Institutional Review of Higher Education Institutions in Albania

Report of the Institutional Review of Aleksandër Moisiu University, Durrës

December 2016

Contents

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 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 of 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 students' 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.

Review team

Mr Grant Horsburgh	Lead Reviewer	
Professor Jeremy Bradshaw	Reviewer	
Professor Sherif Bundo	Reviewer	
Dr Alketa Grepcka	Reviewer	
Mr Stephen Harris	Reviewer	
Professor Jethro Newton	Reviewer	

The context of this review

'Aleksandër Moisiu' University, Durrës (AMU) was opened in academic year 2006-07 and in the first year enrolled 1,000 students from almost all regions of the country. Initially the University was formed from three faculties: Faculty of Education; Faculty of Economics and Administration, and Professional Higher School. Since its establishment, AMU has been designed to be a different type of university, basing its approach on Western best academic practices with regard to organisation, university life and study programmes. As such, students are the centre of all activities and processes.

From the outset AMU has functioned according to the principles of the European Charter and has combined this with the US credit system (USCr). This has enabled graduating students to obtain a diploma that is recognised worldwide which can facilitate further study and employment opportunities. The University issues the diploma in Albanian and English and credit values are expressed by both the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the USCr system. Another central feature of the University has been the engagement with the local community, working to establish collaborative arrangements with the regional development institutions.

The University has grown substantially in the 10 years since its formation. At the time of this review, AMU has approximately 10,000 students and offers 80 study programmes across all three cycles. The University's 270 full-time academic staff are organised into six main units, as follows: Faculty of Business; Faculty of Political Science and Law; Faculty of Education; Faculty of Professional Studies; Faculty of Information Technology; and Faculty of Integrated Studies with Practice.

The Faculty of Integrated Studies with Practice was established in 2008 as the result of a pilot project between the Albanian and German governments. The faculty works in the same way as a professional academy in the Federal Republic of Germany and is regarded by the University as being innovative and unique. In addition, the Faculty of Professional Studies, formerly the Professional High School, is similar to a 'community college', and offers diplomas focused on practical professions.

Summary report

'Aleksandër Moisiu' University, Durrës (AMU) is a public institution with facilities located in the port town of Durres. The University opened in academic year 2006-07 and at the time of this review AMU had approximately 10,000 students and offered 80 study programmes across all three cycles. The University has 270 full-time academic staff organised into six main units, as follows: Faculty of Business; Faculty of Political Science and Law; Faculty of Education; Faculty of Professional Studies; Faculty of Information Technology and, Faculty of Integrated Studies with Practice.

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 Rectorate and Academic Senate.

The visit took place over two days on 19 and 20 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. AMU operates in accordance with the requirements of its Statute (2011) and Internal Rules and Regulations (2012) and is organised to secure efficiency in management and the existing and emerging arrangements for the management and administration of the University, and for collegial decision-making, work appropriately and are understood by staff at all levels. However, the University does not make effective use of reports and data on quality matters, and of information and feedback obtained through student surveys. Similarly, there are no formal mechanisms in place to provide the wider academic community with feedback on the action taken by the Rectorate or Academic Senate resulting from the analysis of data arising from reports or surveys. In addition, the University, faculties and departments do not provide students with any actions taken in response to their feedback. The University supports discussion and debate in its collegial bodies. University boards and councils meet regularly and information on agenda items is made available in advance. The University ensures that the limits of its autonomy are respected and that it operates its autonomy within the confines of prevailing laws and regulations. Self-governance in institutional affairs extends to all organisational academic and administrative units, to teaching and scientific activities, to financial and administrative matters, and to the approval of institutional agreements with outside bodies. Staff awareness of the institutional planning process and documentation is appropriate and there are opportunities for discussion and involvement at various stages in both management bodies and deliberative councils. Academic staff are able to exercise independence in organising academic activities in teaching, research, and the curricula of study programmes. However, improvement is required in the area of applied doctoral

research, and there is a need to strengthen and extend the level of market-related applied scientific research undertaken by doctoral candidates. The University acknowledges that not all faculties are sufficiently active in undertaking labour market research and points to the need for this to be improved. Students, graduates and employers value the work of the Alumni and Student Counselling Office and the processes used for tracking graduate destinations, such as regular surveys and various other forms of communication with local and regional employers and other partners, represents good practice. The current volume of international activity in both project work and mobility is modest.

The Standards for Resourcing are fully met. AMU has a clear structure which is available on the University website and which delineates responsibilities for the management of human resources. The University's policy and procedures support effectively and guide the recruitment of appropriately qualified full and part-time staff to meet the academic and administration requirements of the University. AMU arranges cultural events for staff and students in conjunction with the local community through DURSAK, an organisation representing the citizens of Durres. AMU has internal mechanisms for the assessment of its academic staff and each department is responsible for managing the process. However, different methods exist for the formal assessment of teaching across the University which are mainly focused on the identification of problems rather than being developmental in nature. AMU has a well-established and effective social development policy and is conducting a number of environmental initiatives in cooperation with the District Council of Durres. AMU has transparent and appropriate procedures for the management of financial resources which are set out and administered in accordance with the standards and regulations of public financial management with annual submission of accounts to the Ministry. AMU's information technology infrastructure includes computers, computer laboratories, photocopiers, printers, scanners, projectors, general and specialist software and fast broadband internet with Wi-Fi availability. There are three libraries in total, one in each of the main University buildings, and all provide facilities for online bibliographic searching. The library is a member of the Consortium of Academic Libraries in Albania and this provides staff and students access to more books, in hard copy and online which is a feature of good practice.

The Standards for the Curriculum are fully met. AMU's provision complies with each of the three Bologna cycles and study programmes are offered in line with local, national and international trends. AMU aims to align its provision with the demands of the labour market and local, national and international priorities and strategies and programme review process and revisions to curriculum take full account of the University's Quality Assurance Regulations. The provision of online timetable and syllabus information is a feature of good practice. Students reported a wide range of opportunities to participate in placements and practicums and felt well supported by the University. The University's close links with alumni and employers provide an extensive variety of opportunities for practicums and placements. Students, graduates and employers value the depth and breadth of the University's engagement with external bodies for the development of curricula, provision of placements and practicums and employment opportunities for its graduates is a feature of good practice. This approach is exemplified by, but not confined to, the Faculty of Integrated Studies with Practice.

