific research which identifies priorities and a policy of evaluation and transfer of research outcomes (paragraph 4.4)
- adopt measures to improve the stock of books and prioritise the project which is already underway to introduce access to e-books and online journals (paragraph 5.8).

Affirmation of action being taken

The review team affirms the following actions already in progress:

- action to establish a Student Careers and Employment Advice Office (paragraph 1.11)
- involve students in the development of faculty websites, under the supervision of relevant academic staff (paragraph 2.8)
- a strategic commitment to improve facilities in older buildings for students with mobility difficulties (paragraphs 2.12, 2.14, and 5.6)
- attempts to optimise the number of students relative to institutional capacity, by taking control of student quotas and by developing its estate (paragraph 3.6)
- the project to address the quality and quantity of textbooks (paragraph 5.8).

Summary of judgements for each Evaluation Area

- 1 The Standards for the Organisation and its Management are substantially met.
- 2 The Standards for Resourcing are substantially met.
- 3 The Standards for the Curriculum are fully met.
- 4 The Standards for Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research are substantially met.
- 5 The Standards for Students and their Support are substantially met.

Summary judgement

The review team recommends to the Accreditation Council that at the Polytechnic University of Tirana the State Quality Standards are substantially met.

Detailed report

Evaluation Area 1: The Organisation and its Management

1.1 PUT's governance and regulatory frameworks are designed to align with national legal requirements for higher education institutions and the University operates in accordance with the requirements of its Statute and Internal Rules. **[SER docs 1.1-1.5 & 3.8; Clarification doc p3(1); Meetings 1,3 & 4]** The Statute supports the University's Mission, and is adjusted as required by external regulatory authorities. **[SER p11]** Since October 2015, with the introduction of new higher education legislation, PUT has commenced implementing changes in the structure and functioning of the organisation. These activities will ensure compliance with the requirements of the new law, and the relevant by-laws when they are enacted, and are understood by staff. **[Meetings 4,8 & 9] [Chapter III, Standard I.1]**

1.2 Existing arrangements for the management and administration of PUT, and for collegial decision making, work appropriately and are well understood by staff at all levels. **[Meetings 3, 4,8 & 9; Clarification doc p7(17)]** Organisational arrangements have either already been made or are in the process of being implemented to take full account of the new legislation. However, further reform is necessary if PUT is to address concerns raised by staff and students, in surveys and during the visit, relating to the lack of an embedded quality culture among academic staff and students. **[PAAHE surveys; SER docs 1.6 & 4.10; Clarification doc p13(2); Visit doc 3; Meetings 2,4-6 & 9]** It is recommended that the role of the University develops and it implements a mechanism which encourages the promotion and ownership of a quality culture across all units and all levels and the development of appropriate academic quality monitoring and review procedures. **[Chapter III, Standard I.2]**

1.3 PUT has developed and implemented effective arrangements to support collegial discussion and debate which work well for staff at all levels. **[SER p11; Clarification doc p4(5); Visit doc 9; Additional info 1 & 11; Meetings 4,8 & 9]** Boards and councils meet regularly and information on agenda items is made available to staff in advance. **[Meetings 8-10]** Members of the Rectorate and senior managers at faculty and department level are responsible for monitoring the implementation of decisions. **[Chapter III, Standard I.3]**

1.4 Students generally displayed awareness of opportunities for representation. **[Meetings 5 & 6]** However, it is unclear whether students receive information on boards and council agenda items. **[Meetings 5 & 6]** Students' use of informal channels with academic staff and University authorities enables them to raise issues and for the student voice to be heard. **[Meetings 5 & 6]** Students also view the activities of the Student Senate positively, and are actively engaged with its operation. However, PUT does not provide a training programme to support student representation and engagement. **[Meetings 4-6]** To strengthen the effectiveness of student engagement and representation in its formal governance processes, it is recommended that PUT provide a programme of training for student members of Academic Senate, and faculty and department boards and councils. **[Chapter III, Standard I.6]**

1.5 Self-governance in University affairs extends to all organisational academic and administrative units, to teaching and scientific activities, to financial and administrative matters, and to the approval of University agreements with outside bodies. **[SER pp7-8; Clarification doc p5(9); Meetings 3, 8 & 9]** PUT has been proactive in seeking external funding opportunities and has benefited from a range of European and international programmes and projects. **[SER docs 1.23-1.30, 3.12 & 4.16; Meetings 1,3,8 & 9]** An effective process for internal audit and control undertaken by an internal audit unit located in the Rectorate is in place. **[SER p8; SER doc 2.71; Clarification doc p6(11) & p7(15); Meetings 4 & 7] [Chapter III, Standard I.4]**

1.6 Staff awareness of and access to PUT strategy is appropriate and there has been discussion at various stages of development by both management bodies and deliberative councils. [SER p11; SER doc 1.3; Meetings 1-4&7-10] The 2016-17 Strategy has been drawn up in accordance with the University's Mission, Vision and purpose, and contains appropriate objectives and accompanying actions to support implementation. [SER p8; SER doc 1.3] However, the current strategic plan has a life span of only two years, which in comparison with best international practice is short. [Clarification doc p5(8); Meetings 1 & 3] In addition, the planning process commences at faculty and department level and lacks a mechanism to ensure close alignment between University strategic priorities and priorities defined at faculty and department level. [Meetings 3, 4 & 8-10] Arrangements for effective regular monitoring and review of University progress against strategic priorities, and of faculty progress against those objectives and targets, are therefore potentially at risk. To strengthen the effectiveness of University decision-making, it is **recommended** that the new Development Strategy identifies a set of University priorities, supported by appropriate objectives and targets that faculties are required to address in their faculty and department plans. [Chapter III, Standard I.5]

