



**AGJENCIA E SIGURIMIT TË CILËSISË NË ARSIMIN E LARTË**

Institutional Review of Higher Education Institutions in Albania

**Report of the Periodic Institutional Accreditation  
of University College “BEDËR”**

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## Contents

About this review.....	4
The context of this review .....	5
Summary of findings .....	8
Good practice .....	8
Weaknesses.....	9
Recommendations.....	9
Affirmation of action being taken.....	9
Summary of judgements for each Evaluation Area .....	10
Summary Judgement .....	11
Detailed report.....	12
Evaluation Area 1: The Organization and its Management .....	12
Findings.....	16
Good practice.....	16
Weaknesses.....	16
Recommendations.....	16
Affirmation of action being taken.....	16
Judgement .....	17
Evaluation Area 2: Resourcing .....	18
Findings.....	21
Good practice.....	21
Weaknesses.....	22
Recommendations.....	22
Affirmation of action being taken.....	22
Judgement .....	22
Evaluation Area 3: The Curriculum .....	23
Findings.....	29
Good practice .....	29
Weaknesses.....	29
Recommendations.....	29
Affirmation of action being taken.....	29
Judgement .....	29
Evaluation Area 4: Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research.....	30
Findings.....	34
Good practice .....	34
Weaknesses.....	34
Recommendations.....	35
Affirmation of the action being taken.....	35
Judgment .....	35
Evaluation Area 5: Students and their Support .....	36
Findings.....	40
Good practice .....	40
Weaknesses.....	40
Recommendations.....	40
Affirmation of action being taken.....	40
Judgment .....	40
Evidence List.....	41
List B: Meetings held during the visit .....	44

## **About this review**

The overall aim of Institutional Review is to assess the extent to which each HEI meets the Albanian State Quality Standards which came into force in 2011. Institutional Review is a peer review process with each review team composed of a mix of 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 HEI meets the standards, but will also inform the HEIs, Albanian government, the public and students of how each HEI meets the standards. This report also helps the HEI to identify priorities for enhancement [the process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported].

The Albanian State Quality Standards have been grouped under five 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's 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 advice and assistance to the review team by ensuring that the findings made in the report are underpinned by evidence, and also by proofreading and summarising the full report for the summary below.

## **The context of this review**

University College “Bedër” (UCB) was founded in 2011 and is a private higher education institution based in Tirana, Albania, with the request of Albanian Muslim Community as a non-profit organisation.

In 2019, to support the need for professional skills in Albania, a licence was granted to UCB to deliver professional programs in the field of graphic design and web programming. At this moment UCB has two faculties: the Faculty of Technology and Business, offering 2 bachelor programs and 1 professional program; the Faculty of Humanities and Law, offering 4 bachelor programs, 7 master of science, 2 professional master and 1 integrated master program.

The Faculty of Technology and Business has 3 departments, namely the Department of Computer Science, the Department of Economics and Business and the Research Centre for Sustainable Development and Innovation. The Faculty of Humanities and Law has four departments, namely the Department of Law, the Department of Communication Sciences, the Department of Education and English Language and the Department of Islamic Sciences. In total all the departments offer 20 study programs, professional, first and second cycle.

Other than the Faculties and Departments, the management and administrative units of UCB are the Rectorate, the Board of Administration, the Academic Senate, the Internal Quality Assurance Unit, the Office of Finance and Services, the International Relations Office, the Registrar's Office, the Office of Protocol and Archives, the Admissions and Career Counselling Office and the library.

From 2020, the institution operates in a new building with 2918.3 m<sup>2</sup> with the maximum reception capacity of 1066 students. Currently 589 students are studying in 20 programs at UC Bedër. From 2016 – 2020 are graduated 826 students. The total number of academic staff involved in teaching and research for academic year 2020 – 2021 in both faculties is 111 where in the Faculty of Humanities and Law, 34 are full time and 41 part time and in the Faculty of Technology and Business, 24 full time and 12 part time.

In 10 years of its operation, the institution has undergone different evaluation processes, reporting and audits performed by the internal structure of the institution or outside it ensuring sustainability and functioning in accordance with the Albanian legislation of higher education and quality standards in force.

## Summary report

The University College Bedër, is a private non-profit higher education institution with a specific profile in higher education sector in Albania. The institution was opened based on the request of Muslim Community of Albania in 2011. The college works closely with national and international institutions, businesses in the region and abroad. It has a close partnership with the Muslim Community of Albania to provide main contribution in education for Islamic sciences in Albania.

After the reorganisation on 2019-2020 academic year, UC "Bedër" is composed by two faculties, the Faculty of Humanities and Law and the Faculty of Technology and Business, 7 basic units, 6 of which are departments and the other one is a Research Center for Sustainable Development and Innovation.

This is the second Institutional Review of the institution to assess the extent to which the Albanian State Quality Standards, which came into force in 2011, have been met. The report of the first review in June 2017 identified features of good practice, made recommendations for the University to consider addressing identified areas of weakness. Based on the first accreditation report<sup>1</sup>, UCB, the summary of judgements for each Evaluation Area were:

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

The review team recommended to the Accreditation Board (AB) that at the University College "Bedër", State Quality Standards were substantially met and as a consequence the University was granted accreditation by the Board for a period of four years with decision Nr. 101, date 10.11.2017<sup>2</sup>. In this decision, the institutions were obligatory to provide an action plan to address two recommendations.

The institution provided to ASCAL the action plan to fulfil the recommendations of BA. The review team judge that the institution has addressed the recommendations left by the previous accreditation where the institutions is working for the integration of foreign students and the evaluation policy of research activity, grants and projects, is already in place.

A Self-evaluation Report was developed by an Internal Self-evaluation Working Group, which included six representatives from institution with an in-depth knowledge of the UCB including a student representative.

During the compilation of the report the self-evaluation team had access to documentation from both academic and administrative departments and based their work on the principles of objectivity, transparency, impartiality and respect for academic autonomy.

The self-evaluation document addresses each of the five evaluation areas in turn and references a very comprehensive list of evidence. It starts by describing the historical

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<https://ascal.al/media/documents/qaa%20eer/University%20College%20Beder%20EER%20AL.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ascal.al/sq/bordi-i-akreditimit/vendimet/vendimet-e-mbledhjes-10-11-nentor-2017>

background to UCB and then discusses the actions taken to address the recommendations from the previous review in 2017. The judgement of the self-assessment team of each of the evaluation areas; the organisation and its management, resourcing, the curriculum, teaching, learning, assessment and research and students and their support are that they are all fully met. The Self-evaluation provided with internal documents, statutes and regulations of the University along with relevant statistical data and reports. Drafts were circulated to a wider audience within the institution before being finalised. The Academic Senate authorised the release of the final report and for sending this to the ASCAL.

The review team was made up of two reviewers, one member of staff from an Albanian institution and one from Kosovo. The review team was supported by the Review Manager provided by the Albanian Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education (ASCAL). The review team received the Self-evaluation Report, the supporting evidence. The wide range of supporting information provided by the institution, enabled the team to familiarize themselves with the structure, policies, management procedures and nature of teaching and research activity undertaken. Evidence included the Statute and Regulations, internal reports, the annual report to the Ministry, admission and orientation procedures, list of external agreements and memoranda, examples of programme information and evidence of deliberative meetings. The public website was referenced in the SER and the review team had access to it. The review team considered the evidence, both in English and Albanian, was appropriate to make a judgement and did not request any further information in order to explore the evidence for the way in which UCB addresses the Standards.

The review team met with the Rector, senior managers, students, lecturers, administrative and support staff, the internal quality assurance unit, as well as alumni and external partners during two days of meetings. The review team toured the premises of the college to see the lecture and seminar rooms, laboratories, offices and library.

Discussion supported the clarification of procedures, responsibilities and findings. Minutes were taken at all meetings and are referred in this report.

Due to Covid 19 pandemic, the review team recognizes the difficulties that the institution went through in this assessment and acknowledge the engagement with the process and the cooperation provided to the review team throughout all phases. In particular, the review team commend the work of the Self-evaluation Group in providing a comprehensive evidence base documentation and information, academic staff and students, who participated in the meetings.

The review team thanks ASCAL, Review Manager and Director for support in this process. The review team consisted of Niko Hyka (Lead Reviewer), Arben Mehmeti (External Reviewer).

**The review team judges that:**

The Standards for the Organisation and its Management are **fully met**. In reaching this judgement, the review team identify three good practice and one affirmation. The review team found that the institution is managed efficiently in accordance with the Albanian law, Statute & Regulations and have good collaborations with other institutions and partners. The review team identified that the institution has a well-organized and effective information system, which enables students and academic staff to provide complete information about the academic and administrative process.

The Standards for Resourcing are **fully met**. In reaching this judgement, the review team identify two good practice and made two affirmations. UCB pursues an open policy of human resources employment and recruitment of qualified academic and administrative staff. The review team affirms the steps being made to develop online resources to enable learning to continue during the Covid-19 pandemic. The review team affirms the steps being made to develop infrastructure and logistics for students and academic staff.

The Standards for the Curriculum are **fully met**. In reaching this judgement, the review team didn't identify any of feature of good practice, now weakness, no recommendation and one affirmation related the efforts being made in opening new professional programmes in the field of ICT and collaboration with stakeholders of this field.

The Standards for Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research are **substantially met**. In reaching this judgement, the review team identified two weaknesses and associated recommendations and made four affirmations. The weaknesses relate to the lack of high impact-oriented research projects that enable the publication of papers in journals with impact factor and the lack of regulation for proper allocation of funds for the research. The budget for the research projects is used mainly for the conference participation. The associated recommendations are focused on how the institution maybe increases the focus on research and its management. The review team affirms that the institution has made progress by increasing the budget for scientific research from 2 to 6%. Also, it is very encouraging that UCB publishes two journals periodically and is making efforts to index them on international platforms.

The Standards for Students and their Support are **fully met**. In reaching this judgement, the review team identified no feature of good practice and made one affirmation. The review team judge that the UCB pursues a supportive policy for students and pays attention to students with special needs and from special categories, offering appropriate infrastructure and scholarships. The library is subscribed to online scientific journal JSTOR thus enabling students and staff access to this magnificent world library

## **Summary of findings**

### **Good practice**

The review team identified the following feature of good practice:

- Decision making is performed in accordance with the legislation, which guarantees objectivity, transparency and participation of all actors of the institution in this process. **[Chapter III Standard I.2].**
- UCB has established a good level of collaboration with local public and private institutions for students support during the practical training, which is key for their future employment. **[Chapter III Standard III.3].**
- The Dean of students is a good example of student support in the institution. **[Chapter III Standard I.2].**
- UCB pursues an open policy of human resources employment and recruitment of qualified academic and administrative staff. **[Chapter III Standard IV.1].**



- The review team identified that the institution has a well-organized and effective information system, which enables students and the personnel to provide complete information about the academic and administrative process. **[Chapter III Standard VII.1].**
- UCB's Student Guide and organization of "oriented week", which ensures that students have easily accessible and detailed information in one place about their study programmes and all other aspects of student life at the UCB **[Chapter I Standard III.3].**
- UCB pursues a supportive policy for students and pays attention to students with special needs and from special categories, offering appropriate infrastructure and scholarships **[Chapter I Standard III.4].**

### **Weaknesses**

The review team identified the following weaknesses:

- Lack of high impact-oriented research projects that enable the publication of papers in journals with impact factor. **[Chapter II Standard I.4], [Chapter II Standard I.5].**
- There is a lack of a policy document for proper allocation of funds for the research **[Chapter II Standard I.1].** Also, the budget for the research projects is mainly used for the conference participation **[Chapter II Standard I.8].**

### **Recommendations**

The review team made the following recommendations:

- The institution to see opportunities for staff training and development through the establishment of a Center for Excellence in order for training to be mandatory and evaluated in the future. **[Chapter I Standard II.4]**
- The institution should increase the applications and the budget for the research projects of national and international calls to support the involvement the research activities including by the senior staff as well as establish a standard of at least one international paper to be published annually. **[Chapter II Standard I.1], [Chapter I Standard II.6 and Chapter I Standard II.7]**
- The Interdisciplinary Centre for Sustainable Development and Innovation is in the initial stage of consolidation, but work should be intensified to start the activity as well as greater student involvement and strengthen the role of the Centre for Young Researchers. **[Chapter II Standard II.6]**
- The cooperation with alumni students and Alumni Office should be coordinated through a document in which to present their function, contributions and commitments. **[Chapter I Standard III.3]**