The Standards for Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research are fully met. AMU has appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure efficient organisation and documentation of study programmes and appropriate and effective policies and mechanisms in place to ensure that lecturers are regularly assessed. Students are involved in the evaluation process. The University has implemented an appropriate support structure to promote continuous teaching improvement. Research and scientific work is directed at University level under the leadership of a Vice-Rector. AMU supports and encourages scientific research which facilitates the strategic development of the country, the region and the city of

Durres. AMU encourages groups and research projects at the national, regional and European level. AMU has developed a policy setting out scientific research priorities that focuses on areas of particular interest for the country, region, city and the University.

The Standards for Students and their Support are fully met. AMU actively recruits students for its first cycle programmes directly from Albanian high schools. The University organises open days and participates in the annual student fair organised by the Ministry. Students commented favourably on the information on potential study programmes available on the University website. AMU has a proactive and effective Students Counselling and Alumni office which has a key role in assisting with orientation activities for new students. To support the tutoring process University-wide, the Faculty of Information Technology is leading a project to explore the effectiveness of the current system. AMU provides appropriate levels of support for special social categories. AMU encourages and supports student participation in University life. 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. Graduate employment is a key focus of the University and AMU has effective processes in place to assist students in gaining employment and for assisting students in gaining their placement in the third year of their first cycle programmes.

In reaching these judgements, the review team has recorded five areas of good practice that the University may wish to build on and disseminate across the Albanian higher education sector. The review team has also identified one area where the University has recognised that further development is required and has affirmed the University's proposed action. Finally, the review team has made one recommendation 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.

The University 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 consisted of Mr Grant Horsburgh (Lead Reviewer), Prof Jeremy Bradshaw, Prof Sherif Bundo, Dr Alketa Grepcka, Mr Stephen Harris and Prof Jethro Newton (External Reviewers).

The review team concluded that the Quality Standards are fully met in four Evaluation Areas and substantially met in one Evaluation Area and that overall the State Quality Standards are fully met.

Summary of findings

Good practice

The review team identified the following features of good practice:

- the work of the Alumni and Student Counselling Office and the processes used for tracking graduate destinations, such as regular surveys and various other forms of communication with local and regional employers and other partners (paragraph 1.11)
- the opportunities available to Faculty of Integrated Studies with Practice students for accessing professional practice experience, internships, and employment opportunities (paragraph 1.12)
- the level of integration and engagement developed with the local community (paragraph 2.4)
- the library is a member of the Consortium of Academic Libraries in Albania and this provides staff and student access to more books, in hard copy and online (paragraph 2.11)

- the provision of online timetable and syllabus information (paragraph 3.8)
- the depth and breadth of the University's engagement with external bodies for the development of curricula, provision of placements and practicums and employment opportunities for its graduates (paragraph 3.12).

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weakness:

- the absence of a mechanism to inform management authorities and students of Rectorate and Academic Senate proposals, opinions and decisions (paragraph 1.2).

Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendation:

- action taken by the Rectorate and Academic Senate relating to institutional reports and data completed for quality assurance, monitoring, and enhancement purposes, is clearly communicated to the wider academic community and that the use made of student feedback from evaluation surveys is strengthened by putting in place mechanisms, at University, faculty, and department level, for informing students of actions taken to 'close the loop' in response to their concerns and the feedback they provide (paragraph 1.2).

Affirmation of action being taken

The review team affirms the following action already in progress:

- work underway in respect of the AMU Statute, the internal rules and regulations, and the organisational structure, to address the requirements of the new higher education law (paragraph 1.1).

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 fully met.
3   The Standards for the Curriculum are fully met.
4   The Standards for Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research are fully met.
5   The Standards for Students and their Support are fully met.

Summary judgement

The review teamrecommends to the Accreditation Council that at the 'Aleksandër Moisiu' University, Durrës the State Quality Standards are fully met.

Detailed report

Evaluation Area 1: The Organisation and its Management

1.1   The self-evaluation report **[SER pp5-7]** outlines AMU's governance and regulatory frameworks which are designed to align with national legal requirements for higher education institutions. AMU operates in accordance with the requirements of its Statute (2011) and Internal Rules and Regulations (2012). **[SER docs 1, 2 & 10; Clarification doc pp2-3; Meetings 1-3; 8, 9 & 12]** AMU's Statute is consistent with the institutional mission, and is adjusted as required by external and internal factors. The University has begun introducing changes to enable compliance with the requirements of the new law and the relevant by-laws, when they become available. **Affirmation** of the work underway in respect of the AMU Statute, the internal rules and regulations, and the organisational structure, to address the requirements of the new higher education law is therefore acknowledged. **[*Chapter III, Standard I.1*]**

1.2   AMU is organised to secure efficiency in management and the existing and emerging arrangements for the management and administration of the University, and for collegial decision-making, work appropriately and are understood by staff at all levels. **[SER pp7-8; SER docs 9 & 10; Clarification docs pp4-5(6); p5(7) & p5(8); Visit docs 1 & 15; Additional info 18; Meetings 3-6, 9-10 & 12]** In response to the new higher education law, changes to structures and organisational arrangements are being implemented. For example, new appointments have been made at Rectorate level and to faculty management positions. **[Clarification doc p9(21)]** A new Board of Administration has replaced the former Administrative Council, and the Council of Professors has been replaced with a Permanent Council for academic titles. **[Visit doc 5]** However, the University does not make effective use of reports and data on quality matters, and of information and feedback obtained through student surveys. Similarly, there are no formal mechanisms in place to provide the wider academic community with feedback on the action taken by the Rectorate or Academic Senate resulting from the analysis of data arising from reports or surveys. In addition, the University, faculties and departments do not provide students with any actions taken in response to their feedback. **[SER docs 5-6 & 53-56; Visit doc 14; Additional info 5, 6 & 9; Meetings 1, 2 & 4-6]** Consequently, the absence of a mechanism to inform management authorities and students of Rectorate and Academic Senate proposals, opinions and decisions is considered to be a **weakness**. **[*Chapter III, Standard II.3*]** It is therefore **recommended** that action taken by the Rectorate and Academic Senate relating to institutional reports and data completed for quality assurance, monitoring, and enhancement purposes is clearly communicated to the wider academic community and that the use made of student feedback from evaluation surveys is strengthened by putting in place mechanisms, at University, faculty, and department level, for informing students of actions taken to 'close the loop' in response to their concerns and the feedback they provide. **[*Chapter III, Standard I.2*]**