1.7 The annual report submitted to the Ministry of Education and Sports (the Ministry) provides a comprehensive reflection of internal and external educational and scientific activities, and is based on an effective extended process of self-assessment which is understood by staff. [SER p8; SER docs 1.21, 1.22, 3.1-3.6&Ev: Evaluation of Teaching and Research; Meetings 5-9] The report is informed by self-evaluation reports on teaching activities completed at the end of the academic year by departments and study programmes, as well as department reports on research activity which are finalised at the end of the calendar year. [SER p11; SER docs 3.1-3.6; Visit docs 6 & 7; Meetings 7-9] Department reports are discussed at faculty councils, and composite faculty reports are provided by Deans to the Deputy Rectors who together finalise the annual report for approval by the Academic Senate prior to submission to the Ministry. [SER p11; SER docs 1.21&1.22] The approved report is made available on the University's website. [Chapter III, Standard I.6]

1.8 PUT has in place effective management, executive, and administrative structures which are separate from academic structures and organisational units. The structures and arrangements are understood by staff and reflect prevailing higher education law. [SER pp8-9] Departments are the main unit for teaching and research and each has at least seven full members of academic staff, of whom a minimum of three are required to hold a doctoral qualification or professorial academic title. All teaching and scientific research activities are based on principles of academic freedom and contribute to the University's Mission, purpose and goals. [SER docs 1.21 & 1.22; Meetings 2,4, 8& 9] Academic staff exercise independence in teaching, curricula, and research activities, and in organising study programmes. [SER p9; SER docs 1-3.38.5; Meetings 8 & 9] Academic councils and management bodies enable full involvement of staff in discussion, debate, and decision-making. [SER p 11; Visit doc 9; Meetings 3& 8-10] [Chapter III, Standard II.1]

1.9 In relation to employment, admissions, and its use of public information, PUT respects and operates in accordance with prevailing competition rules. [SER p9; SER doc 1.3; Meetings 4 & 7] However, PUT acknowledges the absence of a coordinated process to undertake labour market research and the use of this data in programme planning. [SER p8] In addressing this **weakness** and to assist with the development of the new strategic plan, it is **recommended** that the University develop an annual survey of local and regional labour market needs and use the outcomes to review and improve academic provision. In implementing this recommendation, account should be given to existing practice in faculties where market research activities are undertaken currently to enable them to obtain information and data on regional and local employment needs. [SER doc 1.3; Visit doc 4; Meetings 8, 9 & 11] [Chapter III Standard III.1]

1.10 Similarly, PUT recognises the need for a centrally organised tracking of graduate employment destinations. **[Clarification doc p13(1); Meeting 4]** Some faculties undertake market research activities to enable them to obtain information and data on graduate employment outcomes but there is no mechanism in place to ensure University oversight. To address this **weakness**, it is **recommended** that a centrally organised mechanism is introduced to enable graduate employment destinations and outcomes to be tracked centrally. In implementing this recommendation account should be given to existing practice in faculties where graduate employment outcomes are tracked currently. **[Chapter III Standard III.1]**

1.11 PUT does not have a fully functioning Careers Office for providing comprehensive advice and support to its students. **[Clarification doc p7(16); Meeting 3]** However, steps are being taken to implementing such a service and an office space has been identified. **[Meeting 10]** Affirmation of this action to establish a Student Careers and Employment Advice Office is therefore acknowledged. **[Chapter III, Standard III.1]**

1.12 There has been a lack of progress in PUT establishing an Alumni Association to act as an interface between the University and its alumni. **[SER p9; SER doc 4.9; Clarification doc p13(1); Meeting 11]** To address this **weakness** it is **recommended** that PUT establish as a matter of some priority an Alumni Association for its graduates. **[Chapter III Standard III.1]** In implementing this recommendation consideration should be given to allocating this role to the intended Student Careers and Employment Advice Office. **[Chapter III, Standard III.1]**

1.13 PUT bases its policies and institutional activity in pursuing collaboration and partnership at regional, national, and international levels in line with its Strategic Plan 2016-17. **[SER p10]** The University cooperates with a range of government and non-government organisations, often through signed agreements. Staff benefit from cooperation agreements with other higher education institutions both nationally and internationally through research links and opportunities for international mobility. This adds value to PUT study programmes and helps to meet labour market needs. **[Clarification doc p7(20); Meetings 5,6,8&9]** Cooperation agreements with other higher education institutions both nationally and internationally exist and staff are able to benefit from this through research links and opportunities for international mobility. However, PUT does not maintain a central register of partnerships and collaborative links, and does not operate a risk register. **[SER docs 1.28, 1.32, 1.33, 3.42.4, 3.43, 4.16.2& 4.16.3; Meeting 2]** **[Chapter III, Standard III.4]**

1.14 Through cooperation with state and private institutions PUT provides various services to the benefit of students including an online registration and online mark check system. **[SER p10; SER docs 1.8& 4.3; Clarification doc p14(6); Additional info 7]** However, the principal focus of PUT's links and cooperation with external organisations is through the provision of study and teaching practices, internships, and teaching secretary services. **[SER p10]** Prompted by increasing student numbers, PUT's efforts to increase the number of public and private companies with which it has such links are meeting with success. **[Meetings 2, 4-6& 10]** **[Chapter III, Standard III.3]**