### **Affirmation of action being taken**

The review team noted affirmation of the following action being taken:

- The review team therefore affirm the efforts being made to engage with the opportunities offered by the Erasmus Scheme for student mobility. **[Chapter III Standard I.4].**

- The review team affirm the efforts being made in opening new professional programmes in the field of ICT and collaboration with stakeholders of this field. **[Chapter I, Standard 1.7].**
- The review team affirms the steps being made to develop online resources to enable learning to continue during the Covid-19 pandemic. **[Chapter III Standard VII.1, VII.2].**
- The review team affirms the steps being made to develop infrastructure and logistics for students and academic staff. **[Chapter III Standard VII.3].**
- The steps that the institution takes to allocate about 40.000 euro and to increase budget for scientific research from 2 to 6%, that can be submitted by the staff of the departments, however a regulation on these projects should be drafted and all researchers should be informed about this possibility. **[Chapter II Standard I.1]**
- It is very encouraging that UCB publishes two journals periodically and is making efforts to index them on international platforms **[Chapter II Standard I.7]**
- The UCB is trying to strengthen scientific cooperation between the Centre for Sustainable Development and Innovation and Departments. **[Chapter I Standard II.6].**
- The establishment of the Centre for Young Researchers is very important for the involvement of students in research projects and in the future, the role of this center should be strengthened. **[Chapter I Standard II.6]**
- The library is subscribed to online scientific journal JSTOR thus enabling students and staff access to this magnificent world library. **[Chapter I Standard III.5]**

#### **Summary of judgements for each Evaluation Area**

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

### **Summary Judgement**

The reviewers recommend to the Accreditation Board that at University College "Bedër" the State Quality Standards are **fully met**.

## Detailed report

### Evaluation Area 1: The Organization and its Management

1.1. UCB has a comprehensive statute (approved in 2016 and reviewed in 2018) [A.E7] which complies with the law of higher education in Albania and is consistent with the mission and objectives in the strategic plan [A.E17] of the institution. The statute is used as the basis for all activity and all the regulations are written in compliance with this. The General Regulations [A.E10; A.E11; A.E13; A.E14; A.E21], are compliant with this as are the regulations for the Faculties and Departments [A.E13; A.E14]. The Basic Regulation [A.E10] state, for example, the organisation of UCB, the function of the governing bodies, the responsibilities of academic and administrative staff, the rights and responsibilities of students and procedures for teaching and learning. There are also regulations which apply to each study programme in the first and second cycle [A.E82; E83]. UCB is able to adjust and improve its statute and regulations as necessary, which is clearly demonstrated by the introduction of new regulations on safety regarding Covid-19 [A.E86] and instructions on online teaching and learning [A.E85; BM1]. The institution and its structures therefore work in accordance with its statute. *[Chapter III Standard I.1].*

1.2. The last reorganisation of UCB is approved by the minister with order No. 200, Date 03.07.2020 [A.E9]. Actual structure of institution is in compliance with its statute [A.E7], laid out clearly in the organisation chart [A.E30; A.E31] and understood by all staff [BM5; BM8, BM9; BM10]. It is evident through discussions with these staff that UCB has an effective management structure, according to the statute [A.E7; A.E30] which includes the Board of Administration, the Rectorate, the Academic Senate, the Council of Ethics, the Deans Office and the Academic Staff Assembly. The leading authorities being the Rector, the Administrator, the Deans and the Heads of Department [BM1; BM8; BM9]. According to the statute [A.E7], the Academic Senate has responsibility for the approval of strategic plan [A.E17] and the annual plans of the institution, including the approval of new study programmes proposed by the departments. The Rectorate is responsible for drafting the strategic plan, taking into account proposals from the faculties, departments and administrator and implementing the decisions of the Senate [BM1; BM8]. The Rectorate also submits the budget [A.E16; A.E60, A.E61] to the Senate for approval [BM8; BM10]. The Heads of Department bring forward proposals for new programmes and these are discussed at faculty level before going for costing and approval at the Senate [A.E18]. The Board of Administration is responsible to the Foundation for the finances of the Institution and therefore also approves the budget for human and physical resources, after approval by the Senate [BM8]. The Board of Administration drafts the annual budget based on proposals from the departments and faculties and is ultimately responsible for the sound financial operation of the institution [A.E60; M8; M10]. The Council of Ethics is responsible for examining the ethical issues concerned with teaching and research and is governed by both the Statute [A.E7] and its own regulation [A.E10], evidence of its operation is also demonstrated [BM10]. The institution has a large number of administrative structures which seem to increase bureaucracy and difficulties in management but during the meetings it was noted that each unit has important functions and tasks that helps the well-functioning of the institution as a whole [A.E30]. The review team identify progress in the way of functioning of all governing and administrative structures compared with previous accreditation [EER 2017, ASCAL website] and judge that the institution is organised in such a way as to ensure efficiency in its management *[Chapter III Standard I.2].*

It is evident through meetings with teaching staff **[BM5; BM9]**, support staff **[BM10]**, deans and heads of department and senior managers **[BM8]** that UCB has well defined procedures for decision making that includes full engagement of all relevant staff. Review team identify that the decision making is performed in accordance with the legislation, which guarantees objectivity, transparency and participation of all actors of the institution in this process **[Chapter III Standard I.2]**.

1.3. The internal regulations, define the responsibilities and duties of the senate and other collegial bodies, which in most cases, have decision-making power, not only proposing ones. The Senate and the teaching staff meet periodically, in accordance with the relevant regulations. Meetings are planned in advance according to the Statute **[A.E7]** or additional meetings are arranged when needed, agendas circulated and meetings minuted **[A.E124]**. The Ethics Council, instead, focuses on issues related to the ethical activity of UCB Dean's office is the liaison institution between the Rectorate and Basic Units: it approves the priorities identified by the basic units related to study programmes, admission criteria and development priorities **[A.E13' A.E14]**. Decisions taken by the collegial bodies (Academic Senate, Board of Administration, Rectorate, Dean's Office) are protocolled and are passed on to the respective structures for implementation, in line with the decision's scope **[BM8; BM10]**. Students contribute in the constructive debate thanks to participation in the Senate and Standing Committee on Students' Relation **[A.E124]**.

Review team identify the Dean of students a good practice for cooperation between institution and students **[A.E30; BM3; BM4]**. As the basic unit, the Department meetings focus on issues related to teaching tasks, study programme, monitoring of scientific research activities undertaken by members of department are monitored and aspects of relationship with students are addressed in discussion with the academic staff, thanks to students' representatives' presence in the Senate and Department meetings. The department meetings are presided by the head of the department **[A.E19; BM8]**. **[Chapter III Standard I.3]**.

1.4. UCB operates within the Statute **[A.E7]** and in compliance with the law on higher education in Albania respecting academic freedom. It has appropriate structures for the supervision and internal evaluation of its activities as shown through the organogram **[A.E30]**. Monitoring quality at UCB is the responsibility of the Internal Quality Assurance Unit (IQAU) **[BM11]** according to the Academic Senate Decision **[A.E24]**. The IQAU undertakes constant monitoring of academic and administrative functions **[M11; A.E21]**. External experts are used to give an objective view, and this provides added value to the process **[BM11]**. UCB has made substantial progress in developing partnerships with both local and international universities **[A.E36; A.A.E37; A.E38]**. UCB has an Office of Public and Media relation and the Office of Information Technology, determined in the Statute **[A.E7]** which coordinates the activities and communication between institution and partners **[A.E30]**. The Office of International Relations and the Office of Scientific Research, are organized in order to support and facilitate the acquisition of funds from EU programs and more. The International Relations Office has an Erasmus+ program coordinator who makes it possible to receive and disseminate information on projects and application procedures **[A.E39; A.E42]**. The Office of Scientific Research serves as a body that supports academic personnel with information on open calls for projects and funding, as well as the technical aspects of application procedures **[BM3; BM4; BM5]**. International projects, such as Erasmus+, and although Covid-19 has stopped travel, it is well placed to develop this further when conditions allow **[SER]**. The review

team therefore affirm the efforts being made to engage with the opportunities offered by the Erasmus Scheme for student mobility **[Chapter III Standard I.4]**.

1.5. The Strategic Development Plan 2018 – 2023 **[A.E17]** at UCB is compliant with the mission and purpose **[A.E7]** of the institution and has eight strategic priorities; Qualified Education, Quality of Scientific Research, Student Admission, Student life and relationship with graduates, Sustainable Impact, Social Responsibility, Human Resources, Infrastructure and Financial Resources. The plan was discussed among academic staff, students and at the Board of Administration before being approved at the academic Senate in accordance with the Statute and Regulations **[A.E24; A.E25; A.E26]**. The strategy sets appropriate objectives and means to achieve expected outcomes. An integral part of the strategy is infrastructure development **[A.E68]** to support the development of new study programmes **[A.E108]**. These have been proposed on the basis of labour market analysis **[A.E33]**. Although parts of the development strategy have been implemented or are in the process (eg., infrastructure development, student support, institution consolidation), the review team did not find an analytic action plan for the implementation of the strategy with deadlines, costs and responsible structures **[Chapter III Standard I.5]**.

1.6. In compliance with Article 32 of Law No.80/2015, UCB produces for each academic year the annual report, which is submitted to the MoEYS and published in the official website of the institution **[A.E8]**. Each basic unit of the UC “Bedër”, submits to the Rectorate every academic year end, the annual report, which is in itself a model of internal evaluation of units **[A.E8]**. The Senate, Rectorate and Administrative Board discuss and approve this document with involvement of all participating stakeholders **[SER]**. This report is presented by the Rectorate during the Academic Senate meeting and became an object of discussion among academic and administrative staff and students. It compares performance with previous years and enables the Rectorate, the Senate and the Board of Administration to make informed strategic and operational decisions **[A.E8]**. The annual report informs the MoEYS on the academic activity, financial situation, forecast on academic staff engagement, offers an overall quality assessment of students and study programmes, and school tuitions for the upcoming years **[Chapter III Standard I.6]**.

1.7. UCB has appropriate structures to accomplish its mission and purpose as outlined in the Statute **[A.E7]**, and demonstrated by staff **[BM5; BM9; BM10; BM11]**. There are two faculties, each of which has three departments **[A.E31]**. The spirit of autonomy is embodied in the Statute and also reflected in regulations based on this, for example, the Regulation of the Faculty of Technology and Business, Faculty of Humanities and Law **[A.E13; A.E14]** and departments, **[SER]**. All regulations and procedures are approved at the Board of Administration and the Senate. Academic freedom in teaching and research is also embodied in the Statute **[A.E7]**. Examples include discussions between **[A.E19]** an academic staff and Head of Department on a course syllabus **[A.E116]** and the organisation of a workshop **[A.E27]**. UCB offers study programmes to fulfil its mission which meet market demand and are in line with the strategic development plan **[A.E17]** and national priorities. These include Bachelors programmes in Law, Communication Sciences, Computer Sciences etc. Professional and Scientific Masters programmes are also targeted at meeting market demand **[A.E88]**. Support structures include the secretary, Dean of students, the Library, the Human Resources office, the Protocol and Archive, the Office of Admissions and Career Counselling, the Finance Office and Logistical Services **[SER]**. These structures are also presented for

inspection on the UCB website [[www.beder.edu.al](http://www.beder.edu.al)] along with many other details about the Institution, the programmes offered and its organisation. The review team conclude that UCB has appropriate structures to accomplish its mission and purpose [**Chapter III Standard II.1**].