1.3   AMU supports discussion and debate in its collegial bodies. University boards and councils meet regularly and information on agenda items is made available in advance. Arrangements for the operation of deliberative councils and boards, and to support collegial discussion and debate, are understood by staff and students. Members of the Rectorate and senior managers at faculty and department level are charged with responsibility for monitoring the implementation of decisions. **[SER pp8-9 & 41; Clarification doc p5(8) & p19(4); Visit doc 6; Additional info 17; Meetings 2, 3, 5-6 & 9-11] [*Chapter III, Standard I.3*]**

1.4   AMU ensures that the limits of its autonomy are respected and that it operates its autonomy within the confines of prevailing laws and regulations. Self-governance in

institutional affairs extends to all organisational academic and administrative units, to teaching and scientific activities, to financial and administrative matters, and to the approval of institutional agreements with outside bodies. AMU has sought external funding opportunities and has benefited from European programmes and projects. **[SER pp9-10; SER docs 23 & 58; Clarification doc pp5-6(10) & p6(11 & 120); Meetings 3-4, 8 & 10]** Internal audit and control undertaken by the independent internal audit unit located in the Rectorate assures effectively that AMU complies with the institutional Statute and internal regulations and with national higher education law. External experts through signed agreements provide independent advice to the Rectorate on autonomy and accountability matters. **[SER p10]** [*Chapter III, Standard I.4*]

1.5   Staff awareness of the AMU planning process and documentation is appropriate and there are opportunities for discussion and involvement at various stages in both management bodies and deliberative councils. **[SER pp10 & 41; SER doc 8; Clarification doc p5(9); Additional info 16; Meetings 1, 3 & 9-10]** The 2010-16 institutional strategy had been drawn up in accordance with the AMU Mission, Vision, and purpose. It contains a SWOT analysis and identified strategic goals and objectives, performance metrics and targets, and an action plan. [Additional info 16] As a result of external legal and other changes, the current strategic plan is being replaced by a new plan and initial discussions have commenced. **[SER p10]** [*Chapter III, Standard I.5*]

1.6   The annual report to the Ministry of Education and Sports (the Ministry) provides accounts of teaching and study programmes, scientific research, staffing, project activity and economic and financial matters. In accordance with the AMU Statute, this report is made available on the University's website, the process is effective and staff understand the arrangements. **[SER p10; SER docs 1 & 5; Clarification doc p19(6); Meetings 5 & 9-10]** The Rectorate requires departments and study programmes to complete a self-evaluation report on teaching and research activities; therefore the drafting process is informed by internal evaluation and self-assessment reports on department and study programme activities. **[SER doc 45; Additional info 13; Meetings 9-10]** The Rector convenes an open meeting of the Academic Senate and Administrative Council, to which all staff and students are invited, to discuss the report prior to seeking the approval of University governance bodies and subsequent submission to the Ministry. **[Meetings 3 & 9-10]** [*Chapter III, Standard I.6*]

1.7   AMU's academic and scientific activities are undertaken in six faculties and 23 departments, or basic units. **[SER p11; SER docs 1-2; Clarification doc pp5-6(10); Meetings 2, 4 & 10-11]** In addition, the Centre for Development and Excellence supports research activity, while the Centre for Continuing Education makes provision for the training and updating of teachers. **[SER p11]** Faculties and departments are organised in accordance with legal requirements, management, executive, and administrative structures are separate from academic structures and organisational units and the academic staff of the basic units are appropriately qualified. **[Meetings 2-3]** AMU exercises academic freedom in teaching and research, together with organisational management and financial autonomy. Academic staff are able to exercise independence in organising academic activities in teaching, research, and the curricula of study programmes. **[SER docs 49-51; Visit doc 2; Meeting 10]** The structures are understood and work effectively. **[Meetings 1, 3, 4 & 9-10]** [*Chapter III, Standard II.1*]

1.8   AMU offers programmes in three cycles of studies. Second-cycle studies are offered in all faculties except the Faculty of Integrated Studies with Practice, while doctoral studies are available in the Faculty of Business. **[SER p11]** However, as the University has noted, improvement is required in the area of applied doctoral research, and there is a need to strengthen and extend the level of market-related applied scientific research undertaken by doctoral candidates. **[SER pp11-12; Meetings 2, 3 & 10]** [*Chapter III, Standard II.1*]

1.9   Staff involvement in established institutional boards and councils at all levels is appropriate. Opportunities exist for discussion and debate and for involvement in decision-making. Staff are also aware of new and emerging arrangements. **[SER p41; Clarification doc p19(4); Meetings 2, 3 & 10]** Students are also afforded opportunities for involvement in both management processes and deliberative councils. **[SER docs 16-18; Meetings 5-6]** **[*Chapter III, Standard II.3*]**

1.10   In relation to employment, admissions, payment, and its use of public information, AMU can be judged to respect and operate in accordance with prevailing competition rules. **[SER docs 1-2; Meetings 4 & 8]** AMU is informed continuously on regional economic development. **[SER p12]** The Strategic Development Plan also emphasises the importance of addressing labour market needs. **[SER doc 8]** Activities in support of this include the studies undertaken by some faculties, such as that undertaken on graduate employment by the Business Faculty, and market research on employment needs completed by the Faculty of Integrated Studies with Practice. **[Clarification doc 9(20)]** However, the University acknowledges that not all faculties are sufficiently active in undertaking labour market research and points to the need for this to be improved. **[SER p41][*Chapter III, Standard III.1*]**

1.11   The Alumni and Student Counselling Office provides employment advice to students, information about employment opportunities and conducts ongoing monitoring and tracking of graduate employment destinations. **[Clarification docs p8(18-19) & p17(1); Visit doc Tracking graduate destinations; Meetings 2, 3 & 9]** It works closely with graduates to collect information about their career and employability. **[SER doc 68; Additional doc 1.18]** The office also collaborates with a range of employers to coordinate students and employment opportunities, and arrange recruitment events. [Additional doc 1.19] Students, graduates and employers value the work of the Alumni and Student Counselling Office and the processes used for tracking graduate destinations, such as regular surveys and various other forms of communication with local and regional employers and other partners, represents **good practice**. **[*Chapter III, Standard III.1*]**

