AGJENCIA E SIGURIMIT TË CILËSISË NË ARSIMIN E LARTË

Report of the Institutional Accreditation

of the University of Vlora "Ismail Qemali"

Otober 2020

REVIEW TEAM:

1. Prof. Asoc. Dr. Hemion Braho   Lead Reviewer

2. Prof. Dr. Sherif Bundo   Reviewer

3. Prof. Asoc. Dr. Arben Mehmeti   Reviewer

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About this review

The overall aim of Institutional Review is to assess the extent to which the University of Vlora "Ismail Qemali" meets the Albanian State Quality Standards that came into force in 2011. Institutional Review is a peer review process with each review team composed of a mix of international reviewers and Albanian reviewers appointed by ASCAL.

The resulting reports will serve not only for institutional accreditation based on the extent to which the University of Vlora "Ismail Qemali" meets the standards, but will also to inform the stakeholders, 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 headings, the 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 ASCAL and Accreditation Board. This overall judgement is one of four levels:

- **State Quality Standards are 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, ASCAL 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.

The context of this review

The University of Vlora 'Ismail Qemali' is a public university established by government decree in 1994 as Vlora Technological University, and renamed as the University of Vlora 'Ismail Qemali' in 2007. Its founding faculties (Commerce, Naval Engineering and Nursing) were based on its legacy institutions, dating back to 1919, and on discipline expertise built up in those institutions. Since 1994 the University has grown in size and subject offering, in response to the regional needs of Southern Albania. It now has four faculties and 16 departments, offering programmes across all three cycles of study, and around 276 qualified academic staff, out of which 208 full-time academic staff members. It is characterised by its strong regional role and local networks.

Summary report

A self-evaluation report (SER) was developed by a team at the University which included representatives from all faculties and a student representative. Drafts, drawing upon evaluation reports developed in each area, were circulated to a wider audience within the University and viewed by the Rector before being finalised by the self-evaluation writing team. The review team found some constraints in the presentation of the report, which did not specifically reference each Standard and where an amount of the supporting evidence was not available in English. The report's description under each Evaluation Area was helpful to the review team in assessing the extent to which the University met the Standards; however, the University's own self-evaluation judgements were more positive than those reached by the review team.

The visit took place over two days. The review team was made up of one senior higher education reviewer and two experienced higher education member of staff from Albanian and foreign institutions. The review team was supported by a the Review Manager and a note-taker provided by the Albanian Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education (ASCAL). The review team was provided with a self-evaluation report and a portfolio of supporting evidence eight weeks in advance of the review visit, and supplemented by additional documentation requested. In all, some 458 documents were considered, and enabled the team to familiarise themselves with the structure, policies, management procedures and the nature of teaching and research activity undertaken by the University. Evidence considered included the Statute of the University, Academic Regulations, Annual Reports, admission and orientation procedures, the range of external agreements, examples of programme information, and evidence from deliberative meetings.

A series of meetings took place during the two days of the review visit, which allowed the review team to gain a clearer understanding of responsibilities, procedures and the views of staff and students. The review team met with the Rector, senior managers, students, lecturers, administrative and support staff and external stakeholders. Notes were taken at all meetings. As part of a tour of the campus, the review team viewed the library, teaching spaces and IT laboratories and were able to view the University's online and electronic information systems for staff and students. Having reviewed all evidence available, the team reached the conclusions set out below.

The University meets the standards **fully** for the Organisation and its Management. The responsibilities for the organisation and management of the University are clearly set out in the University Statutes and regulations and the appropriate committees are in operation as the University works towards full implementation of the new legislation. The establishment of the Internal Quality Assurance and Evaluation Unit, the adoption of a new development strategy and

the work to monitor systematically the employment of graduates were completed. The approval of the new institutional regulation is underway. The review team did not identify any weaknesses. As a good practice, the review team found the specific identification of a voice in the UV budget dedicated to research. The review team recommended using better the stakeholders' network to have a major impact in the local environment and diversify the incomes risks. This would also help to meet one of the objectives in the development strategy to become a "professional leader university".

The University meets the standards **substantially** for Resourcing. The University of Vlora, has sufficient qualified and specialized human resources and a dedicated structure for the HR management. It follows legal procedures for the recruitment and appointment of its staff. The university guarantees the availability and access to the university's information. Efforts have been done to train the academic and academic assistant staff, even though this is not a well-regulated practice that is strictly applied by each of the base and main units. There are currently several restrictions on the engagement of foreign professors in the lecturing activities and also on of good professionals in this regard.

The financial management is performed from the adequate structures indicated from the relevant law and in accordance to the financial public administration rules. The data concerning the financial administration are public available. Currently, the University of Vlora does not have financial management issues, but this cannot be said for the near future, due to the risk that some study program may close since they are facing a decline in the number of students. The university has already established its own information systems for the management and maintenance of its activities, guaranteeing online information for its students and staff. Logistical and physical infrastructures have constantly improved which are clearly visible. Good efforts have been made to increase university's capacities, regarding the construction of new academic buildings and the improvement of the existing ones and also for the commencement of the procedures for the construction of the new campus.

The review team identified two weaknesses for the continuous professional development and lack of external professors involved in lecturing and research activities. Also, review team identified the following recommendation to remove restrictions on the engagement of foreign professors in the lecturing activities and on good professionals in the staff training.

The University meets the standards **fully** for the Curriculum. Study programs are designed in accordance with the directions of meeting national quality standards, respecting the requirements of laws and bylaws. Study programs are designed with the aim of facilitating the mobility of student studies and the transfer of studies to other HEIs inside and outside the country. The study programs are designed with reference to the demands of the labor market But need to be better tailored with the demands of the labour market. The curriculum has clear study and

training objectives. Programs are subject to continuous improvements. There are few differences between the second study programs, which makes the division into professional master and scientific master not clear in practice. In study programs and university curricula there is room for improvement in the practical side of the study programs especially for some study programs and degrees for which the market is evolving faster. The university's relations with third parties need to be more interactive and sustainable. The review team identified the following recommendations: study programs need to be better tailored with the demands of the labour market; currently no study program is offered in cooperation with any other European or Balkan HEI, and presence of foreign lecturers in specific programs is recommended. However, it is clear that UV has made many efforts and has undertaken different initiatives for joint programs with national HEI-s, neighboring and EU countries; in the study programs there is initiative to improve the practical part especially in some units and degrees for which the market is evolving faster. University relations with third parties are expanding and can be even more functional and effective.

The University meets the standards **substantially** for Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research. The University's Internationalisation Strategy is being implemented through staff and researchers participation in conferences, symposiums, workshops and, acknowledging the initiative to create a specific fund, the message is to push staff to participate in external projects.
The review team identified two weaknesses related to the applications for research projects from national calls and research premises should be reorganized and offices should be separated from the laboratories, and new staff should be trained on the use of appropriate equipment. The review team affirmed the steps the University has started to take to address support for researchers through a specific fund, to improve its staff-student ratio and creating a structure that promotes continuous teaching improvement, including mentoring.

The University meets the standards **fully** for Students and their Support. The admission of students to programmes is managed in line with the Statute and regulations and students (both prospective and current) are able to access clear information about the study programmes and the University's services. A good level of support is provided to students by academic and administrative staff, including careers advice provided through the Student Counselling Centre. The students' participation in University governance and a Student Council has been established and operational. The review team affirmed the steps being taken by the University to improve to establish and strengthen the Student Council to improve the communication between students and decision-making bodies, and preparation of a regulation in order to strengthen the cooperation with Alumni.

Summary of findings

Good practice
The review team identified the following of good practices:
- The approval of a specific fund for the research in the UV's budget **[Chapter III Standard I.2]**
- Blood donation day organized from the Public Health Department and other activities related to the social and environmental protection and enhancement. **[Chapter III Standard IV.4]**

Weaknesses
The review team identified the following weaknesses:
- Continues professional development does not rely on the most recent teaching methods and the recent hired staff is not trained on pedagogy and teaching psychology. **[Chapter III Standard IV.3]**
- There is a lack of external professors involved in lecturing and research activities**. [Chapter I Standard I.4]**
- A study program has large theoretical loads and in most of them lacks the development or practical training of students. **[Chapter I Standard I.3]**
- Lack of teaching practice in laboratories **[Chapter I Standard II.4]**
- The Academic Senate has not approved a budget for any specific research project, except for the budget for common departmental activities (conference participation, co-financing of some projects). There is a lack of regulation for proper way to allocate the fund for the research has not yet been found **[Chapter II Standard I.1]**

Recommendations
The review team identified the following recommendations:
- Use better the stakeholders' network to have a major impact in the local environment and diversify the incomes risks. **[Chapter III Standard III.3].**
- More efforts are needed to become a "professional leader university". **[Chapter III Standard I.5]**
- Remove restrictions on the engagement of foreign professors in the lecturing activities and on good professionals in the staff training. **[Chapter I Standard I.4]**
- Study programs need to be better tailored with the demands of the labour market. **[Chapter I Standard I.3]**
- Currently no study program is offered in cooperation with any other European or Balkan HEI, and presence of foreign lecturers in specific programs is recommended. However, it is clear that UV has made many efforts and has

undertaken different initiatives for joint programs with national HEI-s, neighbouring and EU countries. **[Chapter I Standard I.4].**