1.8. UCB has several decision-making bodies, namely the Senate, the Administrative Board, the Rectorate, the Council of Ethics, two standing committees on Quality Standards Assurance and Student Relations, the Academic Personnel Assembly [**A.E30**], the Dean's Office and the Student Councils. Each have particular responsibilities, for example the Senate is responsible for accomplishing the mission and approving the budget as defined in the Regulation of the Academic Senate [**SER; BM1**]. The Administrative Board has particular responsibility for budget approval [**E16**], the Rectorate implements the strategic development plan and day to day operations [**BM8**], the Council of Ethics role is also defined by its regulation and the Standing Committees are defined by the Senate [**BM1; BM8**] and have specific responsibilities [**SER**]. The role of the Academic Personnel Assembly is also defined in the Statute [**A.E7**] and are working effectively as evidenced in minutes of meetings [**A.E9**]. The Dean's Office makes appropriate decisions at Faculty level and the Student Councils also have well defined roles and responsibilities [**A.E7; BM3; BM4**]. The team conclude that UCB has management bodies that facilitate decision making by favouring debate in institution boards [**Chapter III Standard II.3**].

1.9. The institution takes into account the suggestions of labour market studies organized by the departments for the respective programs. Based on the suggestions made in the market studies by the relevant departments, [**BM8; BM9' BM10; SER**] proposals have been made for changes in the curriculum of some programs as well as for the opening of new programs. One of the objectives presented in the Strategic Plan is the updating of curricula and scientific research according to market needs. An important contribution is considered the role of the institution in the education of staff serving in religious institutions in Albania (Islamic religion) [**SER**]. UCB examines national and international reports which keeps it updated on local, regional and international economic development [**E33; E35**]. New programme developments are proposed in response to examination of this information by acknowledged experts within the Institution and agreed through the committee structure previously described. UCB also monitors student internship placements [**A.E100**] and student employment upon graduation to gain feedback on employability through the Office of Graduates [**A.E35; BM7**]. During the meeting with second year students [**BM4**] and admin staff [**BM10**], it was referred that Dean of student's office, offers them instructions for internship and employment opportunities based on collected data through alumni network. The review team conclude therefore that the institution conducts market research to accomplish its mission and purpose [**Chapter III Standard III.1**].

1.10. UCB cooperates with various local/regional public and private institutions to improve students opportunities for conducting internships (more than 54) [**E37**]. Review team identify good examples of collaboration with Epoka University for student and staff exchange, organizing of scientific activities, participation in the joint research projects, Turgut Ozal College for student professional practice, Atom IT company for curriculum design for IT programs and training etc, [**BM6; BM9**]. CUB have also approached the various international institutions for student staff and mobility [**A.E43**], shared activities, collaborative research projects [**A.E42; A.E118**] development of new pedagogical approaches and new learning platforms [**A.E52; A.E91**]. The review team conclude that UCB is pursuing a strategy of

collaboration and partnership at a regional, national and international level **[Chapter III Standard III.2]**.

1.11. Institution promotes and enhance students and staff mobility activities in the framework of collaboration within various national and international projects.

UCB collaborates with a range of private and public institutions in Albania in order to give students opportunities to participate in internships and case studies **[A.E100]**. The college also encourages mobility of staff and students to participate in mobility schemes through Erasmus+ **[A.E39]**. Staff are encouraged to attend international conferences and workshops **[A.E117]** and cooperate with other higher education institutions **[A.E37]**. However, the current Covid-19 pandemic has restricted opportunities severely this year. The review team conclude that UCB pursues a cooperation strategy with other supporting institutions and a favouring policy for mobility of academic personnel and students at an international level, but this year has been severely curtailed due to the Covid-19 pandemic **[BM5; BM8; BM9]**. **[Chapter III, Standards III.3, III.4]**.

## **Findings**

### **Good practice**

The review team identified the following feature of good practice:

- Decision making is performed in accordance with the legislation, which guarantees objectivity, transparency and participation of all actors of the institution in this process. **[Chapter III Standard I.2]**.
- UCB has established a good level of collaboration with local public and private institutions for students support during the practical training, which is key for their future employment. **(Chapter III Standard III.3)**
- The Dean of students is a good example of student support in the institution. **[Chapter III Standard I.2]**.

### **Weaknesses**

The review team did not identify any weaknesses.

### **Recommendations**

The review team did not identify any recommendations.

### **Affirmation of action being taken.**

The review team affirms the following actions already in progress:

- The review team therefore affirm the efforts being made to engage with the opportunities offered by the Erasmus Scheme for student mobility. **[Chapter III Standard I.4]**.



## **Judgement**

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

## Evaluation Area 2: Resourcing

2.1. The structure of UCB is organised according to the Statute [A.E7; A.E30] and the General Regulation [A.E10]. The organisational chart [A.E30] is publicly available on the institution website<sup>3</sup> [www.beder.edu.al]. The institution has reorganised its base units in 2020. The institution pursues a policy for the employment of academic and administrative staff in accordance with law no. 80/2015 on higher education in Albania. Prior to the start of each academic year the Departments calculate their staffing requirements, for full and part time staff, and present these to the Dean who will then make a formal request to the Rector [A.E44], [A.E45; BM8; BM10]. Recruitment is organised by the Office of Human Resources according to the Law of Higher Education, the Labour Code, the Statute [A.E7] and the General Regulations [A.E10] of UCB. Vacancies are published on the institution website according to the Human Resources Policy and Procedure [A.E46; BM10], An Ad-hoc recruitment commission is set up and they examine the applications and conduct interviews and successful and unsuccessful candidates notified [A.E44]. Both academic and support staff are given an employment contract detailing the conditions of employment [A.E57]. UCB favours recruiting academic staff who have graduated from internationally recognised universities and have been successful in this regard [BM8]. In accordance with the Strategic Development Plan [A.E30], UCB supports staff to pursue further degrees [BM5; BM8; BM9] and provides financial support to those academic staff participating in scientific conferences and research activities [BM8; BM10; A.E29]. The review team concludes that UCB pursues an open policy of human resources employment and recruitment of qualified academic and administrative staff [Chapter III Standard IV.1].

2.2. UCB is engaged in the implementation of integration policies of its employers. Institution takes care of an integrative and inclusive environment of academic and administrative staff. approves an annual plan [A.E27] of academic and research activities at the beginning of each year which includes participation in conferences [BM5; A.E23]. All the staff members of UCB, participate in the meetings regarding the activities and annual planning [A.E117; E119]. As part of informing, the staff is informed by the Human Resources Office, departments or through meetings and electronic communication [A.E28; A.E50].

Information Days are organised by a dedicated ad hoc unit for students and prospective students, these are supported by academic and administrative staff [A.E51; A.E80; A.E49]. HEI also organises other activities, for example book promotions, national holiday celebrations and graduation ceremonies which enable cooperation between staff [A.E49]. It is concluded therefore that UCB pursues a policy of integration of academic staff, assisting teaching, scientific staff and administrative staff [Chapter III Standard IV.2].

2.3. UCB follows a training plan according to priorities and needs identified by the staff requests. The development strategy states that training of staff is a priority [A.E17] and this is achieved through attendance at conferences, scientific publications, committee attendance and training events [BM5; BM8; BM9]. In these two academic years, the institution establishes and developed the system for online teaching [A.E85]. The staff had specific training regarding online teaching. Manuals and guidelines are distributed and some trainings were held and covered the area of online teaching techniques to lecturers in improving their approach to teaching [A.E91; A.E92; A.E93; BM5; BM8; SER]. (Chapter III, Standard IV.3).

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.Bedër.edu.al/en/content/default/organization-scheme-6/4/168>

Assessment of staff skills takes place at the end of each academic year and has a defined procedure and objectives **[BM5]**. This starts with a self-assessment **[A.E55]** followed by evaluation by the Head of Department according to the employment contract **[A.E74; BM5]**. Student questionnaires are also used to feedback on teaching quality **[A.E113]**. Administrative staff are evaluated by the Administrator using a standard evaluation form **[BM6, SER]**. The review team identify that the performance evaluation mechanisms of the activity of academic staff, are sufficient. UCB encourages the mobility of academic staff through cooperation agreements with international universities under the Erasmus+ scheme **[BM5; BM8; BM9]** and also supports staff mobility **[A.E29]** but a minority of staff have so far participated in these programs outside mobility programs. The Covid-19 pandemic has restricted this activity where most of them are performed online or postponed **[BM5; BM8; BM9]**. Foreign lecturers have also visited UCB to support academic staff **[SER]**. The institution encourages academic staff to further their qualifications, attend national and international conferences **[BM5; BM8; BM8]** and publish in journals **[A.E72]**. They also provide financial support for conferences **[BM2, BM8]** and for publication. The review team concludes that UCB pursues a policy of periodic assessment of its staff skills **[Chapter III Standard IV.3]**.

2.4. Before the Covid 19 pandemic, UCB has organized a wide range of activities to encourage social dialogue between staff, students and the general community for example to increase awareness of blood donation and to raise funds for people impacted by the recent earthquake in Albania, families in need etc. **[SER]**. The cooperation agreements **[A.E37; A.E126; A.E127]** are also considered a framework for social dialogue and exchange of knowledge and cultures as well as scientific endeavour. Printed publications and television appearances by academic staff **[BM5; BM8]** and activities related to religious tolerance **[SER]** are also a means of promoting social dialogue. UCB also treats the health and safety of its staff as a priority and engages with external experts **[BM5; BM8; BM9; E127]**, to provide training and support **[A.E57]**. The environment is inspected and certified for safety **[BM6; A.E103]** and more recently the institute conforms to the Internal Regulation for protection from Covid-19 **[A.E86]**. **[Chapter III Standard IV.4]**.

2.5. The Office of Human Resources, in cooperation with all other departments, coordinates the human resource activities of the institution according to the Statute **[BM6; BM7]** and the Basic Regulation of the Institution **[A.E12; BM5, BM8; BM9; BM10]** and directions from the Rector and Administrator **[A.E11; A.E12]**. Both academic and administrative staff have an individual employment contract **[BM5; BM8; BM9; A.E57]** which sets out the roles and responsibilities of the member of staff and the employer. The team conclude that UCB implements clear rules to determine responsibilities according to respective functions **[Chapter III Standard II.2]**.

2.6. UCB guarantees financial stability in income through student fees, donations through the Muslim Community of Albania **[A.E61]** other incomes **[A.E63]**. Budgets are prepared by taking into account the needs of the departments and faculties using defined procedures based on the Administrative Board Reregulation **[A.E62]** and the Regulations **[A.E12]**. The budget is then approved by the Senate and finally by the Board of Administration **[A.E16; BM8; BM11]**. The institution therefore drafts the budget in accordance with defined procedures **[Chapter III Standard VI.1]**.

2.7. According to the Statute **[A.E7]**, the administrator is responsible for the implementation of the correct financial procedures **[BM11]**. The Finance office operates within the appropriate regulation and performs the necessary functions such as student invoices, payments and preparing financial statements **[A.E63]**. Periodically a financial report is prepared for the Administrator to ensure the budget is being implemented as planned and make any adjustments which may be necessary **[SER; BM11; A.E8]**. **[Chapter III Standard VI.2]**.

2.8. The Administrator and the Finance and administrative office continuously monitor the financial position and report to the Board annually **[SER; BM11]**. The external auditors report is also presented to the Board of Directors **[A.E62]** along with the financial statements. This is also presented to the General Directorate of Taxes. The annual reports **[A.E8]** are closely linked to the financial position, the institutional objectives and they ensure that both human and physical resources are reflected in the financial statements. As a non-profit institution, UCB pursues a policy of budgetary and financial control. **[Chapter III Standard VI.3]**.

2.9. UCB has a comprehensive website [[www.beder.edu.al](http://www.beder.edu.al)] which has details, for example of the statute and regulations, academic structure, policies and procedures, the programmes offered, research, services and news and media. UCB also makes use of social media channels to communicate with students and other stakeholders [<https://www.facebook.com/UniBeder>]. In support of all activities, UCB has provided for students and staff the Information Management System (BIS - Beder Information System) **[A.E64]**. BIS ensures transparency and objectivity regarding the way of organizing teaching processes, related to the subjects, student registration and their evaluation, **[A.E64; A.E65]**. This system allows the student and personnel to provide information about the academic and administrative learning process **[BM3; BM4; BM5; BM8; BM9; BM10]**. Students and academic staff have the opportunity, through individual passwords and addresses, provided by the institution, to be updated with any information. The review team identified that the institution has a well-organized and effective information system, which enables students and the personnel to provide complete information about the academic and administrative process **[Chapter III Standard VII.1]**.