1.12   AMU cooperates successfully with a range of government and non-government organisations, often through signed agreements. **[SER p13; Clarification doc p9(22); Meetings 3-7 & 10]** While the University has cooperation agreements with other higher education institutions both nationally and internationally, there is no central register. **[SER docs 15, 23 & 58; Clarification doc p10(23) & p19(8); Meetings 9-10]** The design and development of new study programmes, and changes to existing ones, owe much to collaborative links and partnerships. **[SER pp14 & 41; Clarification doc p11(2)]** Such arrangements bring benefits to students (through labour market links), to student programmes (through employer influence), and to staff (through research links and opportunities for international mobility). **[SER p14; Clarification doc p9(19), p14-15(2) & p16(6); Visit doc 11.3; Meetings 3-5 & 9-10]** The opportunities available to Faculty of Integrated Studies with Practice students for accessing professional practice experience, internships, and employment opportunities represents **good practice**. **[*Chapter III, Standard III.2*]**

1.13   The main thrust of AMU's cooperation with external institutions is through the provision of practical study opportunities. **[SED p14; Clarification docs p14-15(2), p16(6) & p7(15); Meeting 12]** Meetings with students and external partners confirmed that students are able to benefit from a range of such links with local and regional public and private employers, and that opportunities are made available by these organisations for students to undertake practical study opportunities. **[Visit doc 11.3; Meetings 5-7]** For example, the Faculty of Professional Studies is engaged in a successful international initiative involving collaboration with a Swiss organisation and the Ministry for the design and delivery of a professional studies programme in informatics. However, most of the signed cooperation

agreements for practical study opportunities involve only two faculties (Faculty of Educationand Faculty of Professional Studies). **[SER pp14 & 41; Meetings 4 & 9-10]** The University recognises that improvement is necessary and that such arrangements should be established across all faculties. **[*Chapter III, Standard III.3*]**

1.14   AMU acknowledges the desirability of increasing the level of international mobility, of both staff and students, by encouraging applications from across all faculties. **[SED p41]** The International Relations and Projects Office provides advice and support for EU-funded projects under Erasmus+ and Tempus agreements, and for mobility agreements for both staff and students under Erasmus+ and other schemes, such as short-term training activities. The University also encourages the occasional engagement of incoming foreign experts. **[SER pp14-15 & p41; SER docs 13, 15, 20, 23, 25-26, 45 & 58; Clarification doc p11(2); Visit doc s 9 & 13.2]** However, the current volume of international activity in both project work and mobility is modest. **[SED p41; Meetings 3-4] [*Chapter III, Standard III.4*]**

Findings

Good practice

The review team identified the following feature of good practice:

- the work of the Alumni and Student Counselling Office and the processes used for tracking graduate destinations, such as regular surveys and various other forms of communication with local and regional employers and other partners (paragraph 1.11)
- the opportunities available to Faculty of Integrated Studies with Practice students for accessing professional practice experience, internships, and employment opportunities (paragraph 1.12).

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weakness:

- the absence of a mechanism to inform management authorities and students of Rectorate and Academic Senate proposals, opinions and decisions (paragraph 1.2).

Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendation:

- action taken by the Rectorate and Academic Senate relating to institutional reports and data completed for quality assurance, monitoring, and enhancement purposes, is clearly communicated to the wider academic community and that the use made of student feedback from evaluation surveys is strengthened by putting in place mechanisms, at University, faculty, and department level, for informing students of actions taken to 'close the loop' in response to their concerns and the feedback they provide (paragraph 1.2).

Affirmation of action being taken

The review team affirms the following action already in progress:

- work underway in respect of the AMU Statute, the internal rules and regulations, and the organisational structure, to address the requirements of the new higher education law (paragraph 1.1).

Judgement

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

Evaluation Area 2: Resourcing

2.1   AMU has a clear structure which is available on the University website and which delineates responsibilities for the management of human resources. **[SER doc 1.9]** The University's policy for the recruitment and employment of academic and administrative staff takes full account of the Statute and internal regulations and Albanian law. **[SER p16; SER docs 1.1, 1.2, 1.16 & 1.17; Meetings 3 & 5]** For teaching posts, experience and qualifications from European or American universities give an application additional merit. **[SER doc 1.18]** The University's policy and procedures support effectively and guide the recruitment of appropriately qualified full and part-time staff to meet the academic and administration requirements of the University. **[*Chapter III, Standard IV.1*]**

2.2   In line with its Strategic Development Plan 2010-16, AMU sets a high value on building a strong sense of community in its staff and students, through inclusion, support and collegiality in its approaches. **[SER doc 1.8]** This includes providing training, workshops and cultural events for academic and administrative staff, and extends to supporting groups of academic staff in organising regional and international conferences and other activities at the University. **[SED p17; SED docs 1.21, 1.22, 3.9 & 3.10]** For example, eight professors received training in American and European universities through a Tempus project on how to create innovative teaching resources, and on their return held workshops with other staff in order to share their experiences. The University organises an information day with seminars and workshops to which all staff and students are invited. **[Meeting 5]** AMU also arranges cultural events for staff and students in conjunction with the local community through DURSAK, an organisation representing the citizens of Durres. **[SER doc 3.4] [*Chapter III, Standard IV.2*]**

2.3   AMU has internal mechanisms for the assessment of its academic staff and each department is responsible for managing the process. At the start of each academic year tasks are shared among academic staff and a formal agreement is signed between the head of department and each member of academic staff. The plan outlines the academic plan for their study programmes, what they are going to teach, what they plan to publish, and any other academic activity. At the end of the year the Head of Department holds a meeting with each member of the academic staff to determine how effectively they have carried out their plan. **[SER p17; SER docs 1.54 & 1.55; Meeting 2]** Teaching quality is evaluated through biennial student surveys which are designed and implemented by the Quality Office. However, the result of these surveys is expressed as a single percentage score for each lecturer and is therefore of limited value as a means of identifying development needs. **[SER docs 1.53, 1.56, 2.4 & 5.2: Scores for student evaluation; Meeting 2]** In addition, AMU believes that the internal mechanisms for the assessment of academic staff are 'encouraging instruments for professional growth'. **[SER p17]** However, different methods exist for the formal assessment of teaching across the University which are mainly focused on the identification of problems rather than being developmental in nature. **[SER docs 1.62 & 3.14; Meetings 8-9] [*Chapter III, Standard IV.3*]**