1.15 Responsibility for PUT's international activities, including mobility, is shared between academic departments and a central unit with responsibilities that include international relations. **[SER pp10-11; Meetings 1-6& 8-10]** There are a number of appropriate activities in place, including mobility agreements for staff and students, short-term training and conferences, opportunities to pursue doctoral qualifications at a foreign university, and project links (see also paragraph 3.11). **[SER docs 1.23-1.30, 2.3.1, 3.41, 4.16& 4.17; Meetings 2-4& 8-9]** However, PUT recognises that its international profile would benefit from strengthening. **[SER p12; Meetings 5, 6, 8 &9]** There are modest levels of incoming and outgoing mobility, with incoming student mobility representing a particular

challenge. **[Meetings 5,6, 8&9]** PUT lack institutional capability to deliver study programmes in international languages such as English and accept that provision for study programmes in international languages would be beneficial as would a long-term mobility policy. **[SER p12; SER doc 4.12; Clarification doc p7(18 &19) & p13(3); Meetings 1&3]** It is **recommended** that to strengthen its strategic aspirations in the area of internationalisation, PUT develop a long-term policy for improving the number of incoming international students and academic experts in all departments and faculties. **[Chapter III, Standard III.4]**

Findings

Good practice

The review team did not identify any features of good practice in this Evaluation Area.

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weaknesses:

- the absence of a coordinated process to undertake labour market research and the use of this data in programme planning (paragraph 1.9)
- the absence of a centrally organised tracking of graduate employment destinations (paragraph 1.10)
- a lack of progress establishing an Alumni Association to act as an interface between the University and its alumni (paragraph 1.12).

Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendations:

- develop and implement a mechanism which encourages the promotion and ownership of a quality culture across all units and all levels and the development of appropriate academic quality monitoring and review procedures (paragraph 1.2)
- provide a programme of training for student members of Academic Senate, and faculty and department boards and councils (paragraphs 1.4 and 5.10)
- ensure that the new Development Strategy identifies a set of University priorities, supported by appropriate objectives and targets that faculties are required to address in their faculty and department plans (paragraph 1.6)
- develop an annual survey of local and regional labour market needs and use the outcomes to review and improve academic provision (paragraph 1.9)
- a centrally organised mechanism is introduced to enable graduate employment destinations and outcomes to be tracked centrally (paragraph 1.10)
- establish as a matter of some priority an Alumni Association for its graduates (paragraph 1.12)
- strengthen its strategic approach to internationalisation by developing a long-term policy for increasing the number of incoming international students and academic experts in all departments and faculties (paragraph 1.15).

Affirmation of action being taken

The review team affirms the following action already in progress:

- action to establish a Student Careers and Employment Advice Office (paragraph 1.11)

Judgement

The Standards for the Organisation and its Management are substantially met.

Evaluation Area 2: Resourcing

2.1 PUT defines clearly all duties regarding the management of human resources. Functions are set out in the Statute, in faculty, department and research group regulations. The University implements an appropriate and well-defined recruitment policy for academic and assisting lecturing staff. **[SED docs 1.11-1.15; Additional info Practice of Hiring Procedures for Academic Staff]** The recruitment process is driven by either the introduction of new programmes or an increase in student numbers. **[Meetings 1 & 3]** The Department of Human Resources oversees recruitment policy and employs eight individuals to implement recruitment process in each faculty and the research centre. PUT has commenced changes in its structure and functioning to ensure compliance with the requirements of the new law, and the relevant by-laws when they become available. **[Chapter III, Standard IV.1]**

2.2 PUT adopts a strategic approach to ensure that all staff are provided with appropriate resources. **[Meeting 3]** Financial support is available to enable staff to participate in conferences, publications, and specialist events. Several examples of how staff have benefited from such support were provided including initiatives to integrate academic staff through collaborations and partnerships with foreign universities. **[Meetings 8 & 9]** **[Chapter III, Standard IV.2]**

2.3 All staff prepare an annual report on their teaching programme and research work, which is evaluated at department level. **[Meeting 8]** Performance of research work is overseen by faculty councils and the Internal Assurance Centre of Quality, and is discussed and approved by the Senate. **[Additional info Research Work Evaluation]** To be assigned the title of professorship, a candidate must have one year's lecturing or research work experience at a renowned European university. **[SER doc 2.3.5; Meeting 9]** Such opportunities are made available principally to doctoral candidates or within the framework of collaborative projects at faculty level and several examples were noted. However, there is no institutional mechanism for sharing practice arising from attendance at such activities. PUT implements a training plan linked to the scientific priorities at faculty level but funding constraints mean that only short-term training opportunities for academic staff or a limited number of conference participations are available. **[Chapter III, Standard IV.3]**

2.4 PUT does not have in place an inclusive social development policy for all students and staff. While the University implements a small number of social development policies it is acknowledged that social policies must be reflected in the new development strategy and that such policies include well-defined indicators of the impact on the local community. **[Meeting 10]** To address this **weakness** it is **recommended** that that PUT develops and implements an inclusive social development policy for students and staff. **[Chapter III Standard IV.4]**

