



# Institutional Review of European University of Tirana

May 2022

## Contents

<b>About this review .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Key findings.....</b>	<b>2</b>
Executive summary.....	2
QAA's conclusions about European University of Tirana .....	3
European Standards and Guidelines .....	3
Good practice .....	3
Conditions .....	3
Recommendations .....	3
<b>Explanation of the findings about European University of Tirana .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Standard 1.1 Policy for quality assurance .....	6
Standard 1.2 Design and approval of programmes .....	10
Standard 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment.....	12
Standard 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification.....	15
Standard 1.5 Teaching staff.....	17
Standard 1.6 Learning resources and student support .....	19
Standard 1.7 Information management.....	21
Standard 1.8 Public information .....	23
Standard 1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes .....	24
Standard 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance .....	26
<b>Glossary .....</b>	<b>28</b>

## About this review

This is a report of an Institutional Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at European University of Tirana. The virtual review took place from 24 to 27 May 2022 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Jeremy Bradshaw (chair)
- Ms Hannah Doe (student reviewer)
- Professor Anca Greere (international reviewer).

Institutional Review offers institutions outside the UK the opportunity to have a review by the UK's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). The review benchmarks the institution's quality assurance processes against international quality assurance standards set out in Part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The review was carried out by peer reviewers - senior staff and students from both UK and international higher education providers. The review team included a reviewer from the UK and from a second country, as well as a student reviewer.

The review is evidence based and is underpinned by a self-evaluation document and supporting documentary evidence prepared by the institution. In addition to analysing documentary evidence, the team held virtual meetings with the University Rector, the University senior team, students, academic staff and professional support and administrative staff to verify the evidence. A virtual tour of facilities and resources was also conducted.

In Institutional Review, the QAA review team:

- makes a conclusion against each of the 10 standards set out in Part 1 of the ESG
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- comes to an overall conclusion.

There are three possible outcomes for the Institutional Review:

- meets all ESG standards for Institutional Review
- meets all ESG standards for Institutional Review subject to achieving specific conditions
- does not meet ESG standards for Institutional Review in one or more area.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 6.

The QAA website gives more information about QAA and its mission. For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

## Key findings

### Executive summary

The European University of Tirana (EUT) was licensed by the Albanian Council of Ministers in September 2006. It was founded by a group of lecturers (Albanian and foreign), journalists and experienced managers, in both the public and private sectors of higher education. The aim was to both respond to market demands, as well as to establish a high-quality institution that would offer an alternative model of education of the highest standards, which differed from the existing traditional models of higher education in Albania.

Originally, EUT had two faculties, the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Social Sciences, offering only first level degree programmes. After one year, the Faculty of Economics was opened, which became the largest faculty in terms of students enrolled. In June 2009 the University achieved its first accreditation (institutional and first level diploma accreditation) by the Albanian Public Agency for the Accreditation of Higher Education. The periodic institutional review was carried out in 2016, a process conducted by HEQAA in cooperation with the QAA, which concluded that EUT fully met the state quality standards. In 2019, EUT underwent a partial institutional review to extend its institutional accreditation to the new faculties it opened in 2018.

In 2011, EUT also opened three doctoral studies programmes. Since September 2018 EUT consists of five faculties, 11 departments and four research centres. The five faculties are: Faculty of Law, Political Science, and International Relations; Faculty of Economics, Business and Development; Faculty of Humanities, Education and Liberal Arts, Faculty of Engineering, Informatics and Architecture; and Faculty of Technical Medical Sciences.

In 2015 Albania introduced new higher education legislation. The new legislation resulted in many changes both at a national and university level including a moratorium on all higher education institutions enrolling doctoral students.

EUT's mission is to provide students with a high-quality education based on the most updated scientific research; provide knowledge to the Albanian society through teaching, creativity, the use of best scientific achievements, as well as labour market and international partnerships.

Challenges faced by the University include the continuous changing regulatory landscape within Albania making it difficult to plan for the future; adapting to the post-pandemic situation; high levels of emigration of highly skilled people out of Albania to work abroad making recruitment of well qualified academic staff problematic.

In the face of these challenges, EUT is committed to its strategic objectives which can be summarised as:

- becoming an open but high-quality University, by integrating a careful increase in the number of students, with the application of the highest academic and teaching standards, to graduate well taught students in the three cycles of study
- developing a 'university-aligned-to-business' profile, through close collaboration with industry groups in drafting study programmes curricula, as well as orientating the research work based on their needs
- while maintaining its core teaching on the existing fields of study, it welcomes expansion in other fields of study, based on labour market demands, as well as resources available by EUT.