UCB has one computer laboratory plus computers available in the libraries for both staff and students **[A.E65; BM3; BM4; BM5; M6-Tour]**. For teaching and learning, the institution use google platform, zoom, google meet and therefore has access the Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and Teams for both staff and students **[BM3; BM4; BM5; A.E58]**, For the efficient use of teaching technologies, several tutorials and introductory videos have been prepared for staff and students **[A.E91; A.E92; A.E93]**. Although this technology was implemented prior to the Covid -19 pandemic, the review team affirms the steps being made to develop online resources to enable learning to continue during the Covid-19 pandemic. **[Chapter III Standard VII.1, VII.2]**.

2.10. UCB operates over two buildings which are sponsored by the Founder under agreements **[A.E66]**. This is the first year that the institution operates on this new campus, several investments have been made or are in process **[A.E68]**. In its strategy, with contribution of the Muslim community of Albania, the construction of a new university campus, which will guarantee modern conditions for academic activity, is projected to build in near future. Security and safety are managed through a fire hydrant system, an alarm system, a central audio system and contracted security companies **[M6, Tour]**. The review team affirms

the steps being made to develop infrastructure and logistics for students and academic staff. **[A.E103]. [Chapter III Standard VII.3].**

2.11. Academic, cultural and scientific data is stored electronically in the archive **[A.E71]** managed by the Protocol and correspondence office **[BM6]**. The institution also stores publications, media and staff and students' work in electronic **[google drive]** and hard copy in the libraries **[BM6]**. In support of the progress of the academic process, UCB has made available to students and personnel the library of the institution, which offers a wide range of titles. The library has 22,600 scientific titles, 26,000 scientific books, 166 scientific monographs and 48 scientific journals, and students have access to the JSTOR online library. **[SER], [A.E23] [Chapter III Standard VII.4].**

2.12. UCB has an appropriate infrastructure to carry out its activities, this includes, for example, office space, office equipment, lecture rooms, seminar rooms, computer rooms and libraries **[BM5; BM6]**. They also meet the physical and chemical standards set by the State and are able to carry out functions of common interest such as joint conferences with other organisations **[BM5, BM9]. [Chapter III Standard VII.5, VII.6].**

2.13. UCB has two buildings which provide the necessary infrastructure to carry out the institutions activities and meet the necessary standards for hygiene, lighting, noise, temperature, humidity and space. **[BM6]**. They are also located in areas free from industrial development and pollution **[BM6; A.E68]**. The buildings are also accessible by people with disabilities with the use of ramps and lifts and also have appropriate washroom facilities **[BM6]**. There are also outdoor sport facilities, cafeteria, small recreation area. There are agreements with other organizations for sports provision such are sports facilities and sport clubs. **[BM3; BM4]**. In general, the auditoriums, classrooms and laboratories meet demands to support teaching and learning and other activities. **[A.E103]. [Chapter III Standard V.1].**

2.14. The Protocol and archive office, stores all documentation in hard copy according to the Regulation of Archive-Protocol **[BM6; A.E71]**. In addition, storage of all electronic data produced by the Institution is subject to back up procedures and security protocols **[A.E71]**. This is supported by a recovery plan through backups to the cloud (google drive). All internal documents and procedures also have provision for data storage and the protection of personal data **[A.E7]**. The Registrar's office at UCB is responsible for storing and archiving data on student registration, registration number, etc., in accordance with the bylaws in force, as well as the regulations of the office **[A.E94; A.E75]**. In relation to teaching curricula, within the institution there is a curriculum development office, which coordinates the development of the curriculum process for all new and existing programs. Also, the curricula of each program are made public through the websites of each department **[A.E96]**. The information relating to teaching and learning, personal data is stored in compliance with personal data protection **[BM10]. [Chapter III Standard V.2].**

## **Findings**

### **Good practice**

The review team identified the following feature of good practice:

- UCB pursues an open policy of human resources employment and recruitment of qualified academic and administrative staff. [**Chapter III Standard IV.1**].
- The review team identified that the institution has a well-organized and effective information system, which enables students and the personnel to provide complete information about the academic and administrative process [**Chapter III Standard VII.1**]

### **Weaknesses**

The review team did not identify any weaknesses.

### **Recommendations**

The review team did not identify any recommendations.

### **Affirmation of action being taken.**

The review team affirms the following action already in progress:

- The review team affirms the steps being made to develop online resources to enable learning to continue during the Covid-19 pandemic [**Chapter III Standard VII.1, VII.2**].
- The review team affirms the steps being made to develop infrastructure and logistics for students and academic staff [**Chapter III Standard VII.3**].

### **Judgement**

**The standards for Resourcing are fully met.**

### **Evaluation Area 3: The Curriculum**

3.1. UCB follows clear policies regarding the information about the teaching programs it offers **[A.E21; A.E78; A.E82; A.E83]**. Students are informed through the academic staff, the basic units in cooperation with the Student Support and Career Office and by the career counselling and Dean for student and other had-hoc recruitment groups **[BM3; BM4; A.E51]**. Following the decision of the Academic Senate, a working group was created which focuses on the implementation of an action plan for organizing information meetings with high school students and coordination with departments and academic staff for the organization of presentations in the districts of Albania **[A.E49]**. The academic staff are part of these activities **[A.E49]**. The information on the website brochures, leaflets **[A.E51]**, meetings with high schools during the period March - May **[www.beder.edu.al]** are instruments used by the institution for informing the public about the teaching programs. UCB has signed memoranda with several high schools in the region of Tirana, and in other cities where the focus is the scheduling of visits according to the dates set, for the purpose of increasing student awareness of the study programs offered **[A.E73]**, **[SER annex]**, **[BM7]** **[Chapter I, Standard I.1]**.

3.2. The activity of UCB is based on the mission indicated in the Statute and the Development Strategy 2018-2023 **[A.E7; A.E17]**. The work is based on the teaching process, focusing on students, evaluating and supporting academic staff, promoting equality, and valuing diversity **[A.E82; A.E83]**. The teaching activity takes place in two Faculties: Faculty of Humanities and Law and Faculty of Technology and Business **[A.E31]**. UCB has clearly defined in the Statute and the Regulations the criteria for student admission **[A.E7; A.E79]**. Admission of students is done according to the provisions of the legal framework in force, in accordance with state standards, academic and infrastructural capacities **[A.E97]**. **[Chapter I, Standard I.1]**.

3.3. UCB offers two 2-year programme, nine full-time study programs in the first cycle Bachelor, six programs in the second cycle Master of Science, two Professional Masters and one Integrated Master of Science Programme. **[A.E96]**. The priorities of the teaching programmes **[A.E88]** are expressed in the Strategy of the Institution 2018-2023, in the Strategies of the Faculties and in the Development Plans of the Departments. The study programs are built on five components which express the distribution of the workload, content and training according to the instructions and legal definitions from the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth. **[A.E88]**. **[Chapter I, Standard I.1]**.

3.4. The admission to the study programmes of the first and second cycle becomes possible for any candidate who has successfully completed the cycle of secondary education and who meet the criteria of the grade point average determined by decision of the Council of Ministers. The admission criteria are in accordance with applicable law **[A.E79]**. The first cycle programs have as additional criteria the grade point average of 6. Student registration is done in the Registrar Office **[A.E75]**. The registration data and their provision with a matriculation number are kept in the Basic Register in hard copy and in electronic form **[A.E94]**. The Registrar's Office operates on the basis of a regulation approved by the Academic Senate **[A.E75]**. The students' personal data is filed and stored in electronic form and hard copy and managed by the secretary **[BM10]**. The registration process also includes the signing of a contract between the institution and the students **[BM3; BM4; BM10]**. The programmes are subject to continuous improvements to meet the objectives set out in the Strategy of the Institution

**[A.E17], Strategy of the Faculties and the programmes [A.E108; BM8; BM9]. [Chapter I, Standard 1.1].**

3.5. UCB works towards providing continuing education programmes **[BM8]** and to fulfil the priorities and requirements of law 80/2015, article 81, the Departments has proposed different training in teaching methodology to the staff **[A.E52]**. The Faculty of Humanities and Law is focused on organizing mentoring courses for students, courses on theology, training of library users and Turkish language courses for beginners **[BM5' BM9]**. The Institution has signed several cooperation agreements with general and technical high schools in Albania **[A.E37]**. Also several conferences have taken place such as: UDEK, International Conference on Turkish Language and Literature, ICELL, International Conference on English Language and Literature, ICESS, International Conference on Educational and Social Sciences, ICH, International Conference on Humanities, ICCMS, International Conference on Communication and Media Studies, ICID, International Conference on Interfaith Dialogue, "Albania, a model of interfaith harmony for Europe? ", 3 May 2018, ISCON, International Conference on Islamic Studies Conference: "The role of imams in modern society", ICL, International Conference on Young Researchers in Law" **[A.E117]**. The institution also holds several periodic national and international conferences of various faculties and departments of UC "Bedër". All information is published on the official website of the institution such is: the organization, the scientific board, important dates and others, proceedings book with ISBN etc. UCB organize every year the student conference **[A.E69]**. For the year of 2020-2021 training courses and conferences has been suspended due to the situation of Covid-19 **[Chapter I, Standard 1.2]**.

The Commission of Curricula, the Internal Quality Assurance Unit, the Office for Student Affairs and Career Counseling and the Departments evaluate the gained experience from research projects and conferences and reflect them in the content of the curricula during periodic improvements in the value of 20% **[BM5; BM8; BM9; BM10.] [Chapter I, Standard 1.2]**.

3.6. In the Statute of UCB, its mission is defined as: "To cultivate knowledge, through teaching and scientific research, so as to ensure a modern-day education for the students; **[A.E7]**. In this context, the study programmes are adapted and run in parallel with the strategy for the development of UCB, aiming at the formation and preparation of students in accordance with the labour market trend and in the service of dynamic developments. The attempt of UCB towards a transformation is expressed in the Strategic Development Plan 2018-2023 **[A.E17]** which is implemented in the strategic plans of the faculties and departments. **[BM1; BM8]. [Chapter I, Standard 1.3]**.

3.7. The study programmes are built in fulfilment of the objectives set in the Institution Development Strategy 2018-2023 **[A.E17]**. These objectives reflect national economic and technological developments **[BM2; BM10]**. The changes in the content of the programmes are based on the demands of the labour market **[BM5; BM7; BM10], [A.E33]. [Chapter I, Standard 1.4]**.

3.8. UCB operates in a new campus that enables the implementation of teaching and research activity of the institution **[BM6]**. The facilities have a modern infrastructure and consist of 17 classrooms, 1 conference room, 2 computer labs, a courtroom and a news room etc. In addition to the facilities offered within the 2 main buildings **[A.E68]**, added value are also the outdoor recreational and sports facilities. Classrooms are equipped with video projectors and



smart boards which enable the normal development of the learning process. The institution has also made available to students the library hall, equipped with desks, chairs, computers, Wi-Fi, natural light and the online library. The buildings are well equipped with emergency exit, alternative sources of energy and water. UCB offers the adequate infrastructure with technical facilities for academic, administrative support staff and students, (more than 15 offices). **[A.E103]. [Chapter I, Standard 1.5].** UC “Bedër” has in its policy the construction of a new university campus, which will guarantee modern conditions for academic activity with the contribution of the Muslim community of Albania.

3.9. UCB is increasing the number of academic staff with titles. Each academic year, the institution approves the full list of academic staff in accordance with departments requests and needs. The annual teaching load is set out in the academic staff contracts, **[A.E57; BM5; BM9]**. Study programmes are organized in such a way as to provide academic staff with effective harmonization, teaching, research and administrative commitments **[SER]**. At department level, each academic staff member is evaluated in accordance with teaching observation regulation **[A.E48; BM5; BM8; BM9]**. Each semester the department uses a standard form **[A.E89]** to collect research output and teaching information. The results of the evaluation become part of the personnel file **[A.E55; M7]. [Chapter I, Standard 1.5]**.