2.5 PUT has an appropriate legal structure to inform the budget-drafting process that meets statutory requirements. **[SER doc 2.5.1; Visit doc Administration Board Agenda p2; Meeting 8]** The Rectorate retains final responsibility for the budget-planning process while Senate is responsible for the allocation of funding to departments. **[Meeting 10]** The new law assigns only three representatives to the Administrative Board, therefore four faculties will not be represented on this key decision-making body. **[Chapter III, Standard VI.1]**

2.6 PUT provides the necessary means to implement its financial policy which is based on an appropriate and well-defined transparent and legal framework. The Rectorate has created three directories to manage institutional finances after the approval of the institutional budget by Senate and the Administrative Council and their functions and responsibilities are defined by regulation. **[Visit doc Information on competences of the**

three directories pp1-2] [Chapter III, Standard VI.1]

2.7 PUT is subject to processes of internal audit, external audit, High State Audit and Ministry of Education and Sports audit. Auditing processes are defined clearly in legislation. **[SER doc 2.7.1] [Chapter III, Standard VI.3]**

2.8 PUT has a coordinated information system and information is disseminated either in hard copy or in electronic format. However, the content and quality of information is inconsistent institution-wide with some faculty websites lacking information important to students or presenting out-of-date information. In recognising this weakness, PUT representatives noted that a number of faculty websites remain under construction. **[SER doc 2.7.1 p16; Meeting 10]** It is **recommended** that PUT develops and implements an institution-wide process which ensures that faculty websites provide information which is accurate, complete and clearly presented. Affirmation of action to involve students in the development of faculty websites, under the supervision of relevant academic staff is acknowledged. **[Chapter III, Standard VII.1]**

2.9 PUT coordinates effectively activities in the field of technology. The Secretariat operates an appropriate online computerised system that enables students to register for examinations online. **[SER doc 2.9.1]** While many learning resources have been donated to the University, PUT is committed to improving learning conditions in laboratories, lecture halls, workshop halls and other areas. **[Resource tour]** However, students reported in meetings and via surveys that in many cases laboratory equipment and computer hardware and software is out-of-date and unable to support module requirements. **[Chapter III Standard V.1]. [Student survey; Meetings 4 & 5]** To address this **weakness**, it is **recommended** that PUT develops and implements a University-wide process which ensures that module requirements continue to be supported fully by appropriate laboratories and technology.

2.10 PUT has the required documentation with regard to the property it occupies. While all real estate is owned by the State, PUT is responsible for the use and maintenance of the properties. However, the State is at liberty to acquire or make use of buildings for the wider benefit of the State, for example, as with the Faculty of Mining Geology. **[Chapter III, Standard VII.2; Chapter III, Standard VII.3]**

2.11 PUT provides relevant storage and maintenance of its academic, cultural and scientific heritage at its Scientific Library and the National Library. The University pursues a well-defined and appropriate policy to evaluate its academic ownership and to preserve scientific studies archives in the Scientific Library and at department and faculty levels. Income is secured from a photocopy service at all faculty libraries and from services provided by the Scientific Library to third parties, in exchange for fees approved by the Administrative Board. **[Chapter III, Standard VII.4]**

2.12 PUT has appropriate mechanisms in place to manage its assets. Two new buildings have improved and increased the availability of modern learning, teaching and administrative facilities. While the new buildings have been designed to cater for individuals with mobility difficulties, the older buildings do not and lack appropriate facilities for students with mobility difficulties. In acknowledging this weakness, PUT representatives indicated a strategic commitment to improve facilities in older buildings for students with mobility difficulties. Affirmation of a strategic commitment to improve facilities in older buildings for students with mobility difficulties is acknowledged. **[Chapter III, Standard V.1]**

2.13 PUT has a well-established logistics administrative structure which enables all faculties and departments to carry out functions of common interest. Services are provided to third parties which strengthens ties with community and private sector groups while providing an income source. **[SER doc 2.13.1 pp10, 26, 31 & 39] [Chapter III, Standard**

VII.5]

2.14 PUT has a strategic commitment to improve its facilities and infrastructure for academic and scientific activity to ensure that these remain appropriate. **[Meeting 1]** Students commented unfavourably on the availability of computer facilities to support their learning. The improvement of laboratory facilities, addressing health and safety concerns and improving facilities for students with mobility difficulties are identified as priority areas for development. **[Chapter III, Standard VII.6]**

2.15 PUT has established and maintains appropriate systems to manage effectively documentation requirements in hardcopy and electronic forms. The system is managed and run by a central secretariat with a representative in each faculty. **[Chapter III, Standard V.2]**

Findings

Good practice

The review team did not identify any features of good practice for this Evaluation Area.

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weaknesses:

- the lack of an inclusive social development policy for all students and staff (paragraph 2.4)
- the content and quality of information is inconsistent institution-wide with some faculty websites lacking information important to students or presenting out-of-date information (paragraph 2.8)
- in some cases laboratory equipment and computer hardware and software is out-of-date and unable to support module requirements (paragraph 2.9).

Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendations:

- develop and implement an inclusive social development policy for students and staff (paragraph 2.4)
- develop and implement an institution-wide information management process which ensures that faculty websites provide information which is accurate, complete and clearly presented (paragraphs 2.8, 3.7 and 5.2)
- develop and implement a University-wide process which ensures that module requirements continue to be supported fully by appropriate learning resources, including laboratories and technology (paragraph 2.9).

Affirmation of action being taken

The review team affirms the following actions already in progress:

- involve students in the development of faculty websites, under the supervision of relevant academic staff (paragraph 2.8)
- a strategic commitment to improve facilities in older buildings for students with mobility difficulties (paragraphs 2.12, 2.14, and 5.6).