The review process is evidence-based, and the review team was provided with a self-evaluation document (SED) and supporting evidence by the University. During the four-day virtual review visit, which took place between 23 and 26 May 2022, a total of seven meetings were held, comprising the Rector, the senior management team, teaching faculty, support services staff, students, alumni and employers. A virtual tour of the campus and facilities was also undertaken.

In summary, the review team found five instances of significant good practice and made five recommendations for improvement. No conditions were applied to the review outcome. The review team came to the overall conclusion that the European University of Tirana **meets** all 10 of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015), Part 1: Internal Quality Assurance.

## **QAA's conclusions about European University of Tirana**

The QAA review team reached the following conclusions about the higher education provision at European University of Tirana.

### **European Standards and Guidelines**

European University of Tirana **meets** all 10 Part 1 ESG Standards and Guidelines.

### **Good practice**

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at European University of Tirana:

- the strong leadership provided by the Rector and the Office of Standards and Quality in striving to embed a quality culture across the University (ESG Standard 1.1)
- the robust quality assurance framework, systems and processes, their effective implementation and the engagement of staff at all levels (ESG Standard 1.1)
- the active engagement of, and extensive contribution made by, external stakeholders to the design, delivery and monitoring of academic programmes, principally but not exclusively through the Labour Market Boards (ESG Standard 1.1)
- the provision of individualised advice and guidance to prospective students that informs their decision making (ESG Standard 1.4)
- the wide range of management information collected, analysed and used to inform operational practice and decision making (ESG Standard 1.7).

### **Conditions**

The QAA review team did not apply any conditions to the outcome.

### **Recommendations**

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** for improvement to European University of Tirana:

- make public the Quality Assurance Strategy through, for example, publication on the University's website (ESG Standard 1.1)
- clarify a unified institutional approach to student-centredness and ensure that this is disseminated across the University (ESG Standard 1.3)

- formalise an approach to the setting, moderation and marking of assessments, which can actively involve discipline-level expertise alongside quality management verification (ESG Standard 1.3)
- take prompt steps to ensure that the individual tutoring system is consistently implemented for the support of all students (ESG Standard 1.6)
- strengthen the approach to institutional oversight of publicly published information (ESG Standard 1.8).

## **Explanation of the findings about European University of Tirana**

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a [brief glossary](#) at the end of this report. A fuller [glossary of terms](#) is available on the QAA website.

## Standard 1.1 Policy for quality assurance

**Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.**

### Findings

1.1 The mission of the University is 'To provide students with high quality education by applying the results of valid scientific research, to provide knowledge to the Albanian society through teaching, creativity, the use of best scientific achievements, as well as labour market and international partnerships'. The University states that it places a 'particular importance to internal quality assurance, to ensure that its activity is in accordance with the provisions of applicable legislation, the Statute, and other internal regulatory acts, as well as the vision, mission and strategic objectives of the Institution'.

1.2 The details of how this is to be achieved are provided by the Quality Assurance Strategy 2017- 2022, which outlines the institutional approach towards quality assurance. It refers to the Internal Quality Assurance Manual, the Internal Quality Assurance document, and the Statute of the University, and describes a system that encompasses the management of the institution, the development of the study programmes, the quality of teaching and research, and the students' involvement in the decision-making process. The strategy document integrates the quality assurance strategy within the broader mission, organisational structure, and strategic plan of the University.

1.3 The Quality Assurance Strategy is the result of an accumulation of learning experiences gained through the accreditation of study programmes offered by the University, staff training, partnerships with domestic and foreign universities, adoption of best practices and consultation with stakeholders, mainly administrative and academic staff and students. The strategy was prepared following, and in response to, the institutional review conducted by QAA on behalf of the Albanian Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency (HEQAA) in 2016. The strategy will be refreshed and revised following the publication of the report of this review.

1.4 The goals of internal quality assurance are defined as: a continuous increase of the quality of EUT management, teaching and research activity, through the formulation and implementation of contemporary policies, strategies and procedures, as well as the commitment of all management and organisational levels; the continuous application of EUT philosophy, implementing an academic programme that fulfils EUT aims both conceptually and chronologically; and the continuous increase of the quality of students' education, by providing them with the contemporary knowledge, methods and teaching techniques, quality support services, and by encouraging their involvement in decision-making.