- In the study programs there is initiative to improve the practical part especially in some units and degrees for which the market is evolving faster. University relations with third parties are expanding and can be even more functional and effective. **[Chapter I Standard I.9].**

- UV should apply for research projects from national calls and increase the number of international research projects. **[Chapter II Standard I.1]**

- The Scientific Research Centre premises should be reorganized and offices should be separated from the laboratories, and new staff should be trained on the use of appropriate equipment. **[Chapter II Standard I.5]**

- Alumni regulation should be prepared, in order to strengthen the cooperation with Alumni through official meetings organized by the sector of Career Counseling Alumni, Sports and Cultural Activities **[Chapter I Standard III.9]**

Affirmation of actions being taken

The review team affirms the following actions already in progress:

- The approval of the new institutional regulation, that is still at the draft status **[Chapter III Standard I.1].**

- The construction project of the University Campus has been approved while the construction works are expected to start soon. **[Chapter III Standard VII.3]**

- The steps that University started to take are: support for researchers, an initiative to create a fund (about 11 million AL) for small research projects that can be submitted by the staff of departments and increased research budget by 3.8% in 2020, however a regulation for these projects should be drafted and all researchers should be informed about this possibility **[Chapter II Standard I.1].**

- The steps being taken by the University to improve its staff-student ratio is improving, while for the academic year 2019-2020, UV has employed 74 academic support staff and 35 administrative staff. In the future, the number of new researchers should also be increased (**Chapter I Standard II.4**)

- The review team has noted that the number of teaching trainings is not large despite the needs of teachers for new methods in teaching, even that UV has created a structure that promotes continuous teaching improvement, including mentoring. Furthermore, UV must find the mechanism that through the annual evaluation of staff and application for academic grades these trainings to be mandatory in the future **[Chapter I Standard II.4].**

- The steps being taken to establish and strengthen the Student Council which will support and improve the communication between students and decision-making bodies of the University **[Chapter I Standard III.7].**

Summary of judgements for each Evaluation Area

The Standards for the Organisation and its Management are **fully met**.

The Standards for Resourcing are **substantially met**.

The Standards for the Curriculum are **fully met**.

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

The Standards for Students and their Support are **fully met**.

Summary judgement

The review team recommends to the Accreditation Council that at the University of Vlora 'Ismail Qemali' the State Quality Standards are **substantially met**.

Evaluation Area 1: The Organisation and its Management

1.1 The University of Vlora 'Ismail Qemali' (UV) is a public university established by government decree in 1994. The UV has approved a new Statute in accordance with the Law on Higher Education 80/2015. The approval was regularly given by the Academic Senate, the Board of Administration and by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MESY) **[E.1.2, E1.3, E1.4]**. The statue has been improved and adapted in order to comply with the applicable law and bylaws **[E.1.1 Statute]**. The revised Statute sets out the University's mission, internal organisation and management structures. At the same time, it proves that the University takes action timely to address law requirements, in line with the May 2017 review visit. The UV is engaged in the preparation of a new inner regulation. The UV Senate has drafted the new institutional regulation **[E.1.7 Draft regulation]** and confirmed during the visit that is going to approve soon the new internal regulation **[1.1]**. **[Chapter III Standard I.1]**

1.2 The UV has four Faculties subdivided into 17 departments offering 61 Study Programs out of which 27 Bachelors, 33 Masters and 1 Doctorate program. The single units are led by elected faculty deans and heads of department. Faculties and departments have their own regulations derived from the University's statutes and regulations. The University's statute and draft regulation define the structure and organisation of the University that centres on the following key bodies: Academic Senate, Board of Administration, Rectorate, Deanery, the Council of Ethics and the Permanent Committees. **[1.1; 1.2, I.3, I.4,]**. The Statute **[1.1]** defines the principal tasks of the Academic Senate that, beside the responsibility of the academic life, in conformity with the law pre-approves the annual and mid-term budget in advance, which is definitely approved by the Board of Administration. The Academic Senate has to summon at least once a month in order to discuss the institutional matters related to the academic life or the financial issues. The Senate has its own regulation **[E1.21]**. The Senate, chaired by the Rector, is the University's highest academic authority and includes elected representatives of staff and students. The Rectorate is responsible for the drafting of the strategic development and financial policies of the Institution based on the needs of its Faculties, the Departments and those foreseen in the Strategic Plan **[El. I]**. These are presented to the Senate that discusses them and uses them as a base for the preparation of the annual draft budget. This process is supported by a new unit called Sector of Finance and Budget Execution. The latter, according to the requirements of the Basic and Main Units, compiles the draft budget. The Board maintains oversight of financial and administrative affairs and works with Senate and the Rectorate to develop budgets and resource plans based on the concrete possibilities and financial inputs of the single academic units. One of the achievements and novelties is the approval of a specific fund for the research in the UV's budget. It was one main goal after the visit of the last External Evaluation Group as well as part of the action plan **[E.1.24, E.1 .25].** As confirmed during the meeting with the Rector there have been no particular difficulties with decision-

making and communication between the management bodies of the University. This is a result of the respect of the collegiality of the management and respect of regulations and normative acts. The fact that there has been no conflict in the distribution of resources, it has been confirmed by the last control of High State Audit. **[Chapter III Standard I.2].**

1.3 In accordance with the statute and in line with previous recommendations, the UV has established the Internal Quality Assurance and Institutional Assessment Unit **[E.1.1, E.1.22, E.1.47, E.1.48].** This unit works on plans and quality deliverable services respecting the necessary standards to guide academic activities, administrative and financial functions of the institution into an effective insurance system. According to the UV structure **[E.1.22],** the Internal Quality Assurance and Institutional Assessment Unit consists of three employees: The Head of the Unit and two specialists (a specialist who reports to ASCAL, and a specialist who is in charge of Institutional Evaluation). In addition to the Internal Quality Assurance and Institutional Assessment Unit. The institution has set up the Internal Quality Audit Unit **[EI .49].** This unit is under the supervision and dependence of the Board of Administration **[EI .22].** It consists of the Head of the unit, a legal specialist and an economist. Tasks of these two units are well defined and separate.

1.4 The University in its development strategic plan is engaged in the "internationalisation". Concrete steps have been done with the creation of the Albanian Researchers Network in the Diaspora in order to put together the best Albanian experts in the academy not only in Albania but also in the region **[E.1.52].** In addition to this network, the UV has established also a Consultative Board that is a collegiate body with the main function to consult the Academic Senate and the Rector in order to implement the best Western policies and experiences **[E.1.53, E.1.59].** This board consists of 15 professors and researchers that are working in prestigious universities abroad. The meetings are not regular, but based on occasional needs of the institution. **[Chapter III Standard I.4]**.

1.5 The UV has a Strategic Plan **[E.I.55**] and an Institutional Development Strategy **[EI .66]** both approved by the Academic Senate **[EI .67]** and the Board of Administration **[EI .70].** These strategic documents were prepared with the thorough involvement of the basic academic units. As confirmed during the meeting with the Rector and the Academic Senate, these are the main guiding documents in the development of the institution to face the challenges of the market and to modernize the University. The UV Strategic Plan has defined its goals and the relative development scenarios for the next five years that seem in line with the work that the institution is doing, especially on the "internationalization scenario". As confirmed during the meeting with the Alumni and external stakeholders the UV more efforts are needed to become a "professional leader university" as foreseen in the third scenario. This means that the potential of this institution is not fully expressed. **[Chapter III Standard I.5]**.

1.6 Boards and councils meet formally on regular basis and information on agenda items is made available to all staff in advance electronically. **[E.1.8 - E.21]** Students and staff indicated that matters raised by them are given due consideration through constructive debate at all formally constituted committees.]. Preparations for the process of the different committees, and provision to collegial discussion and debate, is understood by staff and students. The Permanent Commissions were established as collegial bodies that operate in specific sectors of the administrative and academic life of the UV **[E.1.22, E.1.90]**. The UV has e newly established council of ethics **[E.1.36].** Deans and heads of departments are responsible for monitoring in the respective areas, the implementation of decisions made by formally constituted boards and councils. **[Chapter III, Standard I.3; Chapter III, Standard II.3]**

1.7 In conformity with its Institutional Development Strategy for the period 2018-2024 **[E.1.66, E.1.67]** the University conducts market research to accomplish its mission. The Institution has foreseen the inclusion of several partners and regional actors such as stakeholders, businesses, public and private institutions, or employers that employ its students **[E.1.91].** The partners' collaboration has allowed the Institution to bring together the significant information and be in contact with the market **[E.1.94]**. However, the approval of the Development Strategy 2018-2024 needs an entire Market Study that the University seems not to have, beside specific areas. **[E.1.95].**