Judgement

The Standards for Resourcing are substantially met.

Evaluation Area 3: The Curriculum

3.1 In its Mission Statement, **[SER doc 1.3]** PUT acknowledges its strengths in applied technical and engineering fields. Each of the 98 programmes offered by the University, together covering all three Bologna cycles, build on these strengths and align with institutional strategy. **[SER p21; SER doc 3.1]** Therefore, the University's study programmes are aligned with its Mission. **[Chapter I, Standard I.1]**

3.2 The Strategy Document 2016-17 **[SER doc sect 4.1.1]** states the University's strategic objective of expanding part-time and distance learning provision towards continuing education and training courses. However, senior staff admitted **[Meeting 2]** that continuing education had not been a priority, as the institution had concentrated on the three Bologna cycles rather than short courses. While staff were able to give examples of part-time Master's programmes, short courses and distance learning courses, **[Meetings 8-9]** the number of courses that may be described as continuing education is small, essentially part-time Master's in Transportation and Fashion Design, and a distance-learning programme in Logistics and Manufacturing Engineering. **[Chapter I Standard I.2] [SER p24, SER doc 3.1]** It is recommended that, in accordance with the European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning, the University should prioritise the development of study programmes that are designed to widen participation and attract returning adult learners.

3.3 The portfolio of programmes offered by the University align closely with its background and strengths in applied engineering and technology. The University includes further improvement of its offering as a strategic objective, **[SER doc 1.3]** aiming to orientate them closer towards the labour market. **[Chapter I, Standard I.3]**

3.4 The process for programme approval and review is described in the Procedure for Designing, Reviewing and Approving Study Programmes. **[SER p22]** It requires consideration of each programme's compatibility with the PUT Mission, with the development strategy of PUT, and with national and international objectives, prior to approval by Council of the relevant faculty. **[SER docs 1.1&1.7]** The Directorate of Curriculum reviews and evaluates the proposals to ensure alignment with national and institutional requirements, before submission to the Ministry for approval. **[SER p23; SER docs 1.1, 1.7& 3.15 (Albanian); Meeting 4]** Collectively, these processes ensure that study programmes are offered in accordance with University development strategy and in line with local, national and international trends. **[Chapter I, Standard I.4]**

3.5 The University benefits from a number of long-established relationships between companies and individual staff members that inform the development of its academic programmes. **[Meeting 10]** Its qualifications are held in high regard in the employment market and its graduates are regarded as high quality. **[Meeting 10] [Chapter I, Standard I.12]**

3.6 The Strategy Document 2016-17 **[1.3 sect 4.1.1]** states the University's ambition to increase 'the number of students at the three study cycles to conform to institutional capacities'. However, until recently, student quotas have been under the direct control of the Council of Ministers and the University has found it difficult to balance its intake. Recent growth in the number of students entering higher education, coupled with high admissions quotas set by the Council of Ministers, have resulted in unfavourable staff to student and accommodation to student ratios (1:39 and 4.03 M2:student). **[SER p22]** Students reported limited availability of physical resources and described teaching staff having to manage with what is available **[Student Survey; Meetings 5-6]** and senior staff agreed that the pressures on space and teaching staff are a concern. **[Meetings 1, 8&9]** The University intends to address these issues by taking advantage of the change in law that allows universities some control of their student quotas, and through ambitious building plans that

include a Civil Engineering and Architecture building. **[SER doc 1.3; Resource tour; Meeting 1]** Affirmation of action to optimise the number of students relative to institutional capacity, by taking control of student quotas and by developing its estate is acknowledged. **[Chapter I, Standard I.5]**

3.7 In the self-evaluation report, PUT acknowledges that it has not given enough importance to informing students about their study programmes and the component curricula and learning objectives. **[SER p28]** Students are given leaflets **[SER doc 3.27]** that contain broad descriptions of the topics covered, and study guides **[SER doc 3.36]** that provide basic information about each programme, without going into detail of the learning objectives, assessments and assessment criteria. Discussions with staff and students revealed varied practice across the faculties and programmes in the level of completeness of programme information available on the websites. **[SER p27; Meetings 5, 6 & 10]** For some students, the main source of programme information was the introductory class at the beginning of each academic year. **[Meetings 5, 6, 8 & 9]** It is **recommended** that PUT develops and implements a mechanism to ensure that all students are provided with reliable and up-to-date programme information, including learning objectives and assessment methods. **[Chapter I, Standard I.8]**

3.8 First cycle study programmes focus on providing students with a background knowledge of the general principles in their subject and a general proficiency in the application of these principles. **[SER p28]** Example programme guides **[SER doc 3.36.1.1-1.6]** show introductory classes generally concerned with acquiring background theory and basic skills in year one, leading up to more applied topics in year three. **[Chapter I, Standard I.8]**

3.9 Scrutiny of programme guides confirms the University's assertion, that first cycle programmes are constructed to develop basic proficiency in key subjects, thereby building on knowledge gained in high schools. **[SER p29, SER doc 3.36.1.1-1.6]** The first class each year serves as an introduction to the coming year's studies, a practice that was welcomed by the students. **[Meetings 6, 8, & 9]** However, the University concedes that there is a lack of institutional structures to support the induction and orientation activities of new students, and an over-reliance on the initiatives of academic staff. **[SER p34]** It is **recommended** that PUT develops and implements a more structured approach to student induction and orientation, including coordinating and supporting the initiatives of members of the teaching staff. **[Chapter I, Standard I.8]**