1.5 The internal quality assurance structure has two main components, the Internal Quality Assurance Commission (IQAC), and the Standards and Quality Office (SQ-Office). Quality assurance is accomplished through the involvement of academic and support staff, monitoring activities carried out by management structures, the SQ-Office, and the IQAC, and by engaging internal and external stakeholders, in cooperation with the (HEQAA) and other state structures.

1.6 The IQAC was formed in 2011. Its members are nominated by the Rector and approved by the Academic Senate and include a representative from the Students' Council and an external expert. Its role is, on a periodic basis, to evaluate the teaching, research and

artistic activities of the institution, together with the efficiency of its administrative and financial activities. The Commission has operational autonomy and access to the institution's data. The Head of IQAC participates regularly in meetings of the Rectorate. It acts as the point of contact for the Ministry of Education and Sport. When reviewing a particular activity, each member of the Commission prepares a report that is then used by the chairman to produce a summary report. The Commission's review results are published in an internal report sent to the Rector and Administrator of EUT and are shared with the heads of relevant units.

1.7 The SQ-Office is responsible for overseeing the institutional quality assurance system, including developing policies, strategies, processes and guidelines related to quality assurance, and for monitoring their effective implementation.

1.8 The strategy for quality assurance includes evaluation of the quality of student life at the University. Feedback is gathered through surveys and focus groups. Focus groups are conducted annually by the IQAC, following a documented methodology.

1.9 The Academic Senate is the highest academic body of EUT. It is chaired by the Rector and its membership includes elected faculty representatives, the chairman of the Council of Students, and two other student representatives. Its remit, which mostly covers matters of governance, includes guaranteeing the assurance of internal quality of the institution.

1.10 The Rectorate is a body chaired by the Rector and including the Vice-Rector, Deans of the faculties, the Administrator, the General Secretary, and the Head of the Human Resources Office. It is responsible for the long-term planning and the day-to-day operation of the institution.

1.11 Within each faculty, there is a Decanate that includes the Dean, Vice-Dean, Administrator, Heads of Department, Head of the Scientific Research Centre, Head of the Scientific Committees of Master's Programmes, and the Head of the Student Council of the faculty. The Decanate drafts the strategic development plan of the faculty and coordinates the activity of the faculty's units.

1.12 Key management posts of the institution are the Rector, who is the highest academic authority of EUT and its legal representative for academic matters, the Vice-Rectors, the Deans, the Heads of Department, and the Heads of the Scientific Research Centres.

1.13 The policy of quality assurance has formal status at EUT. It aligns with the Statute and mission and, together with the Internal Quality Assurance Manual, defines the structures, posts, and processes that enable policy to be enacted. While the Quality Manual is available internally to staff and students, and has been submitted to the HEQAA, it is not publicly available. Recognising that the contents of the Quality Manual might have commercial value, the review team considers that, as a minimum, the Quality Assurance Strategy should be made available to the public and therefore **recommends** EUT to make public the Quality Assurance Strategy through, for example, publication on the University's website.

1.14 The Standards and Quality Office was set up in 2016 following the institutional review. Its role is to emphasise the importance of quality assurance across the University. Its head also leads the Curricula Office that is responsible for overseeing the drafting of new courses and programmes. The Quality Assurance Unit oversees and monitors the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes and carries responsibility for ensuring the University meets the requirements of the Ministry and submits the necessary reports to the Accreditation Board. Together with the independent IQAC, the University has



established structures, policy, and an institution-wide culture of quality assurance. The whole approach to quality assurance philosophy is systematically addressed in the course of training programmes for staff members. The review team identified as **good practice** the strong leadership provided by the Rector and the Office of Standards and Quality in striving to embed a quality culture across the University.

1.15 In order to operationalise its quality assurance strategy, EUT has developed tools to ensure that programmes are developed, maintained, recorded and assessed according to the University's protocols. These are described in a number of documents that provide the operational detail that underpins the strategy and policy. They include procedures and templates for designing a syllabus, preparing a definitive record of a programme, monitoring and controlling final exams, and assignment of work and responsibility.

1.16 Teaching staff described the Quality Assurance Manual as a key document, to which they referred for matters connected with academic processes. They were able to provide examples of everyday activities that were conducted in alignment with the manual. The manual, together with other policy and process documents, is available in a shared folder on the intranet. The review team identified the robust quality assurance framework, systems and processes, their effective implementation, and the engagement of staff at all levels as **good practice**.

1.17 EUT considers scientific research to be an important element of the quality assurance processes in the University. This is reflected in the Research Strategy. Academic staff report on their research activity on an annual basis; the University periodically monitors and evaluates the results of the scientific research of the academic staff during the follow-up process. There are established Indicators of Academic Research Performance. EUT expects that its lecturers who have degrees or PhDs must publish at least one article every three years in a journal with impact factor ranked by Journal Citation Reports/Scopus. The Centre for Methodology and Scientific Research periodically offers training courses to develop staff members' ability to undertake independent research.