1.8 UV has established the Career Counselling Sector Alumni end cultural-sports activities with the aim to monitor the employment of graduated students. The University maintains contact with employers this Centre also in relation to opportunities for internships, jobs and information on graduates employed in their organisations. The Rector of UV is directly involved in a communication with the relevant institutions through a letter in order to track former students of the UV. The letter is accompanied by a form indicating information on title level of studies that the employees of these institutions have attended at UV **[El .96]**. In addition to contacts with the institutions of the Vlora Region, UV also contacts its former students in other regions by email in order to monitor their employment **[El.97].** The UV website has a specific section on Alumni where former UV students may request several information or register through the UV Alumni Registration form. **[El. 98].** Alumni confirmed during the meeting their constant contact with the University and that local employment of graduates is significant, while many of their classmates have moved elsewhere in the country or mainly abroad. **[Chapter III Standard III.1]**

1.9 Compliant to its Internationalization Strategy **[E.1.57]** UV has signed numerous agreements with business partners and peers in different sectors **[E.1.105].** Consequently, the Institution has developed worthy external networks and has provided staff and students the opportunity to participate in external activities also at an international level **[E.1.31].** Senior staff recognises the value of staff and students participating in international activities and have included this topic as a key

component of the Institutional Development Strategy 2018-2024 **[E.1.109]**. Especially the added value of the Erasmus+ programme was mentioned during the visit. The institution has a good network at a national level especially in the optic to provide facilities to students **[E.1.101, E.1.102]** The good network established should be seen as a possibility to effectively increase collaboration on specific projects also in the optic of the risk diversification due to reduced incomes from students**. [Chapter III Standard III.2, Chapter III Standard III.3, Chapter III Standard III.4]**

Findings
Good practice
The review team identified the following good practice:
- The approval of a specific fund for the research in the UV's budget **[Chapter III Standard I.2]**.

Weaknesses
The review team did not identify any weaknesses.

Recommendations
The review team identified the following recommendations:
- Use better the stakeholders' network to have a major impact in the local environment and diversify the incomes risks. **[Chapter III Standard III.3]**.
- As confirmed during the visit, more efforts are needed to become a "professional leader university". **[Chapter III Standard I.5]**

Affirmation of action being taken
The review team affirms the following actions already in progress:
- The approval of the new institutional regulation, that is still at the draft status **[Chapter III Standard I.1].**

Judgement

The standards for the Organisation and its Management are fully met.

Evaluation Area 2: Resourcing

2.1 A significant number of employees have been engaged for the administration and functioning of the University of Vlora, based on a preapproved organizational chart. The university is serviced from a full and part time academic staff and the administrative staff of the central level and its main units. There is a large amount of evidences and quantitative data that proves the existence of such potentials **[E1.5, E2.1, E2.2, E2.3, E2.4, E2.5**].

The university has mainly followed an open policy in its recruitment regulations and guarantees fair competition between candidates who fulfill determined vacancy requirements with respects to the academic staff. Recruiting requirements are firstly determined from its base and main units whilst the recruitment processes are performed by the HR department at university level, based on procedures and rules which are already reflected in the University's main regulations and other regulatory acts **[E1.5, E2.5].**

Visiting academic staff is engaged based on the lecturing and academic loads by the base and main units, and the need for such staff are approved on yearly basis from the university's rectorate. The selection process and procedures are performed in accordance with the criteria applicable for the visiting academic staff in the university which is provided in the university's internal regulation and in compliance also with the Law No 80/2015, On Higher Education, as amended, in the Republic of Albania.

The employment of academic assistant staff is also subject to well-defined and approved procedures and rules from the university, based on the needs determined by the base and main units or even by other internal departments of the university **[E2.6, E1.1, E1.5]. [Chapter III Standard IV.1]**

2.2 The staff employed by the University of Vlora, working as full or even part time, regardless of being academic, administrative or academic assistant staff, have the opportunities to feel integrated and even to self-contribute in the activity of the university. To comply with that, the university has a general development strategy, which is applied even through its recruitment and employment policies. Formally, the university has approved a strategy with regards to the continues development of young researchers **[E1.26]** and has also implemented the European Charter for Researchers, aiming the involvement and integration of employees in the governance and trainings of the University of Vlora **[E1.27].**

The university integrates its staff in the social community life and in different activities organized by the University or Vlora Region and beyond **[E2.15, E2.16]. [Chapter III Standard IV.2]**

2.3 In general, the university follows a skill development policy for its academic and assistant academic staff. Its own premises have been made available to sustain this process. It supports the organization of scientific and research activities, of conferences and workshops. The university invites skilled academic and professional

staff in the university **[E1.55, E1.57, E1.26, E2.16**]. The university has not in place study programs pertaining to third level of study, except for the doctoral school in Mathematics. Meanwhile it should be noted that the continues professional development does not rely on the most recent teaching methods. Likewise, the recent hired staff is not trained on pedagogy and teaching psychology. (annotations from meetings held at University's premises, **[M2, M3, M10]. [Chapter III Standard IV.3]**

2.4 The employees of the University of Vlora are also involved in social activities. Examples of good practice In this regard can be mentioned: the blood donation day organized from the Public Health Department, or other activities associated to the environmental protection, or the establishment of Justice Lab at the Law Department, or other activities that has to do with sport, entertaining and informative. **[E2.25, E2.26, E2.28]**. However, cases in which academic staff and students are involved in social activities toward the community are merely rare and sporadic, and do not constitute a sustainable policy of the institution. **[Chapter III Standard IV.4]**

2.5 The institution has in place an appropriate structure to whom is devolved the duty to monitor human resources and the academic potential skills pertaining to academic and assistant academic staff. This structure is part of the governing body of the university and its functions are defined in the main university statutory documents such as the statute and its internal regulations **[E1.1, E1.5, E2.30].** Meanwhile, the HR structure seems to be more like a structure focused on the bureaucratic side of the recruitment procedures than to the enhancement and development of the potential skills that the academic staff might have. (Verbal notes on meetings, **[M3]. [Chapter III Standard II.2]**

2.6 The university drafts on yearly basis its financial budget. The Board of Administration of the University is responsible for drafting the financial budget, monitoring the budget and its implementation. Board's main priority is to ensure the financial continuity of all the University structures. Currently, the university does not disclose any going concern issue, even though this could not be predicted for the future. Beside the yearly budget, the university drafts a preliminary midterm forecast budget **[E2.32].** The budgeting process followed by UV is performed in line with the guidelines of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Albania **[E 2.32]. [Chapter III Standard VI.1]**

2.7 The administrator of the university has the main responsibility on the implementation of the financial policy. The structures devoted to the implementation of the financial policies and the implementation of the university budget are under the administrator responsibility. In order to implement and comply with the tasks assigned from the Accreditation Board, the University of Vlora has had and currently

has several investment projects to increase the teaching and academic capacities, as well as to improve the functioning quality of the existing capacities. On yearly basis the annual financial report of the university is reviewed from the Board of Administration and the Academic Senate. **[E2.38, E2.39]. [Chapter III Standard VI.2]**

2.8 The institution is regularly subject to the internal audit procedures. The internal audit unit has been established based on the Academic Senate Decision no. 83, on date 12 February 2016, and this influences the increase and improvement of the budgeting and financial control **[E2.41].** On the same time, being a public university, the institution itself is subject to the audit from the Ministry of Education and the State Supreme Audit Institution. The acts of these institutions are analyzed and reviewed by the Board of Directors **[E2.42, E2.43]**, while their final opinions and decisions in relation to the audits performed are published on the university's website. **[Chapter III Standard VI.3]**

2.9 The UV guarantees the free access to information to all its structures. All the base and main units obtain the relevant information with regard to any decision, amendments in the normative acts or in the legislation and the organization of the governing structures. The main units also guarantee the cooperation between them and this information is guaranteed also from the statute and the regulation of UV **[E2.45].** In the organizational chart of the university there is also a responsible unit for the organization and functioning of the information systems. At the university level there is a specialist responsible for the distribution and maintenance of the information system.
At the university there is in place a good pedagogical and teaching information system, which guarantees access to all students and university's employees to relevant information data regarding the lessons schedules, attendance of lectures and seminars, exams, confidential treatment of grades, valuation and other data pertaining to the registration and further improvement of the academic activities. **[E2.51].**
Through digital information systems, the students have the opportunity to follow on real time information related to learning process, academic activity, scientific, cultural, sports activities, etc. **[E2.46] [Chapter III Standard VII.1]**

2.10 The UV has installed an integrated system for the management of teaching activities and other related student activities **[E2.47].** The data obtained from the system are secured and easily accessible by students. For the proper functioning of this system, there is a special structure that is responsible for all processes and phases such as registration, collection, storage, sorting, adaptation, modification, exploitation, utilization, blocking, deletion, etc. There is a special regulation for this structure. **[E2.53]**
At the disposal of the teaching process and of the students or the academic staff there are spacious auditoriums equipped with audiovisual systems, three spacious

laboratories equipped with computers and one multimedia lab. Similarly, for the base and main units there is a network of laboratories and other infrastructures. **[E2.55, E2.57]. [Chapter III Standard VII.2]**