3.10. The study programmes are built with clear objectives that express the goals of the Institution in the Strategic Development Plan 2018-2023 **[A.E17]**. Eight strategic priorities of the Institution are reflected in the short- and long-term objectives of the faculties and in the curricula of study programmes **[BM2; BM3; A.E88]**. The overall objective of the programmes is to foster diverse innovative methods in teaching and learning, to increase the number of students while in the medium and short term each programme has specific objectives. The content of study programmes, for example curricula and syllabi, are available to students and accessed by them easily in departments. **[A.E78; A.E116]**. Admissions requirements, including details of educational objectives, credit loads and other relevant information are described in the regulations and syllabi for each individual study programme **[A.E11]**. Short information about programmes, including policies and regulations on academic integrity, are published on the website **[A.E96]**. Each student may request additional information from departments or Dean of student’s office. Students are informed about programmes by lecturers during the initial weeks of their courses **[SER; BM3; BM4]. [Chapter I, Standard 1.6]**.

3.11. The Strategic Development Plan 2018-2023, Bachelor programmes are intended to provide to students with the basic knowledge and concepts, analytical, creative, decision-making skills, based on general scientific methods **[A.E88]**. All bachelor programs are organized at least with 180 ECTS. At the end of the first cycle of studies, student receives a “Bachelor” degree **[A.E88]**. The bachelor programmes are developed within a framework that identifies different types of skills that students require, including basic knowledge, general scientific methods and principles and knowledge relevant to the specific area of study. The framework is clearly set out in the programme regulations for each program **[A.E21]**. These programmes ensure successful completion of the first cycle and admission to the second cycle or to the labour market. Students are informed and guided about the possibility of transferring **[A.E98]** their studies to similar programmes in accordance with the legal acts of the Ministry of Education **[BM8; BM11]**. The review team affirm the efforts being made in opening new

professional programmes in the field of ICT and collaboration with stakeholders of this field **[Chapter I, Standard 1.7]**.

All the study programmes in the first cycle Bachelor are built with a fair distribution of theory with practice **[SER]**. Programmes such as "Computer Science", "Media communication", "Information and Communication Technology" are giving importance to laboratory hours. Examples were given during the meeting with teaching staff for the programme "Computer Science" where the use of different software in laboratory hours in class during the pandemic period had enabled students to gain in-depth practical knowledge **[BM3; BM4]**. **[Chapter I, Standard 1.7]**.

3.12. Students are informed about the transfer procedure which is clearly reflected in the Regulation of the Institution, the regulations of the faculties and the study programmes **[A.E98]**. The Transfer Regulation is in compliance with the requirement of the Ministry of Education and Sport and reflects the criteria and procedures of students' transfer in similar programmes within UCB or in different Universities within Albania or abroad **[A.E75]**. The Registrar's Office administers the data of transferred students and the total number of students enrolled and transferred are reflected in Institutional and Departments Annual Reports **[BM3; BM4]**. **[Chapter I, Standard 1.7]**.

3.13. Students are informed about the continuation of studies from the first cycle to the second cycle programmes. The meeting with the alumni and the students provided examples in this regard **[A.M3; A.M4]**. The study programmes are subject to a continuous review and improvement in accordance with the demands of the labour market. Most students at the end of the first cycle studies have employment opportunities. A higher rate of student employment is evident in the second cycle of studies **[A.E34; A.E35]**. This is also in accordance with the current demands of the labour market for graduates from second cycle programmes. **[A.E83]**. **[Chapter I, Standard 1.7]**.

3.14. UCB provides tutoring for students **[A.E51]**. Each department has appointed a lecturer who is responsible for addressing issues faced by students **[BM3; BM4; BBM5]**. The academic staff keep close communication students **[M5; BM9]**. In addition, the Teaching Secretariat and Career Counselling supports students' progress via its activities **[SER]**. Examples of the mentoring programme provided by students **[BM2; BM3]** such is guidance for the preparation of CVs based on qualifications, labour market needs, communication skills etc. **[SER]**. **[Chapter I, Standard 1.8]**.

3.15. One of the short-term objectives of the departments is the continuous improvement of teaching. Every year the study programmes are subject to 20% improvement. **[BM5; BM8, BM9; BM10]**. Teaching techniques are clearly given in the syllabi of each subject **[A.E96]**. The academic staff are engaged in the continuous improvement of teaching techniques **[BM5, BM8; BM9]**. In this regard, the Institution has provided support in meeting the needs with infrastructure in accordance with the standards. For the academic year 2020-2021, adoptions have been made in terms of distance learning **[A.E85]**. Among the most used forms are e-learning platforms, the uploading of teaching material on platforms and books in electronic platforms, presentations, videos, assignments and tests. Communication has improved through the use of social media networks. The department conducts weekly monitoring of the uploaded materials, the progress in each module, the evaluation and the issues highlighted by the students **[BM3; BM4; BM5; BM10]**, **[SER]**. **[Chapter I, Standard 1.8]**.

3.16. UCB has engaged a total of 67 academic staff of which 24 as part time academic staff and 43 full time [2 Associate Professors, 24 PhD, 41 Master of Science] for the academic year 2020-2021 **[A.E32]**. The Institutional and Departments annual reports are expressing the efforts made by the Institution to increase the number of academic staff with titles although some departments are facing difficulties in the recruitment process **[A.E48; A.E44]**. UCB pays close attention to the recruitment of experienced academic staff. The institution aims to recruit qualified staff. **[A.E17]**. The workload of the current academic staff is part of individual contracts in line within the legal limits set by Ministry of Education Youth and Sport **[A.E58]**, **[BM5; BM9]**. Based on the evidence and meetings with teaching staff, the team conclude that a teaching load of 70% is completed by full-time academics and that this load does not hinder the academic staff in its scientific research work. **[Chapter 1, Standard 1.8]**.

3.17. Policies for the recruitment of academic staff are set out in the Statute, the Regulations of the Institution, the Regulations of the Faculties and the Regulations of the Office of Human Resources. **[A.E44]**. The procedures are transparent and correctly implemented **[A.E45]**. In terms of recruitment, staff with the minimum PhD level and well-experienced in terms of practice and teaching are targeted. Recruitment of support staff - academics is the focus of the UCB **[A.E45]**. There are examples of graduated students being recruited by this College as supporting staff **[BM5; BM6; BM7]**. Each department is composed of at least 7 academic staff in accordance with the Law 80/2015, on Higher Education **[SER]**. **[Chapter 1, Standard 1.8]**.

3.18. Currently UCB offers 8 second cycle programs, respectively 2 Professional Masters and 6 Scientific Master's. Referring to the curricula, the study programmes are organized in modules and evaluated with credits in accordance with Law no. 80/2015 "On Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania" and according to the European System of Credit Transfer and Accumulation [ECTS]. Programmes in the Bachelor cycle are offered with 180 credits whilst the programmes in the second cycle are offered with 60 and 120 credits and a 2-year professional programmes in 120 credits. The study programmes are in compliance with Albanian Qualifications Framework **[SER]** and students are gaining knowledge, skills and competencies in the following fields: finance - accounting, law, computer science, English language, Islamic sciences etc. The professional master programmes are taught by staff with a minimum of a doctorate degree. **[BM5; BM9]**. **[Chapter 1, Standard 1.9]**. The institution states that 70% of teaching activity in all Second Cycle programs is conducted by full-time academic staff but not referred to in the SER **[SER]**. Review team identify that the academic staff in master programs is involved in research activity and mobility resulting in increasing the international profile of the institution. **[A.E119]**. **[Chapter 1, Standard 1.9]**.

3.19. The study programmes offered by UCB are in line with the principles of the Bologna process **[A.E7]**, and level 5,6 and 7 of the Albanian Qualifications Framework **[AQF]**. **[Chapter 1, Standard 1.10]**. The institution has increased the level of cooperation with international institutions and has signed agreements with several foreign universities **[A.E37]**. The Institution has examples of student mobility within Erasmus+ **[A.E39]**. Study programmes are offered in Albanian and English, facilitating the mobility of students in other universities. **[BM5, BM9]**. **[Chapter 1, Standard 1.10]**.

3.20. Study programmes are designed and reviewed in order to provide harmonization with programmes within and outside the country enabling the same recognition and transfer of studies **[A.E33]**. The institution publishes information on study programmes offered in this college, curriculum and admission criteria in Albanian and English language. UCB issues its diploma and diploma supplements in English as well as Albanian **[A.E107]**. Students may transfer their studies to the institution, as well as credits earned in programmes of the same cycle in Albania and abroad, in the same or similar fields, in line with their respective studies **[A.E98]**. Study programmes aim to provide mobility in an international context, but this has not been accompanied by concrete action plans to stimulate mobility especially in last two years due to Covid 19. **[BM3; BM4; BM5; BM8; BM9]**. The application of the evaluation system in European Credits takes place and is valid **[SER]**. **[Chapter I, Standard 1.11]**.

3.21. The Regulation of Departments defines the procedure for preparation of the diploma thesis when the student fulfils the high average criteria set by the Department. In addition to the diploma thesis, a final exam is also prepared by an ad-hoc commission set up in the Department **[A.E82, A.E83]**. The academic staff provide assistance to the students during the preparation of the diploma thesis. The research field of the diploma thesis is in accordance with the experience of academic staff. The defence takes place in front of a commission approved by the department **[BM3; BM4]**. **[Chapter I, Standard 1.11]**.

3.22. The programmes are designed to include the theoretical knowledge incorporated through conventional teaching methods but also provide the opportunity to translate knowledge into practical applications through laboratory work, research assignments and internships **[A.E89]**. Second cycle study programmes include a requirement to produce a thesis **[A.E82; A.E83]**. Students' participation in extracurricular activities such as clubs and conferences of various types is supported by the University. These relatives are specific to specific areas of study at the institution, such as media, law, IT, and are designed to prepare students for their professional careers. The Departments in cooperation with the Office of Students Clubs Coordination and Career Counselling have organised cultural and social activities with students. These activities are reduced during the academic year 2020–2021 due to Covid-19. It is worth mentioning the assistance that students provided to families affected by the earthquake in Durres **[BM5; BM8; BM11]**. **[Chapter I, Standard 1.1]**.

3.23. The study programmes have a normal distribution among the academic activities **[BM2, BM8]** as requested in DCM 41.2015. Theoretical and practical knowledge, enabling students to apply all the knowledge and skills gained in theoretical modules, also based on the competences acquired by students in each study programme. Study programmes are built in form and content to encourage the student's practical knowledge. The theory-to-practice ratios fluctuate on average 50-55% theory to 45-50% practice **[SER]**. The study programmes are designed according to the level and specific area of study. Internships provide additional opportunities to develop employment-related skills and to establish useful contacts **[BM3; BM4]**. The total number of students employed at the end of the first and second cycle of studies is on average high **[A.E34; A.E35]**. Cooperation between UCB, State Institutions and private companies through the development of professional internships has positively impacted the employment rates. Examples were given by the students graduated in the professional Master program "Marketing Communication" who were employed after they carried out the internship in private companies **[BM7]**. The balance between theory and

practice has trained the students in the field of practice by meeting the demands of the labour market **[BM2; BM3; BM7; BM9]. [Chapter 1, Standard 1.2].**

## **Findings**

### **Good practice**

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

### **Weaknesses**

The review team did not identify any weaknesses.

### **Recommendations**

The review team did not identify any recommendations.