1.18 EUT cites its involvement in international projects and collaborations as evidence of its approach to benchmark against international standards of quality assurance. The SED makes the point that while all international collaboration helps the University to enhance its quality assurance processes through knowledge exchange, there are also examples of participation in projects with a specific focus on quality assurance such as:

- The Erasmus+ project QAINAL: 'Capacity Building for Strengthening the Quality Assurance Structures at the Private Higher Education Institutions in Albania' that sets out to establish and support quality assurance processes and mechanisms to ensure effective management and enhance teaching and learning at the private higher education institutions in Albania.
- The Tempus project ENCHASE: Developing the Albanian Quality Assurance System in Higher Education: Process Implementation and Outcome - Basic Methodology.

1.19 Some of these projects have resulted directly in resources for quality assurance, such as the Quality Management Handbook and Teaching Handbook, both resulting from the Erasmus+ Project 'Curriculum Development Joint European Political Science MA' led by University of Salzburg. The value of the international projects for benchmarking was confirmed by staff.

1.20 A Code of Ethics, which includes sections on values and principles, responsibilities of members of the University, and research standards is published by EUT. It also covers matters such as intolerance and discrimination.

1.21 External involvement in the quality assurance processes at EUT comes from the Labour Market Boards, alumni, and external quality assurance experts. The University actively seeks external quality assurance experts to review documents, plans and strategies, and to support programmes through external accreditation processes.

1.22 Alumni reported that one of the strengths of the University had been its collaboration with businesses and with government. They shared their experience of sitting on labour market boards and contributing to the design and development of courses and programmes.

1.23 Each department works closely with its Labour Market Board, comprising five to seven senior members of private enterprises of public institutions, to ensure the continued alignment of its programmes with the requirements of industry and the professions. It is a requirement that Labour Market Board members should be former EUT students. The boards are a contact point for employment, professional practices, and student leadership. The review team concluded that the active engagement of, and extensive contribution made by, external stakeholders to the design, delivery and monitoring of academic programmes, principally but not exclusively through the Labour Market Boards is a feature of **good practice**.

1.24 Student involvement in quality assurance processes comes through a number of channels. In addition to the questionnaires and surveys that provide student feedback on the teaching staff, facilities, support services, and other aspects of their experience, students are able to express their opinion and present any concerns at open departmental meetings that are held every month. There are also monthly meetings between Students' Council representatives and the Rector. Focus groups with students conducted by IQAC are also a valuable source of information, where students are involved in providing and analysing information and suggesting ideas for further improvement. The learning management system is used periodically to solicit student feedback on teaching staff.

1.25 The quality assurance framework at EUT includes non-academic units, which submit annual evaluation reports that include the results of student satisfaction surveys, and which have benefited from knowledge exchange through the international projects.

1.26 The University has a robust policy and framework for managing quality assurance. A culture of quality assurance has been inculcated at all levels of the organisation and there is widespread involvement of students and external stakeholders. Public transparency of this approach would be improved by publication of the Quality Assurance Strategy. Overall the review team concluded that Standard 1.1: Policy for quality assurance is **met**.

## Standard 1.2 Design and approval of programmes

**Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications' framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.**

### Findings

2.1 EUT has clear processes in place for the design and approval of their programmes. Any proposal is generally initiated at the level of the departments and then follows a clear route via the Decanate, the Academic Senate and then the Board of Administration before it is submitted for ministerial licensing. Any new programmes developed are subject to scrutiny by the Albanian Ministry of Education and Sport before a licensing decision is awarded. The requirements set out by the Ministry are comprehensive and will analyse compatibility with legislation in force, alignment with institutional mission and vision, but also national priorities, labour market trends and sustainability considerations, as well as institutional capacity, in terms of human and infrastructural resources and appeal to future candidates, which should be gauged from appropriate market research. Consequently, it is very much the ministerial requirements which drive the processes for design and approval as applied by EUT.

2.2 The review team heard that to start any new programme or, indeed, to propose major changes to existing programmes, the EUT needs to have received the licensing approval from the Ministry; as such, at the point of submission to the Ministry a full demonstration of programme documentation and resourcing is required. This translates into actions which EUT must take to prepare for the application, including purchasing infrastructure and hiring additional staff if the existing resources may prove insufficient to sustain the proposal. The review team understands that EUT relies on the requirements of the Ministry to guide any design of a new programme without the need to propose duplicate internal policy for such purposes. However, it may be helpful to introduce a template to support departments in putting forward such proposals and to ensure consistency across EUT on the components of proposals.