3.10 Second cycle study programmes at PUT are designed to provide a natural progression from the first cycle, and take one of two alternative structures. There are Master of Science programmes that develop advanced knowledge in a specialised area and equip students for doctoral study, and Professional Master's programmes that aim to instil practical engineering skills in a particular area of specialisation. **[SER p29; SER docs 3.1& 3.32-3.33 (Albanian)]** Master's programmes include a diploma thesis, which is an independent and creative research project and is intended to test the student's professional skills and ability to carry on studies and projects in the relevant field. **[SER docs 1.2 & 3.36.2.5]** **[Chapter I, Standard I.9]**

3.11 Article 4 of the Statute **[SER doc 1.1]** states that the University's higher education offering should be based on the principles and standards of the European Higher Education Area and reflect the principles and objectives of the Bologna Process. PUT has put considerable effort into ensuring compliance of its programmes. **[Meeting 2]** Cycle one programmes include 5-6 ECTS of foreign language study, **[SER p25; SER doc 3.36: Additional info 'Sample Teaching Plan']** as required by Senate. **[SER doc 3.22 (Albanian)]** The Foreign Language Centre provides first cycle training in English, French, Italian, Russian and German. **[SER p25]** PUT has a number of Erasmus Mundus, Erasmus+

and Tempus programmes with foreign universities, mostly in the area of joint doctoral programmes. **[SER p25; SER doc 3.12]** Taken together, these measures facilitate the mobility of Albanian students in Europe and beyond. **[Chapter I, Standard I.10]**

3.12 Given the applied nature of the study programmes offered by PUT, practical application of knowledge and skills is a core feature of the provision. In first cycle programmes, laboratory work, assignments and projects are supplemented with professional practice and a dissertation thesis. **[SER p33; Additional info 'Sample Teaching Plan'; Meetings 5-6]** Second cycle study programmes have 30 ECTS allocated to professional practice and the diploma thesis. **[SER p30]** The professional practice may be carried out in public or private sector companies. **[SER doc 3.35 (Albanian)] [Chapter I, Standard I.11]**

3.13 Some study programmes have modules on entrepreneurship and business management. **[SER doc 3.40 (Albanian); Meetings 8-9]** The module Engineering Communication includes coverage of curricula vitae writing in Albanian and English, verbal and non-verbal communication, effective presentation strategies, business letter writing and other transferable skills. **[SER docs 3.36.1.5&3.36.1.6]** Students valued this module, **[Meeting 6]** though it is now elective, rather than core. Staff indicated that such modules are currently available in two of the faculties **[Meeting 8]** and that the Careers Office has an initiative to build on these examples and introduce similar activities into a wider range of subjects and faculties. **[Meeting 10] [Chapter I, Standard I.12]**

Findings

Good practice

The review team did not identify any features of good practice in this Evaluation Area.

Weaknesses

The review team did not identify any weaknesses in relation to this Evaluation Area.

Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendations:

- in accordance with the European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning, prioritise the development of study programmes that are designed to widen participation and attract returning adult learners (paragraph 3.2)
- develop and implement a mechanism to ensure that all students are provided with reliable and up-to-date programme information, including learning objectives and assessment methods (paragraph 3.7, 5.2 and 5.5)
- develop and implement a more structured approach to student induction and orientation, including coordinating and supporting the initiatives of members of the teaching staff (paragraphs 3.9, 5.2 and 5.5).

Affirmation of action being taken

The review team affirms the following action already in progress:

- attempts to optimise the number of students relative to institutional capacity, by taking control of student quotas and by developing its estate (paragraph 3.6).

Judgement

The Standards for the Curriculum are fully met.

Evaluation Area 4: Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research

4.1 PUT has appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure efficient organisation and documentation of study programmes. Appropriate mechanisms are in place to approve new programmes. For teaching needs and in order to implement the planned curriculum and study programmes, PUT has collaborated with a number of private and public organisations to employ part-time qualified specialists from relevant fields where appropriate. **[SER docs 4.2 & 4.4]** Discussions with staff, students, alumni and employers indicate that the implementation of some partnership agreements has not taken account of the terms of the agreement, which has affected adversely the overall effectiveness of the partnership. Examples include the level of cooperation with partner organisations and support provided to students during internship or trainee placements. **[Chapter I Standard II.1] [Meetings 2, 3, 5-6 & 10]** To address this **weakness**, it is **recommended** that PUT develops and implements a mechanism to ensure that partnership arrangements are implemented as intended and that students are supported fully during internship or trainee placements. **[Chapter I Standard II.1]**

4.2 PUT provides students who have fulfilled the requirements of their programme with an official diploma document which has been approved by the University. Students are familiar with assessment regulations, including assessment criteria and expectations and on the results announcement procedure. The University has appropriate and effective policies and mechanisms in place to ensure that lecturers are assessed regularly. Students are involved in the evaluation process. **[SER doc 4.8] [Chapter I Standard II.2]**

4.3 PUT has implemented an appropriate support structure to promote continuous teaching improvement. However, discussions with staff indicated that the provision of pedagogic training and support was less developed than subject-specific support. **[Meetings 2, 3, 5-6 & 10] [Chapter I Standard II.3; Chapter I Standard II.4]**