### **Affirmation of action being taken**

The review team affirms the following actions already in progress:

- The review team affirm the efforts being made in opening new professional programmes in the field of ICT and collaboration with stakeholders of this field **[Chapter 1, Standard 1.7].**

### **Judgement**

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

#### **Evaluation Area 4: Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research**

4.1. UCB has a system for ensuring that the delivery of its study programs is correct and up to date. At the beginning of every semester departments, approve the teaching workload, the materials to be distributed, relevant documents and updates of curriculum [A.E59]. The UCB offers facilities for practical and professional training [auditoriums with computers and electronic smart boards, newsroom, computer lab, conference room, foreign language laboratory etc.] [A.E103], but in the future they should provide more sophisticated equipment. This includes new equipment in the communication and media laboratory, a more advanced computer laboratory and the courtroom may be larger [BM7; Tour visit]. UCB administers its students' professional practice and internships through the Dean of Students, specifically the Career Planning Office and all students confirmed that they are satisfied with the practice [BM3]. Some programs, such as those in education, use special forms to monitor and evaluate the process [SER, p 42]. For the preparation of Bsc. and Msc. thesis the students are supported by the scientific leader [SER, p 48; BM3; BM4]. The library and its resources support all study programs and include 22,600 scientific titles, 26,000 scientific books, 166 scientific monographs and 48 scientific journals and the students have access to the JSTOR online library [SER, p 48; BM3; BM6]. *[Chapter I Standard II.1].*

4.2. All students of Bsc. and Msc. studies at UCB must fulfill the obligations set out in the respective regulations for Bsc. and Msc. studies to graduate successfully [A.E82; A.E83]. Students are notified at the beginning of the semester about the studies regulations [including criteria] during the so-called" orientation week". Additionally, these information students can find at the university website<sup>4</sup> (as well as through the student guide) [A.E51]. The UCB has an unique template for exams [A.E82], which contains the name of the faculty, the department, the name and code of the course, the date, time, hall, the name of the lecturer and the number of the student. For the better and as efficiently as possible organization of the exams, the UCB has prepared regulations of studies and exams of the first and second cycle [A.E82; A.E83], including the regulation of student discipline [A.E105], which provides disciplinary measures in this regard. The student has the right to appeal the result of an exam within a period of 5 days after the announcement of the results based on the complaint form [A.E110]. There have been cases in which students have complained because the professor did not notice the seminar sent by the student and the student was not satisfied with the grade [BM3]. In addition, it has been stated by students that cheating is a skill, but there are not such cases [BM3]. All students who successfully complete their studies in the programs offered by UCB are provided with the relevant diploma pre-registered in the register of diplomas and certificates in the MEST [A.E107]. *[Chapter I Standard II.2].*

4.3. For the ongoing evaluation and improvement of the quality of study programs UCB has established the Internal Quality Assurance Unit [IQUAU] [A.E11] and the Permanent Commission on Quality Assurance [A.E108]. The functioning and competencies of IQUAU are defined in the statute of UCB [A.E7] and in the relevant regulations [A.E4; A.E21]. As part of the quality improvement UCB is part of the "Bologna Hub Peer Support" project that started in September 2020 and is coordinated by the German Academic Exchange Service [DAAD] within Erasmus+ [A.E114]. The aim of the project is to promote and improve the implementation of the key elements of the Bologna process in higher education institutions

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.bedër.edu.al/static/docs/guida\\_e\\_studentit\\_shqip\\_17\\_4710.pdf](https://www.bedër.edu.al/static/docs/guida_e_studentit_shqip_17_4710.pdf)

throughout the European Higher Education Area [EHEA]. For this purpose, the UCB has set up working groups for all three sections **[A.E112]**. A student survey is used to evaluate courses and the lecturers **[A.E113]**, it takes place at the end of each semester. This procedure is also confirmed within meetings with the students, but while they do not receive answers regarding the evaluation of the teachers, they notice changes due to the evaluation results during the next year **[BM3; BM4]**. The evaluation of teachers is done by the self-evaluation and the evaluation by the superior, for each unit, through the self-assessment form that is completed annually by each lecturer **[A.E55; BM5]**. The aim is to improve the quality of teaching in the following year. The UCB has also created curriculum office, which is engaged for the curriculum development and to improve the study programs **[A.E114]**. Based on the data received from students and academic personnel, curricular improvements have been made in the institution **[BM3; BM4; BM6; A.E115]**. UCB as part of the evaluation of the quality of the programs has included also the employment rate of the graduates **[A.E35]**, but these evidences do not have data in which sector the graduates are employed **[Chapter I Standard II.3]**.

4.4. Teaching techniques and their continuous improvement is foreseen in the curricula of each subject **[A.E116]**, but the syllabus is missing part of the teaching methods. As mentioned above the evaluation of teaching methods is part of the results collected from surveys with students for each subject and lecturer **[A.E113]** and based on these results, departments take steps to further improve these teaching methods. In addition, UCB has supported the improvement of the quality of teaching by organizing trainings during the period of online lecturing and has held workshops on the progress of online teaching **[BM5]**. Furthermore, it is declared that quality of teaching was accomplished through training in the use of the online platform and making the necessary infrastructure available **[SER p, 50]**, but the list of participants and topic of the training is missing. Although, the UCB has hold several self-organized trainings and through various projects **[BM9]**. The review team has noted that the number of teaching trainings in past years is not large enough despite the needs of teachers to learn new methods in teaching. Will be most welcome that UCB can see opportunities for staff training and development through the establishment of a Center for Excellence in order for training to be mandatory and evaluated in the future, especially for young staff **[Chapter I Standard II.4]**.

4.5. The department is a basic teaching and research unit based on the law on higher education and in the internal institutional regulations. The teaching and research object of the department includes several disciplines of sciences. The organization of the department in teaching and research groups is provided in the statutes of UCB, articles 30 and 31. It is clearly state that UCB enables the creation of an environment, which promotes freedom and academic autonomy **[BM5; BM9]**. The UCB supports participation in scientific activities and engagement in research projects through the directive on the promotion of publications and scientific research, as well as rewards the annual academic effectiveness on transparent indicators provided in the relevant regulation. However, specific and appropriately allocated funds for research are not regulated by regulations. In fact, teachers receive 700 euros for research, but this not enough and mainly is used for conference participation **[BM5; BM7; BM9]**. Although, departments are financially supported in a transparent and open manner by the institution, but there is no data on how many funds are allocated for departments for the research projects **[BM7; BM9]**. Also, at the end of each academic year the performance of the academic staff is evaluated, based on the response received in the evaluation of scientific

work and the annual report that each basic unit prepares and submits to the Rector [A.E5], but in this report very little is reported about the research work of the academic staff. In addition, out of 13 participants in the meeting with the research teaching staff, only three stated that they have applied for scientific projects [BM9]. *[Chapter II Standard I. 1].*

4.6. To support the academic staff for the research UCB has established several units, such as the Center for Sustainable Development and Innovation, the Research Office and the permanent Commission for Scientific Research, Projects, Applications and Innovation [A.E20]. The Center for Sustainable Development and Innovation was established in the framework of the faculty of technology almost a year ago and has not yet started working actively [BM9]. However, greater efforts should be made to apply for scientific projects through national and international calls and the Center for Sustainable Development and Innovation to start working actively in the near future. Additionally, to support the scientific research UCB also operates the Office of International Relations [IRO] and as result of this office many cooperation were established and as well, some joint projects and conferences with institutions inside and outside the country were implemented [A.E117]. In fact, these documents present only conferences, but not typical research projects *[Chapter II Standard I.2].*

4.7. The Office of International Relations is very important in the internationalization of research by enabling the mobility of staff and students. Also, the organization of international conferences of UCB in cooperation with foreign partners, as well as the financial support for the participation of the staff in international conferences [A.E29; BM5; BM9], are indicators of the attention that the institution has to the internationalization of research [BM1; BM8; BM9]. Applying for projects at UCB is very important [A.E119] and is one of the main goals based on the Regulation on Scientific Research Projects [A.E23]. This is shown through the list of some projects [A.E118] even that are not oriented as typical project research, but these efforts by UCB are encouraging. The UCB has signed a series of agreements with institutions and scientific research centers for projects and mobility of personnel and students [A.E37]. Although there is not much academic staff that is part of foreign research teams, some of them are part of the group such OLAS, and they report about local government and some of them has close cooperation with University of Istanbul [BM5; BM9]. *[Chapter II Standard I.3].*

4.8. The UCB identifies the scientific research fields by several principles, starting from the directive of the UCB for the promotion of publications and scientific research. In addition, academic freedom remains one of the main values of the institution, including research, teaching, speaking and publishing, based on research standards without interference or punishment and without prejudice to the results of the study [SER, p 52; BM5; BM9]. The Permanent Commission on Scientific Research, Projects, Applications and Innovation, departments and the Scientific Research Office, assists the scientific research. In addition, some of the work of the master students is included in such research activities [BM5], according to the fields of the respective programs; law, media studies, educational sciences, religious studies, and teaching English as a foreign language, which cooperate with the departments and the Scientific Research Office. However, in the future more efforts should be made to allocate more funds for research and to increase the involvement of new academic staff and students in research activities. Although recently due to the lack of assistants and the pandemic situation, some students Msc. are committed to conduct practical part with students [BM10]. *[Chapter II Standard I.4].*



4.9. UCB focuses on scientific research and supports it by providing the necessary tools and infrastructure for the realization of research. Nevertheless, teachers need more work time for research as some of them in addition to teaching are also in charge of administrative work **[BM9; BM10]** and increasing the funds for the research in near future. New facility, infrastructure, library, halls etc. are a concrete example for the general effort, but still requires a greater focus on internationally realized research. UCB recruit qualified academic staff in the field of scientific research and for this reason at the end of each year, the basic units submit to the Rectorate the requests for academic staff according to the criteria they require **[A.E44]**. However, in recent years due to the pandemic situation, there is a lack of assistants, but UCB is trying to increase the number of assistants **[BM10] [Chapter II Standard I.5]**.

4.10. In the strategic plan of UCB, scientific research is foreseen and is one of the most important elements for the functioning of the institutional activity together with teaching and contribution to society. Therefore, during the academic year all staff is engaged in research work. In the service of research work, academic personnel and students are provided access to "JSTOR", which facilitates and encourages continuous research work **[BM1; BM5; BM9]**. All staff publications are prepared in the Annual Institutional Report **[A.E8]**, which is submitted to the MASR and published on the institution's website. The UCB cooperates with national and international scientific organizations and supports the participation of young researchers in the organization of national and international conferences. UCB employed over the years foreign professors from several countries around the world, such as USA, England, Germany, Spain, Costa Rica, Turkey and Kosovo **[SER p, 53]**. Through different Erasmus+ projects, academic personnel and students were supported for exchange visits. The UCB also works closely with national research and innovation agencies. In this regard, UCB has signed the charter for European researchers, in accordance with the orientation of the Albanian Agency of Scientific Research and Innovation. The continuous interest and involvement of students for diploma theses, organization of different projects and active participation in conferences organized by UCB have pushed the Academic Senate established "Center for Young Researchers" **[AE120; A.E121]**. The center aims to offer students a unique opportunity to be part of the institution's research activity, as well as to develop their skills in the field of scientific research. However, students have little information about this center and most are not part of this center **[BM3; BM5]**. UCB invites local and foreign academic personnel to participate in teaching in the form of open lectures as well as part-time engagements, but this has not been documented **[Chapter II Standard I.6]**.

4.11. The various research and academic activities at UCB are presented in a variety of formats starting from annual reports, an official website, publications and books, national and international conferences and seminars. The yearly international conferences in the humanities and the international conferences in the sciences of education come up with a special theme and the conferences have become a 10-year tradition of UCB Usually the conference publishes a proceedings book, which is provided with an ISBN number and sent to the participants in hard copy and can be found on the website of the UCB **[A.E72]**. The UCB publishes two scientific journals which are published periodically, and are equipped with ISSN: Bedër Journal of Educational Sciences- BJES [ISSN 2306-0557] and Bedër Journal of Humanities - BJH [ISSN: 2306-6083] **[SER p, 54]**. However, efforts should be made to publish papers in journals abroad, especially those with impact factor. There are also similar organizations with partnerships realized at the department/faculty level with other institutions inside and outside the country. In the framework of national cooperation, regional and beyond,

seminars have been organized, with the participation of important actors in the responsible fields [A.E27]. [Chapter II Standard I.7].