2.3 As a private institution, the EUT can and does set its strategic agenda in relation to the discipline areas it wants to develop. The review team understands from the Rector that there are a number of areas where investment is likely to be directed in the future, and these areas are all compatible with national priorities and labour market demands. The review team understands that the relationship between senior EUT representatives and governmental officials is one of constant collaboration, with EUT being in constant communication with the government to support the national agenda and to set the institutional priorities. The review team was also presented with convincing evidence that the links between labour market representatives and EUT are strong with employers highlighting the areas of collaboration and clearly indicating their contribution to curriculum development, including for the purposes of setting up new programmes.

2.4 The Labour Market Boards, attached to each department, play a crucial role in guiding programme design and development. For each new programme a market analysis is compulsory and will be supplemented by discussions with the Labour Market Boards to ensure full alignment with market trends is achieved and that any new programmes place the emphasis correctly on those areas where the anticipated future of that discipline may lie. EUT also uses some of its elective courses to explore subjects that may subsequently be integrated into the full curriculum.

2.5 Students are engaged in a number of surveys and feedback gathering activities, including surveys to evaluate their lecturer and courses, IQAC focus groups organised for more dynamic interactions on topics of interest, and departmental open meetings. The review team understands that these processes clearly support development and further design of existing programmes. However, it was unclear to the review team if students are involved in the planning and preparation of new programmes, and if they are called on to give their views directly for such proposals before, during or after the process starts to move through the formal structures. The Student Council selects students' representatives who then go on to sit on the different committees of the Senate. In this capacity, student representatives may become more engaged with new programme design proposals; however, the review team is of the opinion that this could also happen more intensely at lower levels of the process and that students other than student representatives could be involved.

2.6 The EUT currently runs a number of programmes at both bachelor's and master's levels. The review team scrutinised the documentation in relation to these programmes and found that the qualifications are clearly specified and communicated, that learning outcomes are carefully formulated to align to the correct level of the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, and the Diploma Supplement. EUT highlighted that each programme of study will contain the list of courses, the course syllabi, the teaching schedule, the expected student workload in European Credit Transfer System credits, class hours divided into lectures, seminars, labs, exercises and so on, as well as the academic year and period when each course is conducted. Each bachelor's and master's programme is designed to also include a compulsory internship, which is governed by clear regulations and benefits from relevant agreements which EUT has with multiple employers and internship providers.

2.7 EUT has processes in place for the design and approval of programmes which align with ministerial requirements. The programmes are designed in alignment with the mission and vision of the University and consider labour market trends to ensure employability for future students. The qualifications are clearly set at the correct level, and this is evidenced by the learning outcomes set for the programmes. Overall, the review team found that Standard 1.2: Design and approval of programmes is **met**.

### Standard 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

**Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.**

#### Findings

3.1 The University is keen to ensure it provides a positive educational experience for its students. Students and staff have clearly articulated how they engage in interactive teaching and learning and focus strongly on developing citizenship skills alongside discipline-specific knowledge, competencies and values. Staff indicated that they focus on forming critical thinkers who can contribute relevantly to the debate within their disciplines, but also more broadly at national level; while senior managers and administrative staff focused highly on employability aims and service satisfaction as being their main drivers. When the review team probed into the vision for student-centeredness of EUT, it was noted that although all views carried relevance, there was no unified approach which could be seen as being promoted systematically at the institutional level. The review team believes that articulating such an approach could better focus university-wide action and would allow internal and external stakeholders to come out of their individual roles and more strongly join in on the institutional vision. The review team **recommends** the University to clarify a unified institutional approach to student-centeredness and ensure that this is disseminated across the University.

3.2 The University notes that a strategic objective relates to the creation of a stimulating, supportive and sustainable environment for pursuing excellence, based on flexibility and accountability. Students have confirmed that they are motivated to learn and that the teaching methodologies and the particular pedagogical tasks they are invited to engage with do allow them to develop their own opinions and be able to critically assess particular areas of their discipline, while still providing feedback in a constructive and collegiate manner. Students have also spoken appreciatively about the way staff encourage them to develop and reach their full potential, acknowledging that they are directed towards self-reflection and encouraged to reach and exceed their potential. Academic staff highlighted various mechanisms by which they take into consideration their students' needs and adjust their teaching methodologies to ensure students progress and make full use of their intellectual capacities.