2.11 The UV owns three large buildings where some of its main units are located, whilst some additional facilities have been rented which have been adapted to offer appropriate teaching conditions. In the meantime, the construction project of the University Campus has been approved while the construction works are expected to start soon **[E2.13, E2.58, E2.59]**. In the organizational chart is reflected an organization structure called: the service sector responsible for the maintenance and proper functioning of the university's real estate. **[E1.85]**. Often these spaces and facilities are rented to other institutions and structures with which it cooperates and interacts. **[Chapter III Standard VII.3]**

2.12 Teaching and academic process is supported from the three central libraries and their respective halls, dedicated to the rectorate and to some of the university's main units. The University makes efforts for the publication of historical editions, heritage, good universities practices relevant to the university and the publication and activities organized from the academic staff and academic assistant **[E2.69]**. The university has in practice the promotion of books and publications published from university's academic staff and scientific bulletins at their disposal **[E.270]**. **[Chapter III Standard VII.4]**

2.13 The university has the availability of 4 buildings, which have been subject to continuous reconstruction and improvements of their conditions. Briefly, as proofed by some already documented evidences **[E1.1, E2.59, E2.56]**, at the availability of the University there are:
Building A with a total surface of 3,720 sqm, out of which 1,360 sqm accommodates the rectorate and administrative offices of the university and the remaining 2,360 sqm are dedicated to the Faculty of Economy and its respective administrative offices. The Building B with a total surface of 3,040 sqm hosts the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Building C with a total surface of 388 sqm hosts the Faculty of Technical Science while Building D with a total surface of 2,056 sqm accommodates the Faculty of Public Health. **[Chapter III Standard VII.5]**

2.14 All the constituent structures of the University of Vlora, are served from a logistic and administrative system, that guarantees the normal course of the teaching activities, taking all the necessary safeguards for students, professors and for the academic assistant staff. Technical science faculties are equipped with specialized laboratories and each department has its own IT and computer labs. **[E2.25, E2.26, E2.53]**. **[Chapter III Standard VII.6]**

2.15 The university has made available to the teaching, pedagogical and academic activities, 53 auditoriums (lectures spaces), 25 laboratories and other similar

facilities, 75 offices and administrative spaces, 16 technical and auxiliary offices, 3 computer and multimedia labs, 3 library halls and other infrastructures. **[E2.56, E2.72].**

In summary, the Faculty of Technical Sciences has set the space standard of 4.7 sqm per student, the Faculty of Economy of 2.4 sqm per student, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of 3 sqm per student and last the Faculty of Public Health 3.4 sqm per student. **[E2.73]**

Findings

Good practice

The review team identified the following good practice good practice in this Evaluation Area:

- Blood donation day organized from the Public Health Department and other activities related to the social and environmental protection and enhancement. **[Chapter III Standard IV.4]**

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weaknesses:

- UV does not offer further qualification opportunities for its alumni **[Chapter I Standard I.2]**
- Continues professional development does not rely on the most recent teaching methods and the recent hired staffs are not trained on pedagogy and teaching psychology. **[Chapter III Standard IV.3]**
- There is a lack of external professors involved in lecturing and research activities**. [Chapter I Standard I.4]**

Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendations:

- Remove restrictions on the engagement of foreign professors in the lecturing activities and on good professionals in the staff training. **[Chapter I Standard I.4]**

Affirmation of action being taken

The review team did not affirm any actions already in progress in this Evaluation Area:

- The construction project of the University Campus has been approved while the construction works are expected to start soon. [**Chapter III Standard VII.3**]

Judgement

The standards for Resourcing are substantially met.

Evaluation Area 3: The Curriculum

3.1 UV, offers study programs in three cycles of universities studies. Specifically, it offers 27 Bachelor level study programs, 20 Professional Master Study programs, 13 Master of Science level study programs and one doctorate study program in the field of mathematics. **[E3.1, E1.78].** The fields and study programs are in accordance with the infrastructure conditions of the institution and in accordance with its strategy. The study programs are known by the public, by the high school graduates and by all those concerned. These study programs are published on the university website and are made public at the same time as available choices from each institutional level, main units and base units. **[E2.12, E3.2]**

The University of Vlora is in fact a continuation of several specialized education institutions, such as the Navy, the commercial school and the medical school. The fields of maritime, medicine, tourism, economics and nursing constituted the foundation based on which the university was established, expanding its activity even in the education program. The mission of the university is focused exactly on these fields of studies for which the university offers study programs. In some fields, such as naval engineering, electrical engineering and mechanical engineering, the University of Vlora is the second HEI in the country to offer such study programs. The study programs are built according to the logic and requirements of the law on higher education in the Republic of Albania. The programs are composed respecting the load distribution in each of the program study in relation to the basic subjects, supplementary subjects and specific (characteristic) subjects. The programs and their complete file are compiled by the base unit and approved according to the hierarchy by the main unit and Academic Senate. **[E3.10. a, E3.10. b, E3.11, E3.12a, E3.12b, E3.13]. [Chapter I Standard I.1]**

3.2 The study programs offered by UV are tailored in such a way that students and alumni have the opportunity of pursue further studies and qualifications. Many of these programs have been enabled to be implemented thanks to the support of several international programs, such as the EU-funded TEMPUS project. These programs are mainly focused on the field of navy and those of education. However, in almost the absolute majority of study programs, UV does not offer further qualification opportunities for its alumni at all their units. The cooperation of the University with its alumni in some units is not satisfied and mainly their training needs are met by other institutions. **[E1.82, E1.83, E1.84, M6]. [Chapter I Standard I.2]**

3.3 UV has an institutional development strategy for the years 2018-2024, which has been approved by the governing structures of the university. **[E1.66, E1.67]**. The study programs are in line with this development strategy which, as specified in the strategy, aim a sustainable education and with academic competencies of the

students. The development strategy is based on three strategic development pillars: internationalization globalization, Smart UV and professional leadership. However, it should be noted that study programs can be better tailored with the demands of the labor market. A study program has large theoretical loads and in most of them lacks the development or practical training of students **[M6]. [Chapter I Standard I.3]**

3.4 The study programs offered by the university are in line with the national objectives of higher education and with the general national directions of socio-economic development of the country. This objective of the study programs is also underlined in the development strategy of the university. Among other things, as a strategic objective, the university envisages the advancement of national developments with study programs, with the developments of technology, and in particular with regional features of Vlora region and beyond. Study programs are also multidisciplinary and this is considered a strong point of university uniqueness **[E3.2, E3.22, E3.9, E1.57].**, or of the invitation and presence of foreign lecturers in The university aims to expand the international relations of the university, but currently no study program is offered in cooperation with any other European or Balkan HEI. Although there is a tendency for expansion and internationalization, but there is a lack of organization of joint specific programs. However, it is clear that UV has made many efforts and has undertaken different initiatives for joint programs with national HEI-s, neighboring and EU countries. **[M2/M6]. [Chapter I Standard I.4]**

3.5 Study programs are supported by the capacities of the institutions of academic character, of infrastructural character, of methodical character, of traditional character. The academic staff of UV has a division of engagement time between the teaching process and the research and scientific activity. **[E3.25, E3.26]. [Chapter I Standard I.5]**

3.6 Study programs are promoted by UV. They are understandable, clear, and students receive complete information about their content. Students have the opportunity to select and compare study programs offered by UV and other HEIs. Each study program has clear objectives and describes the totality of knowledge and competencies acquired by a student who enrolls and attends the study programs **[E3.27, E3.10, a and b]. [Chapter I Standard I.6]**

3.7 All undergraduate study programs are organized with 180 credits, in three years, in accordance with the university practice in the Bologna area and that of higher education in the Republic of Albania. These study programs give students the right to pursue further studies at a higher level of study at the same university, or at other higher education institutions, within or outside the country. **[E3.28, E3.29].**
The division of subjects according to each program is built in full compliance with the requirements of the Decision no. 41, dated 24.1.2018 of the Council of Ministers, according to which the subjects are divided into basic subjects, specific

(characteristic) subjects, interdisciplinary subjects, supplementary subjects and final workings. This division of subjects in study programs also provides for a number of hours to be attended in accordance with the set criteria and their distribution load expressed in percentage. Undergraduate programs are also comparable to similar study programs in other higher education institutions and this facilitates the transfer of studies to any other university. **[E3.30]. [Chapter I Standard I.7]**

3.8 UV follows the policy of helping students to adapt with study programs and university facilities. The structures created at the university level for servicing student and for school curricula have in their focus the adaptation and acquisition or easy integration of students in the academic career. For some categories of students, such as students with insufficient income, students from some social categories, or students with very good results, scholarships are granted to facilitate the attendance of study program. **[E2.30, E2.32, E2.57].**

First year students are advised on how to use the student facilities and academic facilities, laboratories, to access the library, information systems, to communicate with the lecturers and secretariat, and informed on student activities and other activities, knowledge assessment and registration procedures, etc. **[E3.34]** Next to each main unit there is a student office that helps to guide and assist students. Meanwhile, the academic staff also uses other interactive forms of teaching that facilitate and assist the integration of students. **[Chapter I Standard I.8]**