4.4 PUT encourages groups and research projects at the national, regional and European level. While the University is committed to the organisation of scientific activities, it was acknowledged that it does not have a published institutional research strategy to prioritise research activity. **[Meetings 2, 5-6 & 10]** Each PUT department is organised into homogeneous subject groups relevant to the programmes provided. While departments mainly focus on teaching activity, departments are at liberty to form teaching and research groups to meet their needs and some departments have formed autonomous research groups. In addition, PUT has a separate research institute where over 70 per cent of staff time is dedicated to research activity. **[Meetings 9 & 12]** While the Scientific Research Directory oversees the evaluation of scientific research outcomes, the lack of a coordinated institutional policy to prioritise research activity does not support the evaluation of progress or the promotion of outcomes in scientific fields. **[Chapter II Standard I.4, I.6, I.7 and I.8]** To address this **weakness**, it is **recommended** that PUT develops and implements a strategic approach to scientific research that identifies priorities and a policy of evaluation and transfer of research outcomes.

4.5 PUT supports and encourages research groups, research activities and cooperation with the other research and design centres. Examples include participation in doctoral projects and research activities of national interest, participation in research European projects and research projects and bilateral studies with other Western universities. **[SER doc 4.13]** Department reports on research activity are finalised at the end of the calendar year and incorporated in the University's annual report to the Ministry. **[Chapter II Standard I.2]**

4.6 Scientific and research outcomes are made public in a variety of ways, including conference presentations, and research bulletins, which are presented at the University or main unit level. Several technical science bulletins are published by the University. Further, some science research activity results are made public through the electronic publication on websites. **[SER doc 4.18]** However, there are few agreements with other institutions interested in the results of research at PUT, inside or outside the country, and the transfer or recognition of achievements in scientific research is superficial. **[SER doc 1.20] [Chapter II Standard I.7]**

4.7 Continuity in scientific research is facilitated through the involvement of PhD students in departmental research activities. This involves incorporating project and thesis work research with research projects on topics of national interest. In addition, the involvement of foreign staff members in research activity and the involvement of foreign partner organisations in research activities facilitates continuity in scientific research fields. PUT encourages faculties and departments to invite foreign academic staff to participate in teaching and research activities. **[SER doc 4.12] [Chapter II Standard I.6]**

Findings

Good practice

The review team did not identify any features of good practice in this Evaluation Area.

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weaknesses:

- the absence of robust management of partnership agreements (paragraph 4.1)
- the lack of a coordinated institutional policy to prioritise research activity and to support the evaluation outcomes (paragraph 4.4).

Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendations:

- develop and implement a policy to ensure that partnership arrangements are implemented as intended and that students are supported fully during internship or trainee placements (paragraph 4.1)
- develop and implement a strategic approach to scientific research which identifies priorities and a policy of evaluation and transfer of research outcomes (paragraph 4.4).

Affirmation of action being taken

The review team did not affirm any actions already in progress in relation to this Evaluation Area.

Judgement

The Standards for Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research are substantially met.

Evaluation Area 5: Students and their Support

5.1 PUT actively recruits students for its first cycle programmes directly from Albanian high schools. Faculties organise recruitment visits where academic and administrative staff visit schools and give presentations on study programmes they offer. The Ministry organises an annual student fair held on the outskirts of Tirana. This is attended by a delegation from all faculties and the University to provide prospectuses and other information for prospective students. At the student fair the University recruits students alongside other universities and colleges from across Albania. **[SED p21; Meeting with Director of Human Resources and Chief Secretaries of Information Technology and Engineering; Prospectus; Meetings 5-6]** Second and third cycle programmes are advertised on faculty websites and in faculty premises. **[Chapter I Standard III.1]**

5.2 At the beginning of their study programmes, professors provide students with syllabuses, timetables and reading lists on the first day of the course. While this information is also available to some students through faculty websites, meetings with students and teaching staff confirmed that this practice is not uniform across all faculties and the University. **[Meetings 5, 6, 8&9]** Implementation of the recommendations made in paragraphs 3.7 and 3.9 will assist in addressing this weakness. **[Chapter I Standard III.2]**

5.3 The staff:student ratio is 1:39. **[SER p22]** This figure is calculated against permanent staff only, and does not factor in part-time staff. Though students did not raise staff numbers as an issue, senior staff acknowledged that this is a problem on which they are focusing. **[Meetings 5, 6&10]** Members of the Senate outlined their desire to reduce this ratio to between 1:25 and 1:17 in the medium term, with the goal of reducing it to 1:15 in five years' time. **[Meeting 10]** **[Chapter I Standard III.1]**

5.4 The PUT website provides general information and each faculty has its own website to provide students and staff with relevant information. In addition, academic and administrative staff communicate with students by email. Students confirmed that they are happy with their communications with University staff. There is some variation regarding the presentation of information and consistency in content. None of the faculties nor the University has developed or implemented a student-facing virtual learning environment. The University provides free Wi-Fi access to all its staff and students. **[Meetings 5, 6, 8&9]** Staff and students confirmed that the University holds a personal file for each student which includes their address and email address. **[Meeting with Director of Human Resources and Chief Secretaries of Information Technology and Engineering]** **[Chapter I Standard III.3; Chapter I Standard III.5]**