4.12 UCB has established the Scientific Research Office [A.E11], which aims to monitor and evaluate the progress of scientific research, which designs and administers policies that regulate research development and oversees the implementation of research programs [SER p, 55]. Through the Scientific Research Office, UCB is trying to improve the research productivity of the institution and expand the impact of academic research results towards academic and community circles. In addition, UCB provides the protection of intellectual property in a contractual agreement it signs with the members of the academic team [A.E57]. Related to the implementation of the grants and projects the Permanent Commission for Scientific Research, Projects, Applications and Innovation is responsible for supervising the progress of all grants and projects [SER p, 55]. Although UCB in its guidelines for Promoting of Publications and Scientific Research sets out the award criteria for research and results in the field of scientific research, none of the academic staff has stated that it has received any award [BM5; BM7]. In order for the academic staff to participate in scientific activities inside and outside the country, the latter also determines the budget. This budget is around 40,000 euros [BM1; BM8], and from the last accreditation in 2017 has increased from 2 to 6% [BM10]. However, it is not clear how the budget is divided according to the departments, only that the professors have stated that they receive 700 euros for research [BM5; BM9], including the participation in conferences [BM9], but these are mainly for participation in conferences. In addition, they have implemented two projects in the field of law for 5000-7000 euros [BM9]. The American and Italian Embassies support some projects, mobilities and conferences [BM1]. In addition, UCB cooperates with domestic and foreign business, as well as takes into account economic and social factors. Although they do not have a mechanism to assess the impact of research on the economy, these impacts have been observed between some small scientific projects and collaboration with partners [BM8]. Academic staff studying abroad for doctoral studies is not denied a salary [BM9]. During the academic activity, the institution has signed cooperation agreements with private sector companies both inside and outside the country [SER p, 55], but this is not documented. Particular attention has been paid to local business, with which bridges of cooperation have been established. UCB supports student research initiatives through the organization of student conferences and project competitions, students are rewarded for poetry and essays [BM3]. The Center for Young Researchers serves as an opportunity for all participants to propose research initiatives. In [SER p, 55] state that after training students on research methods and project design, the center has organized the first competition for research project proposals, and the winning projects are funded by UCB or submitted to donor institutions, this was not declared by the students [BM3; BM4]. [Chapter II Standard I.8].

## Findings

### Good practice

No good practice was found.

### Weaknesses

The review team found the following weaknesses:

- Lack of high impact-oriented research projects that enable the publication of papers in journals with impact factor [Chapter II Standard I.4], [Chapter II Standard I.5].

- There is a lack of a policy document for proper allocation of funds for the research. **[Chapter II Standard I.1].** Also, the budget for the research projects is mainly used for the conference participation **[Chapter II Standard I.8].**

### **Recommendations**

The review team identified the following recommendations:

- The institution to see opportunities for staff training and development through the establishment of a Center for Excellence in order for training to be mandatory and evaluated in the future **[Chapter I Standard II.4].**
- The institution should increase the applications and the budget for the research projects of national and international calls to support the involvement the research activities including by the senior staff as well as establish a standard of at least one international paper to be published annually **[Chapter II Standard I.1], [Chapter I Standard II.6 and Chapter I Standard II.7].**
- The Interdisciplinary Centre for Sustainable Development and Innovation is in the initial stage of consolidation, but work should be intensified to start the activity as well as greater student involvement and strengthen the role of the Centre for Young Researchers **[Chapter II Standard II.6].**

### **Affirmation of the action being taken**

The review team affirmed the following action already in progress:

- The steps that University takes to allocate about 40.000 euro and to increase budget for scientific research from 2 to 6%, that can be submitted by the staff of the departments, however a regulation on these projects should be drafted and all researchers should be informed about this possibility **[Chapter II Standard I.1].**
- It is very encouraging that UCB publishes two journals periodically and is making efforts to index them on international platforms **[Chapter II Standard I.7].**
- The UCB is trying to strengthen scientific cooperation between the Centre for Sustainable Development and Innovation and Departments **[Chapter I Standard II.6].**
- The establishment of the Centre for Young Researchers is very important for the involvement of students in research projects and in the future, the role of this center should be strengthened **[Chapter I Standard II.6].**

### **Judgment**

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

## Evaluation Area 5: Students and their Support

5.1. The UCB prepares students with professional skills and integrity, which is clearly evidenced in the mission of the institution [A.E7]. To fulfil its mission, UCB has drafted admission policies, which aim to increase the quality of admission through the attraction and graduation of a quality and diverse body of students, offering them study programs with curricula that complement the best current and future market needs [A.E17]. UCB accepts a selected number of students based on spatial capacities and human resources, admission and required documentation [A.E97] and depending on the institutional policies as a non-profit institution [A.E7]. However, it should be noted that students do not have entrance exams [BM3]. Additionally, UCB through the website, brochures, direct meetings, fairs, etc., makes public the annual offer for the different programs. The Career Counselling Office organizes open days, or even orientation days for young students near the premises of the institution. Student admission procedures for each academic year, as well as quotas for each study program, along with admission criteria, are sent to the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth [SER p, 58], as well as made public through the website [A.E79]. UCB maintains close links with the regional education directorates and, through the permits provided by them, visits high schools in different cities and centers of the country, to inform high school graduates about the study programs offered by UCB Whereas, in terms of the numerical ratio of academic staff/student in order to realize the teaching process as high quality as possible, it pays special attention and this ratio for the academic year 2019-2020 is 1 lecturer for 6.8 students [A.E32]. [Chapter I Standard III.1].

5.2. UCB guarantees the most efficient and professional communication between the institution and the student through orientation and counseling activities. It states in the report that each student has an academic and career counselor, who guides and supports students during the teaching process, professional internships and employment [SER p, 59; A.E11]. However, the evaluation time noted that a career counselor is responsible for one department and an academic counselor depends on the number of students [BM10]. For this support, the students are very satisfied and appreciate very much that the UCB gives this opportunity [BM3; BM4]. The IT office provides institutional email addresses to all enrolled students, which gives them access and real-time information through the BIS system, consequently, notifications are displayed on the screen of each student [A.E64; BM3; BM4; BM10]. Students are informed by the teaching secretariat through various announcements on the boards placed inside the premises of the institution and are informed by e-mail to the personal student email addresses [BM10]. In addition, internal communication is carried out through secretariats set up at the basic and main units. Moreover, for enrolled students or even those young people who express interest, UCB uses the official website and social networks as important means of communication [SER p, 59; BM6; BM9; BM10]. The protocol and correspondence office also serves at UCB All staff of the institution have internal email addresses as provides by the IT department for each staff member eg. A mbiemri@beder.edu.al. The institution has also prepared the necessary guides for the all-possible information of staff and students, which can be accessed online [A.E50; A.E51]. Based on the requirements set by the MASR students immediately during registration, completed personal file with all necessary information, in accordance with the legal framework and the files are kept in the office of the teaching secretary [A.E75]. For better information, communication and transparency in decision-making, students are active participants as guests in the meetings of the basic and main

units **[SER p, 60]**. In addition, they are members in the Academic Senate, in the Internal Quality Assurance Unit and in the permanent committees, but are not very well informed about some processes and decisions at UCB **[BM3; BM4]** and in the future, their involvement should be more active. **[Chapter I Standard III.2]**.

5.3. A Career Planning Office has been set up at UCB to assist students in career guidance and counselling, which operates under the Dean of Students. Each department appoints a Career Planning Advisor at this office, who provides consultancy to enrolled students **[A.E12]**. The career counsellor closely follows the process of student professional internships. He/she informs students about the organization of various seminars, about job search techniques, who to write a CV and successfully passing the preliminary interview. He/she seeks employment opportunities for all students graduating in the programs "Bachelor" and "Master" and organizes activities which aim to maintain relations between students even after their graduation, etc. **[SER, p 61; BM10]**. The evaluation team noted that this is very important for the students and they are very satisfied with the work of the career counsellors. The study programs at UCB are designed based on the criteria set out in the Bologna Declaration, including courses in general vocational, technical training, etc. Structures are determined, according to these standards and legal criteria set by MASR. Through academic counsellors and career counsellors, students are supported to address their needs across all study cycles. Students are assisted in various organizations and support is provided to student clubs in every aspect such as academic, logistical and financial. Students have several sports clubs, charities and the creative arts club **[BM3; BM4; B M10]**. **[Chapter I Standard III.3]**.

5.4. At the moment UCB is located in rented premises, and from the beginning has required the preparation of the ground and the necessary tools as part of the support policy for students coming from special social categories. This is expressed in the most important acts of the institution, for example article 57, 58 of the basic regulation. At the UCB building a ramp has been established at the entrance of the building, while inside the movement between levels is possible by an elevator. Measures have been taken to offer proper hydro-sanitary facilities, especially for the special social categories **[SER p, 61]**. Students with disabilities are given the opportunity to study and other students always help these students as needed **[BM3; BM4]**. UCB supports all students regardless of race, colour, nationality, religion, etc. Roma and Balkan-Egyptian students are offered equal opportunities with others. In different cases, the structures are set up to enable scholarships for these groups. UCB supports all those students, which shows special skills, and have won awards in various fields. In addition, UCB offers scholarships for people with different abilities, for people with family disasters, for the children of police martyrs, as well as for some other categories, such as employees of the Ministry of Interior, etc. **[A.E122]**. The students are very satisfied with the opportunity to benefit from scholarships, and most of them in the meeting were scholarship holders **[BM3; BM4]**. However, it should be noted that most scholarships are donations and not from the UCB budget **[BM9; BM10]**. Review team identify that UCB pursues a supportive policy for students and pays attention to students with special needs and from special categories, offering appropriate infrastructure and scholarships **[Chapter I Standard III.4]**.

5.5. All titles received at the library are registered by the library management office and they regulate, monitor and archive any records, information, documents or records related

to the general library fund **[BM7, Tour visit]**. The library is on the ground floor and is well stocked with titles **[BM7: Tour visit]**. The office operates according to the instruction on the operation of the library **[A.E125]**. UCB offers multidisciplinary literature, and library-opening hours are posted on the institution's premises and are public at the entrance to the library. The library is open from 8:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. During the exam period, the library is open even on weekends. The libraries schedule is very convenient, especially because it offers students the opportunity to have access during the exam deadlines and during the weekend, students highly value this opportunity for access to the library **[BM3; BM4]**. The UCB Library has 24 reading posts, computers etc, **[SER p, 61]**. UCB also has at its disposal an automation system, where the request for the provision of literature and student registrations is done electronically **[A.E125]**. It is encouraging that the library is subscribed to online scientific journal JSTOR thus enabling students and staff access to this magnificent world library, this is very important for staff and students and they are very excited about this opportunity **[BM4; BM5; BM9]**. Especially considering that JSTOR enables the use of more than 12 million scientific journal articles in 75 different disciplines **[A.E84]**. The UCB provides funds for the purchase of specialized literature in the field of scientific research, allocating to each department a certain fund to enrich the library with the latest publications and publications in the field **[SER p, 62]**. In fact, the fund for the purchasing literature is low with about 2.000 Euro **[BM9]**. However, the allocation of funds for the purchase of necessary literature of the departments is not clear, how, who and how much funds are allocated per department. In addition, it is very important that UCB supports the academic staff for publishing books and there are such cases **[BM9]**. **[Chapter I Standard III.5]**.

5.6. Each student has an academic advisor, who guides and supports him/her throughout the learning process and this is regulated on the basis of the regulation for studies, in article 6 of the regulation for undergraduate studies and exams. It is quite interesting that during the pandemic for all students who did not have the opportunity to attend classes, UCB enabled them to discontinue their studies, and to continue later **[BM4]**. The necessary literature for the offered courses is made known through the syllabus at the beginning of the semester. Course lecturers ensure that the department has at least some copies of the required literature in the library. Students have the opportunity to meet professors in overtime at certain times for students, to help students if they have any additional explanations or difficulties **[BM4]**. It is very encouraging that UCB also organizes intensive English language courses for students who have difficulty with English **[BM3]**. The teachers at UCB during the pandemic situation have recorded the lectures for students who live in remote rural areas and have problems with equipment and internet to be able to listen these lectures later. **[Chapter I Standard III.6]**.

5.7. In order to guarantee the involvement and representation of students in the decision-making bodies, the office of the Dean of Students has been set up in UCB, which is responsible for the smooth running of students' relations with the institution **[SER p, 62; A.E112]**. The Dean of Students performs his duties in cooperation with all academic and administrative units. The Dean supports the students from the moment of application and continues even after graduation, maintaining a productive and supportive relationship, both for the students and for the institution. In addition, he supports students in professional internships, social activities, various projects, as well as in finding various employment opportunities. However, the Dean of students is a regular professor and based on all the

activities involved to help the student this may affect his performance in teaching. In UCB is formed the student council and it plays a special role for the participation of students in institutional life as well as its representatives in the various bodies of the institution [A.E12]. Although this student council does not have a specific budget, through the Dean of students it makes specific requests for different activities [BM8]. The student council representative has given some suggestions for chapter 5 for the preparation of the SER but is overall not very much informed about the SER [BM2]. Students are involved in the meetings of the main and basic units and in the collegial bodies of UCB Furthermore, the UCB Academic Senate has decided to involve student representatives actively in the Student Council in UCB unit meetings [A.E124]. Students elected by the Student Council are part of the Academic Senate, the Internal Quality Assurance Unit and the Standing Committee on Quality and Quality Assurance [Chapter I Standard III.7].