3.9 UV has a relatively high number of academic staff with academic degrees and titles. (176, compared to 275 in total or 64% of the staff have PhD/professor and academic degrees). **[E1.86, E1.87, E1.88, E1.89]**. The second level study programs are based on a higher theoretical and practical level compared to the undergraduate study programs. These programs promote and stimulate students' independent work. Meanwhile, it is concluded that the programs of the Professional Master do not differ much from those of the Scientific Master. Study programs have an excessive theoretical load and suffer from practicality, as they do not provide for sufficient practical cases. This fact negatively affects the initial integration of students in the labor market. UV has a large number of collaborators and affiliates of the university, but the affiliations are not sustainable and can be improved in near future. Leaders and personalities from the business world and other fields are occasionally invited to the UV auditoriums. **[M6].**

The academic level of the staff engaged in teaching with the students of the second level study programs is generally with PhD/professor degree and academic degree, a requirement that is obligatorily as per the provisions of the law on higher education in the Republic of Albania. **[Chapter I Standard I.9]**

3.10 All study programs, first level (undergraduate), second level (master) and third level (PhD), offered by UV are in accordance with the Bologna process and this facilitates and helps the mobility of Albanian students of this university with other high education institutions in Europe and beyond. This change and adjustment is

also provided in the main UV documents, such as the Statute and the internal regulation of UV. Each program is expressed in hours and credits according to the European model. **[E3.9, from a to d].**

The diploma supplement of all UV study programs is prepared and expressed in two languages, Albanian and English. Study programs approximate 70% with the same programs in the same field of other HEIs within the country. **[E3.42, E3.43]**. UV has a large number of cooperation agreements with other universities of foreign countries, mainly European and beyond. Transfer of studies is easily applicable in UV. **[Chapter I Standard I.10]**

3.11 Study programs have hours available for discussions, debates, exercises, laboratory work and other course work or independent work. In some of the first level and / or second level study programs, hours of internships are required. In all study programs a final thesis and its presentation is required. In some programs, the eligibility for the preparation of the thesis is subject to the average grade achieved. **[E3.9, from a to f and E1.103].**

Meanwhile, recent graduates are struggling to be integrated to the labor market and fit to the job offers from potential employers. The theses are theoretical treatments in most cases and serve little to align students with enterprises requirements **[M4/M5].** **[Chapter I Standard I.11]**

3.12 The study programs are designed based on the criteria of the Decision 41 of the Council of Ministers dated 24.01.2018, according to which in each program there are specific (characteristics) subjects that provide the necessary professional training, in which students earn from 90 to 99 credits, or 50-55% of total credits.

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 this evaluation area:

Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendations:

- Study programs need to be better tailored with the demands of the labour market. **[Chapter I Standard I.3]**
- Currently no study program is offered in cooperation with any other European or Balkan HEI, and presence of foreign lecturers in specific programs is

recommended. However, it is clear that UV has made many efforts and has undertaken different initiatives for joint programs with national HEI-s, neighboring and EU countries **[Chapter I Standard I.4]**.

- In the study programs there is initiative to improve the practical part especially in some units and degrees for which the market is evolving faster. University relations with third parties are expanding and can be even more functional and effective. **[Chapter I Standard I.9].**

Affirmation of action being taken

Judgement

The standards for Curriculum are fully met.

Evaluation Area 4: Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research

4.1 The structure of study programmes is mandated by statute of UV **[E1.1]**, UV regulations **[E1.1; E1.5; E1.6; E1.7]** and regulations of basic units **[E1.11; E1.12; E1.13]** which are conform University and national requirements. Programme content is determined at departmental level and pays appropriate attention to the needs of students in terms of provision of delivery types, for example, field trips, study visits, practices and laboratory classes. The students were generally content with teaching methods, curriculum organization, and the quality of teaching staff **[M4; M5]**. The documentation of each study program is provided including all necessary information **[E3.9a, b, c, d, e, f]**. The registration of students in teaching modules is done through UVMS electronic system **[E2.55]**. Students sign up to modules and access their timetables online. Discipline needs are similarly taken into account. For example, provision of practical and professional formation of students is achieved through laboratories **[SER, p 46; E2.56; E2.57]** and teaching practice in various institutions and private sector (internships), which are secured through formal agreements, **[E1.103; E1.105; E1.102]** where learning is appropriately overseen by the University. However, students stated that they need more practice in laboratories and hope that with the construction of new facilities, some new laboratories will be built **[M5]** this would be made possible. In other hand, some students stated that they were satisfied with the practice they perform in private and public institutions **[M5]**. The teaching practices are supervised by the relevant lecturer **[E4.2]**. For each teaching module, basic and additional literature is provided by the lecturer **[E3.14]**, but also by UV library **[E4.4]**. Literature is not lacking; lecturers inform students about literature in Albanian, however for interested students literature in foreign languages are made available online and in physical libraries which are functional and completed with updated literature. **[M4; M5]**. The university has an open library in each academic unit **[M12]**.

Students who meet the criterion of a high average grade can prepare and complete the diploma thesis **[E3.46]**. UV continuously enhances the library with new literature through funds or by various donations based on faculty requirements **[E4.7; E4.7a]**, and students have access to digital platform ULIBRARY **[**https://ulibrary.rash.al/**]** **[SER, p 47],** the UV is in the process of digitization of library **[M12] [Chapter I Standard II.1]**.

4.2 The graduation rules and requirements are defined in UV regulation **[E1.5; E1.6; E1.7]** and in the regulation of each faculty **[E1.14; E1.15; E1.16; E1.17]**. Students confirmed that they were aware of examination rules and requirements **[M4]**. The criteria for each study program can also be found on the website U-Albania **[**https://ualbania.al/Universitet/Info/7?fakultetiD=61&dwgaID=253**]**. At the beginning of the year, professors inform students about the subjects and their content; those who achieve the highest grade complete the diploma and are informed accordingly **[M4]**. Examination results are announced within 48 hours of the examination and

students access this information electronically by using personal account in the UVSM electronic system **[SER, 48]**. This was also confirmed by the meeting with the representatives of the senate and administrative staff **[M2; M12]** and there are cases when students complained about grade evaluation **[M4]**. Should the system fail, examination results are made available confidentially through the course lecturer **[SER, p 48]**. Students may nevertheless request explanations for their examination scores and ultimately make complaint **[M4]**, which is evaluated by an ad-hoc group established for that purpose at department level **[E4.8b].** In general, students stated that the assessment was correct and there were no cases when that assessment was done incorrectly **[M4]**. The students surveyed for this review reported that copying in examinations was not possible **[M5]**, while in exams students are always supervised by 3-4 professors and they are mainly organized in small groups **[M5]**. **[*Chapter I Standard II.2*]**

4.3 To improve the quality of the study programme, the UV in 2018 has re-organised the structure of the UV, where the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Institutional Development was established **[E1.22]**. This unit analyzes students' questionnaires **[2.49a]**, which is submitted in the system and students complete it at the end of each semester or before the exams **[SER, p 48]** for their opinions on staff and study programmes. The review team heard from the students that the questionnaire is done at the end of the semester and is mandatory. If not completed, one would not be able to get the grade; and the questionnaire is completed for each subject **[M4]**. Departments produce annual reports based on analysis at a meeting with staff member. As stated in **[SER, p 48]** the detailed report on the questionnaire, after analysis of Internal Quality Assurance and Institutional Assessment Unit, is sent to rector for review and approval **[E4.12]**. Afterwards, the results of the report will be discussed at department level and final draft proposals, as a plan of measures, are forwarded to the rector. The University Annual Report and the curricular changes it recommends are approved by Senate **[E1.25]**. Students are informed and involved in several meetings regarding the improvement of study programs and are content with their programs **[M4; M5]**.
The self-evaluation report evidenced some employment data within its Annual Report, but only for the Faculty of Public Health **[E1.93]**. However, the University keeps data of its Alumni, prepared by the Career Counseling Sector **[E1.98].** The students surveyed for this review noted that, in general, teaching methods were sound, staff were committed to their teaching work and were available and helpful **[M4; M5]**. **[*Chapter I Standard II.3*]**

4.4 To improve teaching quality in the organization structure, Regional Development Center was established where the vocational training center is integrated **[E1.82]**. The guideline on the development and use of various methods for teaching at UV has also been approved **[E3.17]** and each base unit has prepared a plan of action to implement this guide **[E4.15]**. Given that the guide and the plan for the implementation of the guidelines were approved in early 2020, the implementation of

guide and measures is in its infancy. Some of the young teachers have completed training for teaching (e.g. teaching techniques and online through the Regional Development Center (classroom management for conflict resolution) **[M10; M2; M11]**, but the number of trainings for teaching is quite small at the moment, as they are not mandatory. In the framework of some projects they have conducted trainings for writing projects **[M3].** UV is more oriented in providing training for health professionals, teachers of high schools and from the field of law **[M2; M5]**, but not much for their staff. In order to strengthen the training of teachers, the UV has approved the decision of the academic senate on the strategy of integration and training of the newly recruited staff **[E1.33],** however this was approved in early 2020, and the implementation strategy is in its infancy. Nevertheless, in 2018 the UV approved the strategy for continues training of young researchers **[E4.18]**, but there is no evidence for such trainings. However, in terms of teaching in the framework of various projects (Erasmus +), staff have had the opportunity to participate in training and exchange of experiences through various mobility opportunities abroad **[E4.19; E1.109]**. The academic support structures at institutional level with administrative character have been approved by the decision of the academic senate **[E1.22].** Furthermore, academic support staff with academic and administrative character is evaluated for the performance of their work, and it is very important that assessment questionnaire has been approved by the Academic Senate **[E4.24].** The review team has noted that the number of teaching trainings is not large despite the needs of teachers for new methods in teaching, even though the UV has created a structure that promotes continuous teaching improvement, including mentoring. The review team affirms that the University started trainings for teaching staff in first, second, and third-cycle of teachers, in teaching, learning and assessment, taking into account current best practices. Furthermore, UV must find mechanisms to make these trainings mandatory through the annual evaluation of staff and applications for academic grade in the future. Also the review team affirms the steps being taken by the University to improve its staff-student ratio. **[*Chapter I Standard II.4*]**