3.3 Multiple teaching methodologies have been evidenced which include lectures, seminars, laboratory work, practical work, course work, midterm exams, final exams, professional practices/internships and diploma thesis, final comprehensive exam, and projects, and students confirmed they found the balance between theoretical and practical activities to be suitable for their learning.

3.4 Internships are compulsory for bachelor's and master's level education and are scheduled during the last semester of studies. The University offers placements through their centralised systems for students, but students can also make their own internship arrangements with employers and the University will enter a formal relationship with those employers so that the internship can be carried out successfully and within legal protective stipulations. Employers confirmed they receive support from the University in mentoring interns and they are provided with various forms which guide the choice of activities students can be allocated, so as to ensure that there is a level of alignment with the programme learning outcomes.

3.5 Assessments are regulated at institutional level to ensure fair treatment of students and rigorous application of grading procedures. Assessment approaches are explained in

the syllabi with components such as active participation in seminar classes, mid-term exam, course assignment, final exam highlighting percentages which contribute to the final grade. Some disciplines practice continuous assessments which may propose regular (for example, weekly) assignments which are then graded into a whole. None of the documentation seen by the review team explicitly identifies if formative assessments are included, that is assessments that do not count towards a student's overall grade but rather give students a sense of their performance levels and guide their further preparation. The University clarified that during class hours teachers do engage with formative exercises that allow students to gauge how to situate their learning, without there being any negative consequences on the final grades; however, such practices are not formally reported and are kept under teacher supervision alone. Nevertheless, they may be quantified as part of active class participation. The review team believes that there would be benefit in highlighting such practices as part of the syllabi and creating more formality for students to fully grasp the importance of such practices in allowing them to develop learner autonomy in preparation for summative, grade-based assessments.

3.6 Assignments are designed to demonstrate student achievement of the learning outcomes, with the graduation thesis offering a final summative opportunity for the student to demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have developed during their studies. The review team investigated if there is formal oversight for assessment setting which could check assessments for their level suitability and alignment with the programme learning outcomes. It found that while, in the main, assessment setting is the responsibility of the teaching staff delivering the course, the department head issues formal approval for exam papers and course assignments.

3.7 Marking of assignments is conducted anonymously to avoid any positive or negative bias. Marking is done by teaching staff who deliver the course, with no second marking or randomised moderation being organised; however, the IQAC takes an active role in checking the correctness and quality of examination marking by sampling some examination papers. The review panel **recommends** the University to formalise an approach to the setting, moderation and marking of assessments, which can actively involve discipline-level expertise alongside quality management verification.

3.8 Collective feedback is provided to students in explanatory sessions. Examination papers also contain individual feedback which allows the students to understand the areas of improvement they would need to focus on to further develop their performance.

3.9 Plagiarism and other academic integrity breaches are clearly defined in the Code of Academic Integrity and the Code of Ethics and students indicated that they are made aware of, and provided with support to ensure that they fully understand, the requirements and act in accordance with the regulations. Disciplinary actions to be taken in cases deemed to contravene the Code of Ethics are outlined for both staff and students. The Code of Academic Integrity notes that for plagiarism purposes electronic checks may be performed. However, it does not indicate the regularity with which these should be performed or if they are compulsory as a matter of standard procedure or active only when a breach is suspected. The University has clarified that there is the intention to update the Code of Academic Integrity and include more specific requirements which can ensure greater consistency and more targeted action to prevent instances which could result in academic misconduct.

3.10 Exceptional circumstances are considered formally with a Rector's Decision issued on approval. This gives students the opportunity to put forward any situations which may negatively affect their performance, and which can be treated as extenuating.

3.11 Students can appeal their grades, and re-marking or re-sits may be organised as a result of such appeals. The process is clearly outlined in the regulations and the review team was provided with details for each stage. Students also confirmed that they were aware of the process and knew how to proceed in cases where they were not fully convinced after the feedback from their teachers.

3.12 EUT takes careful steps to ensure that it encourages students to take an active role in the teaching and learning processes, with assessment geared towards meeting the learning outcomes. The review team concluded that Standard 1.3: Student-centred learning and assessment is **met**.