5.5 On their first day at the University, the Rector gives an introductory presentation to all new students. The Deans and the Director give a welcoming address to the new students of their respective faculties or the Institute. Students then receive a briefing from the head of their respective departments. Students confirmed that the information they receive is sufficient to their needs. **[Meetings 5, 6&10; Meeting with Director of Human Resources and Chief Secretaries of Information Technology and Engineering]** Regarding the provision of individual tutors to second and third cycle students, each research group in a department nominates a student tutor. Discussions with staff and students confirmed the satisfactory nature of these arrangements. **[Meetings 5-6]** **[Chapter I Standard III.3; Chapter I Standard III.5]**

5.6 PUT supports disabled students, students with disabled parents, students who are orphans, students suffering from financial hardship, students who are children of police officers fallen in the line of duty, and also Roma and Balkan-Egyptian students, by offering scholarships to the full amount, or part of, their tuition fees. **[SER docs 5.20-5.22; Meetings 4-6]** Beyond this financial assistance, there is no additional support provided to students in

special categories other than the provision of ramps for the convenience of wheelchair users in some areas. Both the staff and student surveys indicated that this provision is only partial and is an area of some concern. This was confirmed in meetings with students and senior staff. While disabled toilet facilities are provided in the new building, it was confirmed by staff and students that this is not the case in all University buildings. Senior staff confirmed that this is a priority area for infrastructure development. The affirmation acknowledged in paragraph 2.12 will assist in addressing this weakness. **[Staff Survey; Student Survey; Meetings 4-6] [Chapter I Standard III.4]**

5.7 Part-time studies have been offered by the University in the past, but, for the present, current government policy means that this provision is due to be phased out. **[Meeting 2]**

5.8 The Head of the Scientific Library, the University's main library, is responsible for the provision of library services. The self-evaluation report states that 'not all textbooks are of a good quality and in sufficient quantity'. Discussions with staff and students confirmed a shortage of up-to-date textbooks in all libraries and no availability of e-books or online journals. **[Resource tour; Meetings 4-6 & 8-9]** This shortfall is currently ameliorated by the provision of photocopied materials. Meetings with senior and teaching staff confirmed that this is a priority area for improvement and that a project has started to address this weakness. **[Chapter 1 Standard III.5] [Meetings 4&8-9]** Affirmation of this action to address the quality and quantity of textbooks is recognised. However, it is **recommended** that PUT adopts measures to improve the stock of books and prioritises the project that is already underway to introduce access to e-books and online journals.

5.9 First cycle students are provided with contact information for their tutor by their lecturers, and students confirmed that they find these arrangements to be satisfactory. Each teaching group is assigned a tutor and the Faculty of Information Technology has a policy that one teacher serves as a tutor to one or two classes. However, for first cycle students there is no formal system for the allocation of individual tutors in place across the University. **[Meetings 5-6&8-9; Meeting with Director of Human Resources and Chief Secretaries of Information Technology and Engineering] [Chapter I Standard III.6]**

5.10 Students have a Student Council where they can debate issues and raise problems they would like student representatives to take forward to Faculty Councils and to the Academic Senate, for resolution. While discussions with students confirmed student representative participation in these meetings, no student representatives were present to provide a view on the degree of student engagement in the institutional life of the University. The self-evaluation report indicates that there is not a high level of student engagement with its deliberative and decision-making processes. Discussions with senior staff confirmed that this is something which the University wishes to improve. However, it was noted that the Student Council does not have any dedicated office space or financial provision from the budget. In addition to formal representation at committee meetings, staff and students indicated that there is also direct communication from lecture halls, through online communication to University websites and in some cases through social media sites. **[Meetings 2, 3&5-6] [Chapter I Standard III.7]**

5.11 The self-evaluation report states that while the University supports the students' cultural life, financially supported activities are rare, and discussions with students confirmed this. Students stated that they would appreciate more social activities. Senior staff indicated that a certain amount from the budget is projected in support of student activities, and that students are present at the Academic Senate for the approval of the budget. **[Meetings 3 &5-6] [Chapter I Standard III.8]**

5.12 It is a legal requirement that first cycle students have a period of internship during the third year of their programme. Meetings with teaching staff and students confirmed that PUT fulfils this obligation. Students reported that sometimes these internships lead to employment but that this is not always the case. The assistance students get from academic staff in finding employment after graduation is variable and is normally based on the strength of personal contacts. **[Meetings 5-6 &8-9] [Chapter I Standard III.9]**

5.13 PUT formerly had a careers office but when the funding for that expired the office closed. The University now has plans to open another careers office later in this academic year. Affirmation of this action is noted in paragraph 1.11. **[SER doc 2.10; Clarification doc p16] [Chapter I Standard III.9]**

5.14 During a meeting with a selection of external partners who were mostly alumni, it was noted that attendees were unanimous in expressing satisfaction with the relationship they have with the University. It was noted that some companies represented provided internships for students, but these were ad hoc in nature and they confirmed that there is no formal system in place. **[Meeting 12]** The creation of an Alumni Association would be a positive step forward for the University in formalising its links with commerce and industry in order to improve student employability and create opportunities for aligning curricula more closely with market requirements. **[Chapter I Standard III.9]**

Findings

Good practice

The review team did not identify any features of good practice in this Evaluation Area.

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weakness:

- the inadequate provision of textbooks of suitable quality and in sufficient quantity (paragraph 5.8).

Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendation:

- adopt measures to improve the stock of books and prioritise the project that is already underway to introduce access to e-books and online journals (paragraph 5.8).

Affirmation of action being taken

The review team affirms the following action already in progress:

- the project to address the quality and quantity of textbooks (paragraph 5.8).

Judgement

The Standards for Students and their Support are substantially met.