4.5 The UV pays special attention to research and for this in recent years laboratories have been equipped with some new equipment where professors and students can conduct scientific research. The department, as the fundamental unit of teaching and research, is ordered into teaching and research groups and determines its own research activities on their regulation approved by the Academic Senate **[E1.14; E1.15; E1.6; E1.17]**. Teaching and research groups are established at department level and they carry out activities in accordance with the mission of the department **[E 4.26].** All members of the academic staff sign agreements with the head of the department for their activities, including scientific research activities **[E 3.26].** Departments also evaluate the research activity as a means of fund-allocation. In recent years, the Academic Senate has not approved a budget for any specific research project, except for the budget for common departmental activities (conference participation, co-financing of some projects) **[M2].** The UV does not have large research funds, although the research funding for these years has been

increased by 3.8% (in 2020). It started an initiative to create a fund (about 11 million AL) for small research projects that can be submitted by the staff of departments **[M9]**, however staff members are not aware of this fund possibility **[M10]**. However, two research projects with partner Universities are under implementation **[M1]**; UV should apply for research projects from national calls and also increase the number of international research projects. Furthermore, students are involved in several projects on their diploma thesis, but most of them have to cover expenses from their budget **[M4]**. The review team affirms the steps the University started taking to address support for researchers, i.e. to create a fund for small research projects.

Requests are approved by departments for research funding or otherwise by Senate and the Administration Board on the basis of the University's priorities, and a staff member stated that had applied for research fund as PhD student and had not been granted, and due to Covid-19 she was not able to start implementation of the project **[M10]**. The research groups at UV have been re-organised, however to meet the minimum of five full-time lecturers the evaluation for the research work is missing **[E4.27]**. **[Chapter II Standard I.1]**

4.6 UV, through the IQAIA and the Sector of Projects and External Relations, provides trainings for young researchers on how to write a research project **[E4.19; E4.20]**. UV in recent years has benefited from several projects (Erasmus +, INTERREG IPA, EASME, etc.), currently are implementing 11 projects **[SER, p 52],** however these projects do not have much research on their activities. In order to encourage the academic staff in the field of science and technology, UV has concluded several agreements with some institutions at the national level, including HEIs **[E1.101; E1.10; E1.103]**. The Sector of Projects and External Relations permanently informs the academic staff on the new calls from relevant institutions **[E 4.33]**. **[Chapter II Standard I.2]**

4.7 It is clear that UV supports the academic staff and researchers for the participation in conferences, symposiums, workshops etc. In the last 2-3 years, every request of academic staff and researchers for participation in conferences, symposiums, etc. has been approved and for this purpose a special budget has been created for the internationalization of UV **[E2.20; E4.34; E4.34a; M3]** and staff presented presentations and scientific papers in these events **[E1.73; E1.74; E4.36].** UV has also created a fund to pay the professors who have written projects and won the project. This is a new experience but in recent years the number of professors applying for various projects has been increased **[M9]**. UV has also financed several national and international conferences **[E4.35; E1.31; M10].** In last years, the UV has published about 237 articles in scientific journals, most of them within the country, however it is encouraging that they have published 67 papers in journals with impact factor **[E1.73].** Nevertheless, much research is published in home country journals, which may discourage staff from publishing in international journals. **[Chapter II Standard I.3]**

4.8 In total there are 27 scientific research groups at UV **[E4.27].** The research priorities are based at the department level, for example Faculty of Public Health has the strategy for scientific research **[E1.80]** also reflected in UV research strategy 2017-2022 **[E1.79].** However, other faculties have not developed strategies for scientific research. **[Chapter II Standard I.4]**

4.9 UV has 25 laboratories with electronic and IT equipment available for scientific research as well as Scientific Research Centre located at the Faculty of Technical Science where laboratories for chemistry, biology, environment, etc. are in place **[E2.57].** During the visit to the laboratories and the Scientific Research Centre, the team noticed that some devices are old, while the new ones, although in large numbers, are not used. The Scientific Research Centre premises should be reorganized and offices should be separated from the laboratories, and new staff should be trained on the use of appropriate equipment. **[Chapter II Standard I.5]**

4.10 UV prepared a long-term strategic development plan 2018-2024 based on the proposals of the basic units to increase scientific activities **[E1.55].** To increase promotion and cooperation for international support in the field of research and transfer of knowledge and technologies, UV has also drafted the Internationalization Strategy **[E1.57].**
There are concerns over the lack of training, additional financial support for research development, promotion, inclusion of students in research and transparency, and bureaucratic hurdles **[M10].** The UV allows academic staff to take the sabbatical year to develop research activities, and in the period 2017-2020, five academic staff allowed for sabbatical year **[E2.21].** Also, UV invited few professors from abroad for research activities and teaching in the framework of various projects such Erasmus+ ICMs **[E1.114a; E1.114b; E1.114c].** However, in the future UV should invite more foreign professors who are focused on research. The review team affirms the step that University started addressing the support to researchers through small grants which is encouraging for staff. **[Chapter II Standard I.6]**

4.11 The University considers conference participation important in promoting the University, both in Albania and overseas, and is particularly active in the organisation of national and international conferences **[E1.31; E4.43].** There is extensive staff participation in overseas conferences, and they provide funding for the conferences and respective articles **[E 2.20]. [Chapter II Standard I.7]**

The progress evaluation of the results in the field of research UV has been carried out through their mechanism (Deputy Rector for Scientific Research and Institutional Development and the appointment of Deputy Deans for Scientific Research) **[E4.44; E4.44a].** Furthermore, Academic Sector for Promotion and Scientific Publication has the database of research projects **[E1.31].** UV has approved some important documents (e.g. Code of Ethics in Research, Regulation of Authenticate software used for plagiarism detection in research and publishing activity (Regulation of Ethics

in Scientific and Publishing Research Activity). In last years, regarding the policy for protection of intellectual property, including good practice in research and publishing activity, Council of Ethics in Research has been established **[E1.38; E2.67; E4.45].** The UV has their bulletin for the publication of scientific papers of staff and students, which is free of charge **[**https://univlora.edu.al/buletini-shekncor/]. The second cycle students have participated in conferences and have the support of their professors for the preparation of manuscripts and literature **[M5]**. Given that UV performs analyses in terms of scientific research on basic units **[E3.42; E1.93],** and also the agreements in place for the evaluation of staff, it is important to have more information so that potential problems in the field of research are properly addressed **[E1.74]**. **[Chapter II Standard I.8]**

Findings

Good practice
No good practice was found.

Weaknesses
The review tem found the following weaknesses:
- Lack of teaching practice in laboratories **[*Chapter I Standard II.4*]**
- The Academic Senate has not approved a budget for any specific research project, except for the budget for common departmental activities (conference participation, co-financing of some projects). There is a lack of regulation for proper way to allocate the fund for the research has not yet been found [Chapter II Standard I.1] **[Chapter II Standard I.1]**

Recommendations
The review team identified the following recommendations:
- UV should apply for research projects from national calls and increase the number of international research projects. **[Chapter II Standard I.1]**
- The Scientific Research Centre premises should be reorganized and offices should be separated from the laboratories, and new staff should be trained on the use of appropriate equipment. **[Chapter II Standard I.5]**

Affirmation of action being taken
The review team affirmed the following action already in progress:
- The steps that University started to take are: support for researchers, an initiative to create a fund (about 11 million AL) for small research projects that can be submitted by the staff of departments and increased research budget by 3.8% in 2020, however a regulation for these projects should be drafted and all researchers should be informed about this possibility **[Chapter II Standard I.1].**

- The steps being taken by the University to improve its staff-student ratio is improving, while for the academic year 2019-2020, UV has employed 74 academic support staff and 35 administrative staff. In the future, the number of new researchers should also be increased (*Chapter I Standard II.4*)

- The review team has noted that the number of teaching trainings is not large despite the needs of teachers for new methods in teaching, even that UV has created a structure that promotes continuous teaching improvement, including mentoring. Furthermore, UV must find the mechanism that through the annual evaluation of staff and application for academic grades these trainings to be mandatory in the future **[*Chapter I Standard II.4*].**

Judgement

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

Evaluation Area 5: Students and their Support

5.1 The University has structures, policies and a procedure in place for admission of new students based on legal framework in force and also criteria from the basic units approved by the senate **[E5.1].** In 2018 UV established the Sector for Career Counseling Alumni, Sports and Cultural Activities to support students **[E1.22; E1.85].** The CCASCA organizes every year open days with high school's students, to inform them for the study programmes and facilities offered by the UV and the reasons why they should choose the University of Vlora **[E2.29].** Students are advised by academic counselors regarding their study programs **[M5].** Each student who is enrolled at UV is provided with a personal identity card and the UV organize welcoming day for new students **[E228c].** Additionally, the Academic Adviser **[E3.30]** together with head of department informs students about the details of the study programme.