## **Standard 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification**

**Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student 'life cycle', eg student admission, progression, recognition and certification.**

### **Findings**

- 4.1 Phases of the student life cycle including student admission, progression and certification at EUT align with national legislation. The processes are defined in internal documents including the Statute, Regulations, Admissions Policy, Student Transfer and Mobility Policy. Staff told the review team that changes to policies and regulations are shared with them, for instance by email and where necessary training also takes place.
- 4.2 Career Advising and the Student Support Office coordinate information activities for prospective students, in cooperation with departments and management authorities, this is supported by the Communication and Public Relations Office. Academic support staff informed the review team that from January 2022 there has been collaboration with Career Advising staff to advise prospective students who have expressed interest in coming to EUT. Students said that following visits by the University to high schools, they were welcomed as individuals by the relevant student office and encouraged to raise further questions. Students told the review team that the University works with them at an early stage, guiding them to make informed choices. EUT emphasised in its SED that mentoring of students starts at the point where interest in studying at the University is expressed and is maintained and continues throughout the student journey to graduation and beyond through the alumni network. The review team concluded that the provision of individualised advice and guidance to prospective students that informs their decision making is a feature of **good practice**.
- 4.3 Information about the academic offer and admission procedures are published online and in the information brochure. There are also mass media information campaigns, open days, as well as registration and orientation weeks for new students.
- 4.4 Academic Senate and Board of Administration approve the criteria for admission for the new academic year based on proposals from departments and Decanates. Study programmes allow enrolment of both Albanian and foreign citizens who meet the required conditions. Applicants must submit all necessary documentation to the Student Registration Office and the status of the student is then obtained by registration and students are provided with a special matriculation number.
- 4.5 EUT recognises prior learning arrangements and credits allowing transfers to EUT from other higher education institutions; this provides the opportunity for programme transfer on programmes which are on the same study cycle. The admissions officer receives requests stipulating which courses and grades students have ahead of being transferred. A final decision is made following a review by the Head of Department and the Recognition Commission at the department. If successful, the student is registered on the study programme.
- 4.6 EUT has the ability to track progression and supports students in a number of ways including tutorial and academic advising, career advising and scholarships. EUT supports students to achieve academically and addresses difficulties they may be facing with academic obligations. Student registration is recorded in many forms including the basic student records register, graduation register and class registers. The University Managing System Information (UMIS) and Learning Management System (LMS) facilitate this process and data is available to identify if a student has not been present in class or for exams. In order to lower withdrawal rates, staff reach out to specific students who require attention, for



instance if they fail to register in classes. Career advising and the Student Support Office work with academic staff to oversee information on student progression. Management staff told the review team that they work to identify those who may be facing difficulties with the intention of intervening early.

4.7 EUT provides an orientation to the institution and the programme of study for new students. This includes an introduction to the learning outcomes of the programme and the various support services and facilities on offer. Students also mentioned that orientation provided the opportunity to meet their Head of Department and professors in order to familiarise themselves ahead of studying. Students felt they 'had always been here (at EUT)' because of the welcoming start.

4.8 EUT recognises student excellence through a number of performance awards including 'Best Bachelor's Degree' and 'Best Master's Degree' each academic year. Those receiving awards are highlighted within the University communication channels and on the website.

4.9 A diploma is awarded to students within six months of graduation if they fulfil the requirements of the teaching schedule and all obligations towards EUT and those of the study programme. Each diploma is registered according to legislation in force before being issued by EUT, and until the diploma is received the students are issued a graduation certificate and transcript. A diploma supplement, consisting of data on the student's achieved qualification, is provided by the Academic Secretariat.

4.10 In conclusion, EUT has regulations across the student life cycle from admissions to progression, recognition and certification. Information is provided to prospective students when they show interest in studying at EUT and students are prepared to start their studies through orientation and induction. The review team concludes that Standard 1.4: Student admission, progression, recognition and certification is **met**.

## Standard 1.5 Teaching staff

**Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.**

### Findings

5.1 Recruitment of teaching staff takes into consideration ministerial requirements and this means that most staff recruited for a teaching position at bachelor's or master's levels will need to hold a PhD qualification. Exceptions apply only for bachelor's and professional study programmes, where master's holders, preferably PhD candidates, may be allocated practice-based teaching, in seminars, for example.

5.2 All recruitment is by open competition, with posts approved in the Academic Senate and Board of Administration based on departmental proposals which consider existing and future needs. Responsibilities are clearly outlined in the recruitment announcements and the importance of teaching is highlighted accordingly through the workload descriptors provided.

5.3 Employees enter a contractual relationship with the EUT under Albanian labour laws. For part-time staff, who also have other employment responsibilities with other employers, the EUT requires that staff submit an approval from their main employer which explicitly states that staff are allowed to undertake the academic part-time role.