2.4   AMU has a well-established and effective social development policy and is conducting a number of environmental initiatives in cooperation with the District Council of Durres. **[SER p18]** For example, in discussion with a group of external partners, many of whom are alumni of the University, it was noted that the majority of their organisations offer internships and professional practice opportunities to students of the University, and in some cases this leads to full-time employment. **[Meeting 7]** The Alumni Office coordinates activities between students and external organisations. **[SER docs 1.67, 1.68 & 3.11.3]** External partners indicated that they have direct involvement in curriculum development with the faculties. For example, the Faculty of Law, has agreements with local lawyers and courts and has both formal and informal communications with their officials regarding the curriculum. Similarly, the head of a local council department described how her department

had supplied data for research at the University and how the subsequent research had assisted greatly that department in their work. **[SER docs 1.29 & 3.4; Meetings 3 & 7]** External partners who work with other higher education institutions commented that the level of integration and engagement that AMU has developed with the local community is a feature of **good practice**. **[*Chapter III, Standard IV.4*]**

2.5   AMU defines clearly all duties regarding the management of human resources. Functions are set out in the Statute, in faculty regulations and in those pertaining to departments and research groups. **[*Chapter III, Standard II.2*]**

2.6   AMU has transparent and appropriate procedures for the management of financial resources which are set out and administered in accordance with the standards and regulations of public financial management with annual submission of accounts to the Ministry. **[SER docs 1.1, 1.2 & 1.27]** The budget for the University is drafted in accordance with the law for higher education. The process for drafting the budget is managed by the management teams and budgetary programmes which discuss individual budgets with departments and works under the direction of the Rectorate. Once finalised, the budget is discussed by the Administrative Committee and finally sent for approval to the Academic Senate. **[SER p19; SER docs 1.5 & 2.2; Visit doc 6 Annual Financial Report]** Academic and administrative staff are clear about their roles in drafting the annual budget. **[Meetings 2-4 & 8-9]** **[*Chapter III, Standard VI.1*]**

2.7   In accordance with the University's Statute and internal regulations **[SER docs 1.1 & 1.2]** the Administrative Committee is the University's decision-making body that oversees and controls the administrative, financial and economic management of the University's assets and properties. The Chancellor chairs the Administrative Committee and is responsible for the implementation of financial policies, and the daily administration and financial management of the University. **[SER p19; Meeting 4]** The Chancellor is assisted in the implementation and control of the budget by the Department of Financial Management, and by the Department of Services, Investments and Procurement. **[SER p19; SER docs 1.27 & 2.2; Meetings 3-4]** **[*Chapter III, Standard VI.2*]** AMU is subject to processes of internal audit, external audit, High State audit and Ministry audit. Auditing processes are defined clearly in legislation. **[*Chapter III, Standard VI.3*]**

2.8   AMU's information system is organised in the form of a database with access pages in the University's website. The website is also the means through which internal staff and academic communications take place. All academic and administrative staff and every student has their own individual University email address. **[SER p20; Meetings 5-6 & 8-9]** The Chancellor is responsible for information exchange within the University working in conjunction with the Department of Information Technology and the Registration and Records Office. **[SER p20, SER doc 1.30]** Statistical information concerning numbers of students and their programmes of study is presented in a section of the website administered by the Directory for Counselling Students and Alumni. While AMU does not operate a virtual learning environment, communication between staff and students is supported effectively by the information system. **[*Chapter III, Standard VII.1*]**

2.9   AMU's information technology infrastructure includes computers, computer laboratories, photocopiers, printers, scanners, projectors, general and specialist software and fast broadband internet with Wi-Fi availability. **[SER p21; Meetings 5-6]** The University coordinates its information technology activities through the Administrative Committee in conjunction with the Faculty of Information Technology. Staff and students reported satisfaction with the information technology facilities available to them. Students confirmed that their learning materials are available online or sent to them through email by lecturers, and that their grades are also communicated to them in this way. The library provides free training in digital literacy for students on a weekly basis. **[Meetings 4-6 & 8-9]** **[*Chapter III,*

2.10 AMU has three main buildings: the original campus in Currila, Durres; a separate building in Durres which is leased and used by the Faculty of Integrated Studies with Practice, and the Departments of Engineering, and Mechanics and Transportation; and a new campus, which is located in Spitalle, on the outskirts of Durres. **[SER docs 1.31, 1.32]** The University has also constructed a new building in Spitalle, next to the new campus, which is currently being decorated and refitted, and which is scheduled for occupation and use for the start of academic year 2017/18. **[SER p21; Tour of new campus; Meeting 2]** The University supervises its construction and reconstruction projects in compliance with Albanian law**. [SER p21; SER doc 1.28] [***Chapter III, Standard VII.3***]**

2.11 AMU has a strong academic heritage and its library archives preserve the academic, cultural and scientific heritage of the University in accordance with Albanian law. **[SER p21-22]** Syllabi and relevant literature for all study programmes plus PhD theses, publications and textbooks written by full-time academic staff are preserved in the library. [SER p21] Scientific conferences organised by the University provide an opportunity for academic staff to present and promote their work. The Publishing Council of the University is a collegial body composed of five members of academic staff, who are approved by the Academic Senate. **[SER p21; SER doc 1.2]** The Council reviews, discusses and approves academic staff publications, who have the right to publish for free in the Scientific Journal of the University. Index cards have been digitalised and the library holds approximately 8,000 titles in Albanian and other languages, in paper based books, and a further 10,000 books are available online. Access is also provided to online journals. There are three libraries in total, one in each of the main University buildings, and all provide facilities for online bibliographic searching. The library is a member of the Consortium of Academic Libraries in Albania and this provides staff and student access to more books, in hard copy and online which is a feature of **good practice. [SER p22; Resource tour; Meetings 5-6 & 8-10] [***Chapter III, Standard VII.4***]**

2.12 AMU provides an appropriate infrastructure for its academic, administrative and social activities including classrooms, offices, meeting rooms, conference rooms and auditoria, libraries and laboratories in which to carry out teaching, research and administration. **[SER p22; Meeting 4] [Chapter III, Standard VII.5]** However, students raised concerns regarding inconsistencies in the facilities available at different University buildings. **[Student survey doc; Meetings 5-6]** For example, students would welcome University halls of residence and improved refectory facilities in the main building similar to those provided in the Spitalle building. Teaching staff expressed a desire for more consistency across the University in the provision of classroom technology and laboratories. **[Resource tour; Tour of new campus; Meetings 5-6 & 8-10] [***Chapter III, Standard V.1***]**