As part of its Internationalization Strategy, the University welcomes foreign students in all cycles of study programmes **[E1.57]**. Mobility is facilitated through inter-University agreements under Erasmus+ **[E1.21]**, but also through provision of courses in other languages **[E1.112],** through recognition of equivalence of diploma and studies and grade equivalence procedures **[E1.62; E3.44; E3.45]**.

Academic staff are required to be available for student consultation in their office every week at published times, as part of their annual workload **[E1.5, Article 883.2].** Based on proposals from the Senate, the MES approves the number of students to be admitted in each study programme. The approved quotas are based on the previous year's returns and the level of demand. At the University of Vlora the number of new enrolled students has been decreased last two academic years. The overall, the University's academic staff-student ratio appears to be 1:25 although that varies across departments, with some having a very high ratio **[E5.4]**. The aim of the University is to increase the number of students over the next three years but to date the expansion has been constrained by the smaller number of pupils in high schools, migration and interest in studying in large centers, like Tirana **[M1; M10]**, including infrastructure and the number of teaching staff. **[*Chapter I Standard III.1*]**

5.2 Students receive information and advice through a number of administrative offices, in particular from the Career Counseling Alumni, Sports and Cultural Activities Sector, the IT Sector **[E1.85],** teaching secretary's organised by the basic units **[E5.52]**, Statistics Office, and the Academic advisers. The Academic advisors work closely with the faculties in each faculty and department and support students **[M5].** The University uses different means for external and internal communication (web page of UV, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram page addresses **[SER, p 60]**. All notices such as class timetables, course curricula, exam registration, internship applications, scholarships, events, tuition fees, syllabuses, study programs and exemptions from fees are always published on the official website of the University, which is easily accessible **[**http://univlora.edu.al/main**] [E2.55; E2.79].** Information

which may require further explanation by staff is given by Information Offices and/or other administrative units **[SER, p 61]**

Students are supplied with a username and password to enter the online system. Each faculty maintains a personal file for each student, containing address, email address, phone number, high school grade reports and other data. Student information is effectively managed and students were happy with the information received about the study programmes, regulation and student life **[M4; M5]** [*Chapter I Standard III.2*]

5.3 Besides that UV gives to its student orientation and counselling on how to continue further study cycle, the Career Counseling Alumni, Sports and Cultural Activities Sector gives advice to students from all study cycles and supports the transition from one study cycle to another **[E5.5]**. The University gives priority to its own graduates when applying for the second and third study cycle programmes **[SER, p 61; E5.1]**. The Career Counseling Alumni, Sports and Cultural Activities Sector offers trainings and seminars on CV-writing; job fairs and job interview support; advice about second-cycle programmes; information about internship and employment opportunities, exchange programmes and study periods abroad; and assistance throughout the relevant application processes **[E2.28; M10; M12]**. In line with the Law in Higher Education No. 80/2015 and DCM no. 41, the study programs at UV have been reorganized to provide to students opportunities for specialization **[E3.41]**.

There are procedures in place that allow students to change study programmes both within and outside the University and support is provided to students who wish to do so by the Career Counseling Alumni, Sports and Cultural Activities Sector **[SER, p 62; E1.1; E1.5]** [*Chapter I Standard III.3*]

5.4 In line with the national legal framework, students from 'vulnerable groups' (including those with disabilities, Roma and Balkan-Egyptian students and orphan's children of ex political convicts or persecuted people by communist regime, children of police officers or military staff of the Armed Forces, who have lost their lives or been injured in duty) **[SER, p 63]** are given support by means of full or partial tuition fee waivers **[E3.32]**. Also, for these categories the UV units propose free quotas in accordance with the DCM **[E5.8]**. Ramps to facilitate the mobility of disabled students are provided only in one building, and the schedules have been moved to the first floor, except for the laboratories, which is impossible **[tour of university facilities; M5]**. The University's sports facilities are very limited and of a low standard, but support have been given to students to organize competition in soccer and volleyball, marathon and one theatrical performance **[M4; M12].** The University, based on the Law 80/2015, does not offer part-time programmes, but is supporting current students to completion **[E5.10]** [*Chapter I Standard III.4*]

5.5 The University has a central library in the Rectorate Building and a four local in each Faculty and is enriched with books based on the request of students to the

relevant departments **[M12]**. Students are also satisfied with the updating of the literature and have permanent assistance from professors **[M4; M5]**. The central library has a limited stock of books; most are in English and some of them are very dated **[tour of university facilities].** The students can access the literature also through online library **[https://ulibrary.rash.al/].** The digitization is in developing phase, and partially is taking place only with regard to indexing. The textbooks for students are selected books and can be used as University textbooks based on the Decision of Academic Senate **[E2.66]**. It is very important that UV possesses the Scientific Library Sector **[E5.11]**. To coordinate the necessary literature of students and professors, UV has drafted the Internal Regulation of the scientific library and a wider list is kept by Sector of Curricula and Student Services **[SER, p 63].** The University is aware that library resources are limited and that literature needs to be updated each year. The departments and Scientific Library Sector present their proposals for library resources, and requests for additional library stock are related based on students and teachers' needs. The library in 2020 received book donations from UV friends for its book stock **[E4.7a]**. The library has literature for 10 different fields, which are classified **[E4.47]**. The library's working hours are presented in all units and on the web page of the UV **[E5.11]**. The library is open from 8am to 20pm in two shifts from Monday to Friday and is closed in weekends, **[M12]**. All students interested in accessing the library must register and have the card with their details **[E5.12]**. The library doesn't have any e-book. The review team affirms the steps being taken to allocate library budget through University budgeting mechanisms and to enrich library stock through donations in order to effectively support students' learning and research. **[*Chapter I Standard III.5*]**

5.6 The advises and tutoring service are offered in each faculty for the students who are doing professional practice and are in process of completing their diploma thesis **[E4.2; E4.3].** Academic staff in all faculties publishes their office hours when they are available to meet students to give pastoral or academic advice and lecturers give additional tutorial classes to students whose academic performance is poor **[SER, p 64]**. At the beginning of the academic year, each lecturer publishes the syllabuses where the office hours of each lecturer are defined, workload is specified, including basic and supporting literature **[E3.14]**. Each person has three weekly office hours. Lecturers support students with guidance in finding literature in relation to their research work **[M4]**. Where possible the University makes adjustments for students with special educational needs, and they changed the classroom for exams from higher floors in first floor **[M4]. [*Chapter I Standard III.6*]**

5.7 The University encourages student participation not only in student life, but also in decision-making. Students have established at the faculty level the Students Council **[E5.13; E1.1; E1.5].** Based on legislation, students are represented with two members at the Academic Senate, but with new legislation, DCM N0 782, their representatives will be also in the Board of Administration **[E5.14]**. In addition, students participate in an ad-hoc commission established by the Directorate of

Internal Quality Assurance and for the evaluation of study programme set up by basic units **[E4.12; E5.15].** However, for the time being their voice is heard by the Student Council and Academic Senate. One student representative has been part of the team for the preparation of the RVV, and has informed other students, but this connection has been maintained mainly with students of her faculty and other team members with Student Council **[M13]**. Students are able to provide feedback on their curriculum, teaching and study support and are involved in improving study programmes, as well they discussed and for the budget of Student Council **[M4; M5]**. Students whom the review team met gave examples of where their feedback had led to changes; in the cooperation with the professor they changed a subject, **[M4]**. The UV supports the students for their elections, providing the facilities and finances for their activities including conferences **[E3.33]. [*Chapter I Standard III.7*]**

The review team affirms the steps being taken to develop and strengthen the Student Council which will support and improve the communication between students and decision-making bodies of the University **[*Chapter I Standard III.7*]**

5.8 The University supports and encourages cultural and social activities for its students and has established the sport association which performs different sport activities **[E2.15].** Beside soccer and volleyball championship, the traditional marathon as well as the celebration of Children's day, in June 1st are well known **[SER, p 64];** including performance theater by the law students **[E2.16].** In addition, the Faculty of Public Health organizes different activities for the community, related to health issues, and engaged students who receive certificates from the UV **[E3.47].** The review team heard from students that they are informed about cultural and sport activities through social media **[M4]. [*Chapter I Standard III.8*]**

5.9 The Career Counseling Alumni, Sports and Cultural Activities Sector plays a role in collecting and maintaining data on students' employment. **[E5.17].** A database has been set up for this, but it is at a developing stage, while the Alumni network is not working very well, the information should come more often and it needs to be improved **[M6]**. The Alumni members are invited to every activity that is organized by the UV and they get all the information they want, but still they are interested in having partner meetings more often, have them open and simple, and listen more to the UV **[M6].** However, in last years they have organized two Alumni meetings, but the evaluation team was not provided with any documents for these meetings by the Alumni office **[M12]**. Furthermore, they plan to establish Alumni association **[M12].** UV supports students for labor market with different skills trainings, such us job fair **[E1.92]** and meetings with groups of interest **[E1.96].** The University doesn't have a real employment policy to employ graduates from the UV, but a large number of academic and non-academic staff is former students of UV **[E5.18].** It is important to note that UV students working (most of them in leadership positions) in public and private institutions are very interested in collaborating with UV and have shown that most of their employees come from UV. The review team affirms that Alumni regulation should be prepared, and in order to strengthen cooperation with Alumni

official meetings should be organized in the future by the Career and Counseling Office **[M6]. [*Chapter I Standard III.9*]**

Findings

Good practice
No good practice was found.