5.8. In the new facility UCB offers recreational and entertainment facilities to ensure and enhance the quality of student life. Also, the Dean of students together with the respective units organize various social and cultural activities [A.E124], and these activities are often organized within student clubs [A.E125]. As for the sanitary hygiene at UCB premises, UCB has signed an agreement with a specialized company for the sanitary hygiene [A.E126]. In addition to the general presence of a doctor at the institution, UCB has signed a cooperation agreement with the American Hospital for advanced health and social care. This offers discounts on fees for medical services of students and staff [A.E127]. In addition, for the students' safety the institution has contracted physical security companies, whose representatives are located 24 hours in the premises of UCB [A.E128]. In the past UCB has also offered dormitories for students, but now does not offer this opportunity as it has been supported by donations. Nevertheless, in the future they plan to provide dormitories especially for students from rural areas [BM10]. [Chapter I Standard III.8].

5.9. It is quite specific that at UCB within the Dean of Students has been established the Career Planning and the Alumni offices, whose responsibilities are provided in the regulation of administrative organization. In fact, the Career Planning office follow students from start to graduation, while Alumni offices after the student graduation [BM10]. However, the Alumni office has no regulations and does not have much information about the Alumni on the UCB website, but they use more social networks [BM7; BM10]. For easy employment of graduated students UCB enables an easy transition to employment through professional internships throughout the year and agreements signed with various companies. It is quite encouraging that UCB has an agreement with the marketing company, where students do the internship and some students from UCB are employed in this company [BM7]. Through the career planning office, academic staff, and administrative staff are committed to implementing student employment policy. UCB envisions favorable policies for the employment of its graduates. It is very important that UCB has a very good relationship with KSHM and most of the employees in KSHM are graduates from UCB [BM7], but also KSHM are very satisfied with the graduates of UCB and have benefited a lot from this cooperation [BM7]. UCB also has a close cooperation with Turgut Ozal College They have a contract for conducting student internships [BM7]. The institution through these offices has accurate data about graduates. During the last four years [2016-2020] the percentage of employment or students attending a further cycle for graduates of Bachelor programs is 82.7% and for graduates of Master programs is 86% [A.E235; BM10]. Representatives of the public and private sector have also been involved in the

preparation of curricula based on market demands, but that meetings with Alumni are not frequent, they should be held more often and be formal **[BM7]**. Especially in the IT sector, UCB has good collaborations with the private sector, accepted the preparation of new study programs from private sector and students have the opportunity to do internships, and it is a great demand for IT specialists as they are missing **[BM7]**. **[Chapter I Standard III.9]**.

## **Findings**

### **Good practice**

The review team identified the following feature of good practice:

- UCB's Student Guide and organization of, "*oriented week*", which ensures that students have easily accessible and detailed information in one place about their study programmes and all other aspects of student life at the UCB **[Chapter I Standard III.3]**.
- UCB pursues a supportive policy for students and pays attention to students with special needs and from special categories, offering appropriate infrastructure and scholarships **[Chapter I Standard III.4]**.

### **Weaknesses**

No weakness was found.

### **Recommendations**

The review team identified the following recommendation:

- The cooperation with alumni students and Alumni Office should be coordinated through a document in which to present their function, contributions and commitments **[Chapter I Standard III.3]**

### **Affirmation of action being taken**

The review team affirms the following actions already in progress:

- The library is subscribed to online scientific journal JSTOR thus enabling students and staff access to this magnificent world library **[Chapter I Standard III.5]**.

## **Judgment**

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



## Evidence List

A. List of evidences provided as part of self-evaluation documents, of SER. These evidences on EER are referred using the abbreviation A.E1..., A. E2..., etc:

- A.E1:** Order for the establishment of the working group of the RVB Institutional
- A.E2:** Institutional Accreditation Decision, 2013
- A.E3:** Institutional Accreditation Decision, 2017
- A.E4:** Regulation on the functioning and organization of the ICU
- A.E5:** Example Annual report of a basic unit
- A.E6:** Decision on licensing of UC "Bedër"
- A.E7:** Statute of UC "Bedër"
- A.E8:** Annual institutional report for the academic year 2017 - 2018
- A.E9:** Order for the Reorganization of the main units of UC "Bedër"
- A.E10:** Basic Regulation
- A.E11:** Regulation on Academic Organization
- A.E12:** Regulation on Administrative Organization
- A.E13:** Regulation of the Faculty of Technology and Business
- A.E14:** Regulation of the Faculty of Humanities and Law
- A.E15:** Letter of approval of the statute of UC "Bedër"
- A.E16:** Budget approval practice
- A.E17:** Strategic institutional plan 2018-2023
- A.E18:** Example, Calendar of senate meetings
- A.E19:** Practice for organizing unit meetings
- A.E20:** Decision to establish a standing committee on research, projects, applications and innovation
- A.E21:** Regulation on the functioning and organization of the standing committee for guaranteeing institutional quality standards and study programs
- A.E22:** Senate decisions on the appointments of external experts to the internal quality assurance unit
- A.E23:** Regulation on scientific research projects
- A.E24:** Decision of the senate for the approval of the strategic institutional plan 2018-2023
- A.E25:** Rector's orders for the establishment of the working group and subgroups for drafting the institutional strategic plan 2018-2023
- A.E26:** Decision of the Board of Directors for the approval of the strategic institutional plan 2018-2023
- A.E27:** Example of the activity report of a basic unit
- A.E28:** Guidance on promoting publications and research
- A.E29:** Support procedure for participation in conferences
- A.E30:** Organization chart of UC "Bedër"
- A.E31:** Organization chart of the Faculties of UC "Bedër"
- A.E32:** List of academic personnel for each department with respective degrees
- A.E33:** Example market study
- A.E34:** Graduates over the years

- A.E35:** Graduate employment statistics
- A.E36:** Example of a cooperation agreement with a higher education institution
- A.E37:** List of partner institutions
- A.E38:** Example agreement for professional practices
- A.E39:** Erasmus + mobility agreement
- A.E40:** Model Certificate of participation - SUSI
- A.E41:** Link to the international competition of the law department
- A.E42:** Practical cases of exchange of students and personnel
- A.E43:** Policy for foreign students
- A.E44:** Academic personnel recruitment procedure
- A.E45:** Administrative personnel recruitment procedure
- A.E46:** Example of the link for job vacancies
- A.E47:** Official email address of the human resources office, [hr@beder.edu.al](mailto:hr@beder.edu.al)
- A.E48:** Regulation on the employment, promotion and performance appraisal of academic personnel
- A.E49:** Orientation days program, academic year 2019-2020
- A.E50:** Personnel guide
- A.E51:** Student guide
- A.E52:** List of personnel trainings, academic year 2019-2020
- A.E53:** Example, request for permission for academic progress, Dr.GentjanSkara
- A.E54:** Example, the appointment of Dr. Arti Omeri
- A.E55:** Personnel self-assessment form
- A.E56:** List of Student Clubs
- A.E57:** Contract Model with Academic Personnel
- A.E58:** Instruction on teaching load
- A.E59:** Example of teaching load of the Department of Communication Sciences
- A.E60:** Draft budget of the Faculty
- A.E61:** Annual budget of the foundation
- A.E62:** Regulation of the Board of Directors
- A.E63:** Data on finances and environments
- A.E64:** Bedër Information System Guide (BIS)
- A.E65:** List of technological assets
- A.E66:** Lease contract
- A.E67:** Certificate of ownership
- A.E68:** Plan of the building
- A.E69:** Links to Publishing and Conference Websites
- A.E70:** Example of work publication
- A.E71:** Archive Regulation
- A.E72:** Link to access the websites of scientific journals
- A.E73:** Reception capacity ratio
- A.E74:** Survey of academic personnel and administrative personnel
- A.E75:** Regulation of the teaching secretary office
- A.E76:** Regulation of the Center for Sustainable Development and Innovation

- A.E77:** Link of Instruction No. 15, Date 04.04.2008 and Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 41 Date 24.01.2018
- A.E78:** Link to a syllabus published on the official website
- A.E79:** Senate decision on admission criteria
- A.E80:** Booklet for academic offer
- A.E81:** Website of the Department of Communication Sciences
- A.E82:** Regulation of studies and exams of the first cycle
- A.E83:** Regulation of studies and exams of the second cycle
- A.E84:** JSTOR access agreement
- A.E85:** Instruction on distance learning
- A.E86:** Regulation on taking hygienic-sanitary measures to prevent the spread of acute respiratory infections including Covid-19
- A.E87:** Example, Senate Decision on Academic Progress, Dr.Gentjan Skara
- A.E88:** Example of a study program curriculum
- A.E89:** Evaluation of teaching practices
- A.E90:** Summer semester
- A.E91:** Video Training for the platform: [www.onebeder.edu.al](http://www.onebeder.edu.al)
- A.E92:** Video Training: Manage of a virtual classroom in Google Classroom
- A.E93:** Video Training: Creating Meet Event on Google Classroom
- A.E94:** Example Contract (teaching secretary)
- A.E95:** Example: Form for paying a pedagogue's hours
- A.E96:** Example of a link where the program curriculum is published
- A.E97:** Example of Web publication of admission criteria and required documentation
- A.E98:** Regulation on transfer of studies
- A.E99:** The decision to appoint career counselors
- A.E100:** List of student internships
- A.E101:** Erasmus + Admission Letter
- A.E102:** Link of Student Conference in Communication Sciences
- A.E103:** List of assets of the institution
- A.E104:** Exam Type Sheet
- A.E105:** Student discipline regulation
- A.E106:** Complaint Form
- A.E107:** Example Diploma Format
- A.E108:** Decision on the establishment of a standing committee for the guarantee of institutional quality standards and study programs
- A.E109:** Application form at Bologna Hub Peer Support
- A.E110:** Project acceptance document (confirmation email)
- A.E111:** Preparatory meeting report for Bologna Hub Peer Support
- A.E112:** Decision for the working group for the project, Bologna Hub Peer Support
- A.E113:** Student survey form for the subject and the lecturer
- A.E114:** Guidance on the curriculum development process
- A.E115:** Example of Curriculum Change
- A.E116:** Syllabus example

- A.E117** List of scientific conferences
- A.E118** List of personnel participating in scientific projects
- A.E119** Example of application in international scientific projects
- A.E120** Senate decision to set up center for young applicants
- A.E121** Statute of the Center for Young Scholars
- A.E122** Regulation on tuition fee deduction
- A.E123** Instruction on the operation of the library
- A.E124** Decision of the Academic Senate for student representatives at the meeting
- A.E125** Student Clubs Office Report 2016-2021†
- A.E126** Agreement with the cleaning services Albpastrim Company
- A.E127** Agreement with American Hospital
- A.E128** Agreement with the physical security company

**List B: Meetings held during the visit**

Meetings are referred to throughout the report using the abbreviation **BM1, BM2**, etc:

Review team meet with the Institutional Coordinator.

**BM1: Meeting 1:** Review Team meet with the Rector.

**BM2: Meeting 2:** Review team meet with the Self-evaluation team.

**BM3: Meeting 3:** Review team meet with a sample of first-cycle students.

**BM4: Meeting 4:** Review team meet with a sample of second-cycle students.

**BM5: Meeting 5:** Review team meet with a sample of teaching staff.

**BM6: Meeting 6 (Institution tour)**

**BM7: Meeting 7:** Review team meet with external partners and alumni.

**BM8: Meeting 8:** Review team meet with senior managers and senior staff.

**BM9: Meeting 9:** Review Team meet with a sample of teaching research staff

**BM10: Meeting 10:** Review team meet with a sample of support staff.

**BM11: Meeting 11:** Review team meet with the Internal Quality Assurance Unit.

**BM12: Meeting 12:** Review team meet with the Institutional Coordinator.