2.13 At present, the University has no plans to increase its student numbers, but instead, plans to focus on the quality of its student intake. **[Meetings 1-2 & 4]** Physical security of the buildings and staff is protected through service contracts with external security companies. Management of the University's property is carried out by the Financial Management Department in accordance with Albanian law and fire and hygiene inspections are undertaken by the relevant local authorities. **[SER p21; SER docs 1.33, 1.34; Meetings 3-6 & 8-10] [***Chapter III, Standard VII.5***]**

2.14 AMU offers logistic services in compliance with the legislation in force regarding public procurements. **[SER p22]** The University evaluates the logistic services it offers through periodic surveys to staff and students. These surveys are carried out online and administered by the Department of Information Technology. **[SER doc 1.35] [***Chapter III, Standard VII.6***]**

2.15   The Protocol Archive is part of the library and it registers and preserves every official document of the University. **[SER p23]** The Directory of Information Technology and Registration supplies students with a user name and password in order to register online and subsequently receive their timetable, programme information and grades through their University email address. Student records are kept electronically and in hard copy.
[Resource tour; Meetings 5-6 & 8-9] [*Chapter III, Standard V.2*]

Findings

Good practice

The review team identified the following features of good practice:

- the level of integration and engagement developed with the local community (paragraph 2.4)
- the library is a member of the Consortium of Academic Libraries in Albania and this provides staff and student access to more books, in hard copy and online (paragraph 2.11).

Weaknesses

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

Recommendations

The review team did not make any recommendations in relation to this Evaluation Area.

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 Resourcing are fully met.

Evaluation Area 3: The Curriculum

3.1   The University states its Mission to be 'The Creation, the acquisition and the fact of providing a real contribution to sustainable knowledge, values and community to Durrës, to Albania and to the region, promoting high accountability, economic development and social welfare'. **[SER doc 8]** In accordance with this Mission, there are six faculties that between them offer programmes in all three Bologna cycles. Third cycle programmes (PhDs) are confined to Economic Science, in the Faculty of Business. The Faculty of Studies Integrated with Practice only offers first cycle programmes, namely three programmes of study integrated with practice in English language. **[SER p25; SER doc 39; Meeting 9]** [*Chapter I, Standard I.1*]

3.2   Four of the faculties have, until recently, offered part-time first cycle programmes, some of which have included weekend classes for the benefit of students in employment or resident away from Durres. **[SER p25, SER doc 39]** However, changes to the law in 2014 prohibited part-time programmes, so these were closed to new applicants. **[Meeting 4]** Although the most recent changes to education law means that part-time programmes are now possible again, it would require each individual programme to go through the full approval process at the University and by the Ministry, and this has not happened to date. AMU has stated its intention to develop continuing education material. **[SER p25]** Apart from some work carried out under the Tempus projects that may be described as contributing to training and education outside the structure of formal degrees, **[SER doc 23]** currently the only continuing education offerings are provided by the Centre for Continuing Education in the Faculty of Education. **[SER p11; Meetings 8-9 & 11]** The Centre for Continuing Education is licensed by the Ministry and is beginning to develop new curricula in cooperation with local schools. **[Meeting 11]** [*Chapter I, Standard I.2*]

3.3   AMU's provision complies with each of the three Bologna cycles. **[SER p25; SER doc 39; Meeting 9]** The University's development strategy states its objective of 'Consolidation of the curricula in accordance with the standards of the Bologna Declaration and the American Credit System'. **[SER doc 8]** Students confirmed that the American grading system is used. **[Meeting 4-5]** [*Chapter I, Standard I.3*]

3.4   AMU's study programmes are offered in line with local, national and international trends. The University's strategic plan states the University's intention to continue to engage with regional partners, interest groups and business, in order to increase their impact on the local community, to continue to develop meaningful partnerships at local, national and international levels, and to increase the number of its own staff who are involved in these activities. **[Additional doc 1.3]** [*Chapter I, Standard I.4*]

3.5   AMU aims to align its provision with the demands of the labour market and local, national and international priorities and strategies. **[SER p26]** The market research is usually undertaken by the relevant department and seeks to identify the market needs in order to develop new or modify existing programmes. Another type of market research focuses on the employment of AMU alumni with the aim of providing employment opportunities for current students**. [Additional doc 1.20; Meetings 1 & 3]** A different approach has been adopted by the Faculty of Integrated Studies with Practice that has configured its Faculty Council to include half if its membership from external bodies. The other faculties have considerably fewer external members but engage in extensive consultation with external bodies in Durres and beyond. **[SER doc 50; Meetings 3 & 7; Additional doc 16]** [*Chapter I, Standard I.4*]

3.6   AMU's programme-review process, and revisions to curriculum take full account of the University's Quality Assurance Regulations. **[SER docs 45 & 50-52]** [*Chapter I, Standard I.4*]

3.7   AMU student numbers are controlled by the Ministry and have been high in comparison to institutional capacity (1:37 full-time staff/student ratio according to 'Information About the Institute' and APAAL data). The University recognises its challenge is to increase the quality of its intake, rather than the quantity and is expanding its teaching space with new buildings and the development of a new campus. **[Additional doc 1.3; Meeting 1-2, 4 & 8]** **[*Chapter I, Standard I.4*]**

3.8   AMU runs an orientation programme for new students that covers their curriculum and component courses, the nature of their assessments and penalties, the library and learning resources, and where to go for advice and assistance. **[SER doc 24]** In addition, new students are supported through a consultation process by which academic staff set aside five hours per week for meetings with students**. [SER p28; Meeting 4-5]**The University statute requires teaching staff to provide copies of the syllabus at the first class of each academic year. **[SER docs 2 & 41; Addition doc 3.2; Visit doc 14; Meetings 4-5]** This information is supplemented by an online tool that provides each student with their timetable of classes, grades, notifications about activities, and information about their syllabus. Students indicated that the online timetable and syllabus information is accurate and useful. **[SER p37; Meetings 4-5]** The provision of online timetable and syllabus information is a feature of **good practice**. **[*Chapter I, Standard I.6, Chapter I Standard I.8*]**