Weaknesses
No weakness was found.

Recommendations
The review team identified the following recommendation:
- Alumni regulation should be prepared, in order to strengthen the cooperation with Alumni through official meetings organized by the sector of Career Counseling Alumni, Sports and Cultural Activities *[Chapter I Standard III.9]*

Affirmation of action being taken
The review team affirms the following actions already in progress:

- The steps being taken to allocate library budget through University budgeting mechanisms and to enrich library stock through donations in order to effectively support students' learning and research **[*Chapter I Standard III.5*]**

- The steps being taken to establish and strengthen the Student Council which will support and improve the communication between students and decision-making bodies of the University **[*Chapter I Standard III.7*]**

Judgement
   The Standards for Students and their Support are fully met.

List of evidences

A. Self-evaluation phase

1. Vetedeklarimi mbi vertetesine e dokumentave dhe lista e evidencave.pdf
2. RVB_eng.PDF
3. RVB_shqip.PDF
4. E1.1 UV Statute.PDF
5. E1.5 Old Regulation.PDF
6. E1.7 New Draft Regulation.PDF
7. E1.11 Regulation of Faculty of Public Health.PDF
8. E1.12 Regulation of Faculty of Technical Sciences.PDF
9. E1.13 Regulation of Faculty of Humanities.PDF
10. E1.14 Regulation of the Department of Foreign Languages.PDF
11. E1.15 Regulation of the Department of Health Care.PDF
12. E1.16 Regulation of the Department of Economics.pdf
13. E1.21 Regulation of Academic Senate.PDF
14. E1.22 Organizational Structure of UV.pdf
15. E1.23 UV budget 2019.pdf
16. E1.24 Decision on Approval of the Action Plan.pdf
17. E1.26 Strategy for Continuous Training of Young Researchers.PDF
18. E1.27 European Card and Code for young researchers.pdf
19. E1.29 Doctoral Regulation.PDF
20. E1.32 Refunding Decision.PDF
21. E1.33 Integration strategy and training of newly recruited staff.pdf
22. E1.35 Regulation of the Board of Administration.PDF
23. E1.42 Election regulation of 2016.PDF
24. E1.43 Decisions of the Institutional Council of Elections, 2016.PDF
25. E1.44 Appointments from the last election.pdf
26. E1.45 New election regulation of 2020.PDF
27. E1.53 Composition decision of the Consultative Board.PDF
28. E1.55 UV Strategic Plan.PDF
29. E1.56 The decision on approval of the strategic plan by Academic Senate.PDF
30. E1.66 UV Development Strategy.PDF
31. E1.68 Strategic Plan of Faculty of Public Health-.PDF
32. E1.70 Decision on approval of the BA Strategic Plan.PDF
33. E1.78 Academic programmes by name and faculty.PDF
34. E1.79 Scientific Research Strategy.PDF
35. E1.82 Decision on the establishment of the RDC.PDF
36. E1.83 Regional Development Center Regulation.PDF
37. E1.84 RDC Strategy.PDF
38. E1.85 Organogram and.pdf
39. E1.91 Meeting with the stakeholders.PDF
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48. E2.49.a Academic Senate Decision No.52, dated 20.04.2017 on On approval of the form for evaluating the performance of full-time and part-time academic staff..pdf

49. E2.51 Academic Senate Decision no. 67, dated 13.06.2017 on "Purchase of server and other accessories in function of UV WEB and its control (Domain and Hosting) by the IT and Statistics Directorate"..PDF
50. E2.53 Academic Senate Decision no. 64, dated 20.12.2019 on Approval of the regulation on protection, processing, storage and security of personal data..PDF
51. E2.63 Academic Senate Decision no. 16, dated 27.01.2017 on Initiation of procedures and project for the construction of the new building of the Faculty of Public Health.PDF
52. E2.65 Academic Senate Decision no. 77 dated 13.07.2017 on "The right of a compulsory copy (of dissertations, education and or exercise books prepared by the lecturers) of the University" of Vlora. " Ismail Qemali.PDF
53. E2.66 Academic Senate Decision No. 2, dated 13.01.2017 on the Approval of procedures for full university publications (university textbooks, monographs and lecture cycles)..PDF
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59. E3.4 Follow-up note from the Centre for Education Services.pdf
60. E3.9.a_f Study programme files.pdf
61. E3.10.a Study Program opening procedure – BSc. Translating and Editory.pdf
62. E3.12.a Reorganizationchange of Bachelor Study Programs (FE).PDF
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65. E3.21 Senate Decision on the Foreign Language Exam (MSc).pdf
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69. E3.27.c Regulation of study programme Bsc. Naval Engineering.PDF
70. E3.31.a Bsc. Study Programme Naval Engineering organized according to MARED format.PDF
71. E3.31.b Student Guide, organized according to MARED format.PDF
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73. E3.34 Welcome day - Orientation of first year students.PDF
74. E3.35 Student Guides.PDF
75. E3.36.a Employment Criteria _Faculty of Public Health.PDF
76. E3.36.b Employment Criteria _ Faculty of Technical Sciences.pdf
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78. E3.43 Decision of the faculty council of technical sciences on the similarity of study programmes up to 70%.pdf
79. E3.47 Cultural and educational activities with the participation of students, which aim to enliven student life..PDF
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81. E4.11 Order No. 123, dated 19.12.2019 On the establishment of working group, for the improvement of the students' questionnaire on teaching quality for the courses of each study programme in UV.PDF
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83. E4.18 The decision of the Academic Senate No. 32, dated 27.06.2018 On the approval of the strategy for the continuous training of young researchers in UV.PDF

84. E4.23 Decision of the Academic Senate No. 53, dated 20.04.2017 On the approval of the performance evaluation form of full-time and part-time academic support staff with academic and administrative character..pdf
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95. E1.1 Statuti i UV.PDF
96. E1.2 Vendimi i SA për Miratimin e Statutit.PDF
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118. E1.24 Vendimi i miratimit të planit të veprimit.PDF
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412. E4.30 Vlerësimi i performancës së stafit nga drejtuesi.pdf
413. E4.31 Plani Kërkimor Shkencor FSHP i miratuar.pdf
414. E4.31a Tabela nga financa me kryetarët e grupeve kërkimore për evidentim të pagës.pdf
415. E4.32 Plani buxhetor afatmesëm UV, Vendim SA Nr 54 Datë17.08.2018.pdf
416. E4.33 Thirrjet AKSHSHI që i dërgohet stafit për të aplikuar për projekte nga zyra e projekteve-email.pdf
417. E4.34 Vendim Nr. 75, datë 13.07.2017.pdf
418. E4.34a Vendim Nr. 76, datë 13.07.2017 'Për financimin e lëvizjeve jashtë vendit të stafit të Universitetit "Ismail Qemali", Vlorë'.pdf
419. E4.35 Konferenca e Qendrës Kërkimore Shkencore, FSHP 2019 httprewbc.ni.ac.rs.pdf
420. E4.36 Lista e konferencave pjesëmarrës stafi i UV.pdf
421. E4.37 Vendime departamenti që kanë grupe kërkimore ku përcaktojnë fushat e studimit.pdf
422. E4.38 Vendim mbledhjes për krijim te grupeve të punës për projekte, DKSH-FSHP.pdf
423. E4.40 Proçedurë punësimi, Departamenti i Finances dhe Kontabilitetit,FE.pdf

B. Site visit

C. Meetings

Meeting 1: Review Team meet with the Rector.
Meeting 2: Review Team meet with members of the Academic Senate (excluding the Rector).
Meeting 3: Review Team meet with senior staff of the University.
Meeting 4: Review Team meet with a sample of First Cycle students.

Meeting 5: Review Team meet with a sample of Second and Third Cycle students.

Meeting 6: Review Team meet with a sample of external partners and alumni.

Meeting 9: Review Team meet with Administration Board and senior staff.

Meeting 10: Review Team meet with a sample of teaching staff.

Meeting 11: Review Team meet with a sample of research-active staff, from each faculty and research centres.

Meeting 12: Review Team meet with Administrative Staff, responsible for student support and services.

Meeting 13: Review Team meet with Self-evaluation Team.