3.9   First cycle study programmes provide students with basic knowledge, general scientific methods and principles, and many include opportunities for research and practical experience, including practicums with external partners**. [Additional doc 3.3; Visit doc 1.6 & 14]** The Faculty of Integrated Studies with Practice offers students a wide range of external learning opportunities in its first cycle programmes. **[Meeting 3]** Second cycle programmes include opportunities for research and practical experience. **[Addition doc 1.6; Visit doc 14]** Students reported a wide range of opportunities to participate in placements and practicums and felt well supported by the University. **[Meeting 4-5]** The University's close links with alumni and employers provide an extensive variety of opportunities for practicums and placements. **[Additional docs 1.20 & 3.3; Visit docs 1.3 & 1.6; Meetings 1, 3, 5 & 12]** **[*Chapter I Standard I.7, Chapter I Standard I.9*]**

3.10   First cycle study programmes are organised into 15 weeks of three-hour class workload, with no pre-assigned division between theoretical and practical teaching weekly workload. However, the curricula aim to balance theoretical and practical teaching, and this is described in the syllabus. **[Additional doc 1; Visit doc 3.3]** In second cycle programmes, there is a 2:1 ratio of theoretical and practical teaching. **[Additional doc 1; Visit doc 3.3; Meeting 5]** The extensive range of links with external bodies, including national authorities, chambers of commerce, insurance companies, banks hospitals, as well as many major companies in Tirana and Durres, provide ample opportunities for students to gain practical experience of the application of theory through placements and practicums. **[SER docs 8 & 13: Additional doc 1.6; Meeting 8]** **[*Chapter I Standard I.11*]**

3.11   AMU's Strategic Plan identifies as key challenges, the quality of teaching and learning; to serve the needs of the country and national and international markets; and learning from theoretical and applied research on the learning process to align with Western institutions. **[SER doc 8]** The University's international ambitions are reflected in its requirement for English language tests for all students. Students are required to take an English language proficiency examination before progression to second or third cycle programmes. **[Additional doc 3.4]** There have been a number of Tempus and Erasmus+ awards for staff and student mobility. **[SER docs 143-15; Meeting 3]** The University recognises that there is limited student mobility. **[SER doc 8; Additional doc 1.3]** **[*Chapter I Standard I.10*]**

3.12   AMU's Student Counselling and Alumni Office provides employment advice to students and information about employment opportunities. It works closely with graduates to collect information about their career and employability. **[SER doc 68; Additional doc 1.18]** The office collaborates with a range of employers to coordinate students and employment opportunities, and arrange recruitment events. **[Additional doc 1.19]** Employability is embedded in the curricula; academic writing is a compulsory subject for all students, and the Student Counselling and Alumni Office provides training in how to write curricula vitae (in Albanian and English), how to write a letter of motivation and how to perform at an interview. **[Meeting 5]** Students also benefit from the University's links with alumni and employers, through an extensive range of practicums and placement opportunities. **[Additional docs 1.3 & 1.6; Visit doc 1.20; Meetings 1, 3, 5, 8 & 12]** Students, graduates and employers value the depth and breadth of the University's engagement with external bodies for the development of curricula, provision of placements, practicums, and employment opportunities for its graduates and is a feature of **good practice**. This approach is exemplified by, but not confined to, the Faculty of Integrated Studies with Practice. **[*Chapter I Standard I.12*]**

Findings

Good practice

The review team identified the following features of good practice:

- the provision of online timetable and syllabus information (paragraph 3.8)
- the depth and breadth of the University's engagement with external bodies for the development of curricula, provision of placements, practicums and employment opportunities for its graduates (paragraph 3.12).

Weaknesses

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

Recommendations

The review team did not make any recommendations in relation to this Evaluation Area.

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 the Curriculum are fully met.

Evaluation Area 4: Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research

4.1 AMU has appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure efficient organisation and documentation of study programmes. **[SER pp11-12; Meetings 2, 3 & 10]** AMU also has appropriate and effective policies and mechanisms in place to ensure that lecturers are regularly assessed. Students are involved in the evaluation process. The University has implemented an appropriate support structure to promote continuous teaching improvement. **[SER p21; SER docs 1.33, 1.34; Meetings 3-6 & 8-10]** [*Chapter I, Standard II.1, Chapter I, Standard II.3, Chapter I, Standard II.4*]

4.2 AMU 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. Assessment results are published in a manner which preserves confidentiality principles and expectations. **[SER docs 2.46-2.48]** [*Chapter I, Standard II.2*]

4.3 Research and scientific work is directed at University-level under the leadership of a Vice-Rector. Formerly, research outputs were restricted to individual contributions, including PhD and second cycle degree theses, and individual participation in projects, articles, conferences and other related activity. More recently, AMU has reorganised its research and scientific work throughout to ensure that this is managed at faculty level. **[SER pp33-35; Meetings 3-6 & 8-10]** [*Chapter II, Standard I.1*]

4.4 AMU supports and encourages scientific research which facilitates the strategic development of the country, the region and the city of Durres. Examples were noted of scientific research projects with a regional focus, related to the city and surrounding area, some which have extended nationally. Several projects have received external financial support. In addition, a number of research projects involve cooperation and partnership with foreign partners. **[SER docs 2.14, 23 & 60]** 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***]**

4.5 AMU encourages groups and research projects at the national, regional and European level. The University is committed to the organisation of scientific activities. Generally, scientific and research field outcomes are made public using different methods. The most commonly used are the methods of research presentation at conferences, seminars, symposia, congresses and research bulletins, which are presented at the University or main unit level. AMU has an appropriate mechanism in place to oversee the publication of research outcomes. The University regularly publishes a scientific bulletin, Interdisciplinary Journal of Research and Development, which includes articles on the work of research-active staff. In addition, scientific research outcomes important to local and regional development have been published through partnerships and local institutions. **[Meetings 5 & 7]** [*Chapter II, Standard I.3*]

4.6 AMU has developed a policy setting out scientific research priorities that focuses on areas of particular interest for the country, region, city and the University. These include, development of the port of Durres as the largest in the country, and environmental and tourism studies relating to the impact of the port on the city and surrounding area. Implementation of scientific research projects tends to be driven by the availability of academic supervision capacity and demand from students. Similarly, 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 partner organisations in

research activities facilitates continuity in scientific research fields. AMU encourages faculties and departments to invite foreign academic staff to participate in teaching and research activities. AMU publicises the outcome in scientific research fields in a variety of formats. **[SER doc 8; Additional docs 1.3 & 1.20; Meetings 1 & 3]** [*Chapter II, Standard I.5, Chapter II, Standard I.6, Chapter II, Standard I.7, Chapter II, Standard I.8*]

Findings

Good practice

The review team did not identifyany 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 did not make any recommendations in relation to this Evaluation Area.

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 fully met.

Evaluation Area 5: Students and their Support

5.1   AMU's main recruitment focus is to improve the quality rather than increase the quantity of students. This will be reflected in the University's new development strategy. **[Meeting 1]** It is noted that the University's student quota is approved by Council of Faculties on the basis of Ministry proposals. **[Meeting 3]** The Vice-Rector Teaching has overall responsibility for the student registration and induction process. Faculty Vice-Deans and Heads of Department report to the Vice-Rector on the implementation of the recruitment and induction process for new students. **[Meetings 3 & 8-9]** [*Chapter I, Standard III.1*]

5.2   AMU actively recruits students for its first cycle programmes directly from Albanian high schools. The University organises open days and participates in the annual student fair organised by the Ministry. For 2015 the Faculty of Integrated Studies with Practice developed promotional activities for secondary schools in Durres and Tirana. Similarly, the Faculty of Information Technology organised an orientation week for first-year students in 2015. **[SER p36; Meeting 5]** AMU also works with the Education Directorate of Durres and other local stakeholders to ensure that the public are kept fully informed of the University's activities, particularly those relevant to potential students. **[Meetings 5-6 & 12]** Students commented favourably on the information on potential study programmes available on the University website. **[Meetings 5-6]** [*Chapter I, Standard III.1*]

5.3   The staff/student ratio is 37:1 calculated as the full-time staff/student ratio. **[Meetings 8-9]** Students and staff did not raise staff numbers as a matter of concern. **[Meetings 5-6 & 8-9]** Staff confirmed that the University will continue to aspire to meet Ministry standards for staff/student ratios. **[*Chapter I, Standard III.1*]**

5.4   AMU has a proactive and effective Students Counselling and Alumni office which has a key role in assisting with orientation activities for new students. **[Meeting 2]** Departments also have an important role in inducting new students into their programmes. In addition, the University uses its website and faculty and department notice boards to provide students with all the information they require. AMU has an effective information system for storing student personal information. **[**Chapter I, Standard III.2**]**

5.5   Departments are responsible for the mentoring and tutoring process. Academic staff are allocated five hours per week for tutoring students. To support the tutoring process University-wide, the Faculty of Information Technology is leading a project to explore the effectiveness of the current system. **[Meeting 3]** Discussions with staff and students confirmed the satisfactory nature of current orientation and mentoring arrangements. **[Meetings 5-6 & 8-9]** [*Chapter I, Standard III.3*]

5.6   AMU provides appropriate levels of support for special social categories. Policy and procedure is focused mainly in exemption or reduction of tuition fees for specific students and takes full account of Ministry requirements and expectations. The Council of Ministries determines the number of scholarships available annually. **[Meeting 4]** It was noted that the University includes a fund for student social and sport activities within the financial budgeting process. **[*Chapter I, Standard III.4*]**

5.7   AMU provides quality textbooks in Albanian and foreign languages in three main libraries which are complemented by faculty and department libraries. The library works with faculties and departments to ensure book stock is kept up-to-date. Student views on library stock are also sought. Staff acknowledge that financial constraints limit the number of English language texts which can be provided to students and typically there are two copies of each English language text available. **[Meeting 4]** The library provides training to assist students in searching for and finding academic information online. Students commented satisfaction with the availability of texts and indicated that if printed texts are unavailable the

information would be searched for online. **[Meetings 5-6]** [*Chapter I, Standard III.5*]

5.8   In addition to the formal tutoring process, daily lecturer and student contact provides further opportunities to support and facilitate the progress of first cycle students. Specific mentoring is provided for year three first cycle students to support them during their thesis selection and development and to advise on future employment opportunities. Similarly, students are provided with advice and guidance prior to and during professional practice or placement opportunities and students are accompanied by a lecturer at their first meeting with a placement provider. Support is also provided on future study opportunities on second cycle programmes. **[SER pp38&39; Meetings 3, 5-6, 8-9 & 10]** [*Chapter I, Standard III.6*]

5.9   AMU encourages and supports student participation in University life. 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. The Student Council organises different activities and addresses the problems raised by students during the academic year. **[SER p39; Meetings 5-6 & 8-9]** The University provides an office, necessary equipment and funding for the Student Council. Students are involved actively in the election of the Rector and other senior appointees and provide input to the quality assessment process. Faculty webpages have a student area. Students commented that they are content that their views are sought, taken seriously and acted upon effectively where reasonably practical or appropriate. However, some students indicated that they were unaware of who their student representative is. **[Meetings 5-6 & 8-9]** [*Chapter I, Standard III.7*]

5.10   AMU pursues an effective and appropriate supporting policy to assure quality of student life in cultural and sports activity. AMU does not provide accommodation for students. Similarly, the University does not offer a subsidised local travel initiative for staff or students. **[Student survey doc; Meetings 5-6]** Staff commented that neither matter is covered by the University's budget and that accommodation and subsistence for students are supplied by a separate company in accordance with Ministry requirements. **[Meetings 8-9]** [*Chapter I, Standard III.8*]

5.11   Student employment is the main focus of the University and AMU has effective processes in place to assist students in gaining employment and in gaining their placement in the third year of their first cycle programmes. **[SER p18; SER docs 1.67, 1.68 & 3.11.3]** The Student Counselling and Alumni Office is responsible for tracking graduate employment and it was noted that the Faculty of Business maintains a database of where students undertake internships and where graduates are employed. This is complemented by projects arranged in partnership with the municipality of Durres during the summer months whereby students have the opportunity to participate in voluntary work locally. It was noted that participation in such opportunities has led to students being employed by the organisations concerned and has increased the profile of the University within the local community. **[Meetings 3-6, 8-10 & 12]** Students commented that they are spoilt for choice regarding potential placement or practical work opportunities and indicated that employment was all but guaranteed following a successful placement and graduation. However, some business students indicated that placement opportunities were not as readily available as in other subject areas. **[Meetings 5-6]** [*Chapter I, Standard III.9*]

Findings

Good practice

The review team did not identyany 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 did not make any recommendations in relation to this Evaluation Area.

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 Students and their Support are fully met.