5.4 Teaching staff hold appropriate qualifications and are competent in the disciplines of their teaching workload. All teaching staff also undertake research activities which allow them to keep up to date with their specialities, further developing their expertise and connecting to other specialists within their disciplines. All staff also undergo pedagogical training to continuously support their methodological expertise.

5.5 EUT has expressed digitalisation as one of its key priorities and promotes technology-supported teaching methodologies. The review team heard that EUT is building on the COVID-19 pandemic experience which has accelerated the use of innovative teaching methodologies with educational technology support. Across its programmes, EUT uses a range of software, which staff have been trained to use, to give their students a modern pioneering educational experience. Employers confirmed that graduates of EUT are exposed to and familiar with a number of technological tools which gives them a stronger competitive edge in comparison with graduates from other universities.

5.6 Teaching staff who also teach on English-medium programmes are broadly fluent in English, many having had long periods of academic exchange abroad in national contexts or institutions which use English consistently. Although mostly English-medium programmes are taken by Albanian students, staff have noted their awareness of multilingual and multicultural classroom pedagogies and students have said that code-switching is not admissible, and staff encourage them to constantly use English although the temptation to revert to Albanian might be very strong.

5.7 EUT supports teaching staff with development opportunities, both as part of the institutional staff development plan, under which collective training opportunities are organised at EUT, and by encouraging staff to identify activities which can contribute to further enhancing their individual academic profiles. The review team saw evidence of training organised at EUT which was well attended and reported as useful by staff. EUT also confirmed that funding is earmarked for staff exchanges and many staff members have travelled to universities based in Europe and the United States, supported by EUT. Engagement with a number of European and international research projects and

conferences also contributes to staff development. Teaching staff also confirmed that they can apply for sabbaticals if they intend to take time out from teaching to devote to research, and a number of staff reported to have benefited from sabbaticals of one or two semesters, having found the approval process straightforward.

5.8 There is a staff appraisal system which combines self-evaluation, evaluations by students and evaluations by management, through the Head of Department, a staff member appointed by the Head of the Department or an external evaluator. Staff appraisal is also informed by IQAC monitoring and a follow-up through the Rector's committee. EUT promotes a system of open lectures on desirable topics which feed into the appraisal system. The review team noted that in the absence of a peer-observation or collegiate evaluation system, open lectures had the potential to relevantly supplement such an appraisal component and found this arrangement to be suitable.

5.9 EUT uses a template which allows staff to include all activities, such as teaching, assessments, supervisions, internship coordination, research publications and outside engagements. The workload template is based on ministerial criteria which the EUT needs to monitor closely for all programmes approved for delivery. Although the template does not explicitly prompt a reflection on development, staff have noted that whenever they identify a developmental need, they can approach their department head or other services to see how best to put together a plan for action. The review team is of the opinion that the appraisal system could be improved if a stronger developmental purpose were to be made evident through the forms utilised. This would mean that regularly and consistently staff would explicitly consider their needs and have a formal opportunity to discuss them within their departments. This could also make planning and budgeting for individual development easier, and it would better streamline any collective needs identified from the bottom up, in order to complement any strategic development directions established institutionally.

5.10 The workload is closely monitored, and staff confirmed that they consider the workload to be well balanced allowing them to perform all their tasks in a timely manner, without any major pressure and within the limits of the working week. Scholarly activities are an important part of the responsibilities of teaching staff, with staff being encouraged to bring research advancements into the classroom. Some members of staff are also connected professionally, not just academically, to their disciplines having taken up industry roles.

5.11 Teaching staff at EUT are competent, hold relevant qualifications and stay connected to the disciplines, either through industry exposure or research activities. Staff are encouraged to maintain an international profile and to engage with exchanges, projects and conferences abroad to ensure they are allowing their students to benefit from up-to-date discipline information. The review team therefore concludes that Standard 1.5: Teaching staff is met.

## Standard 1.6 Learning resources and student support

**Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.**

### Findings

6.1 EUT states that it provides students with necessary infrastructure and resources to support the learning experience. This includes auditoriums equipped with audiovisual equipment, computer laboratories, laboratories related to arts, engineering and technical medical science, and a gym.

6.2 Improvements to the learning environment are supported by the resources accompanying participation in international projects. Departments involved in the projects participate in the decision-making process for learning resources or new infrastructure investments.

6.3 The library provides a wide collection of literature, and e-resources that include Edward Elgar Publishing, ASTM Compass, Sage, and EBSCO. The library is open six days a week (Monday to Saturday) and all staff and students have access to the materials and quiet study space. In addition, students are provided access to PCs which can be used for assignments or accessing the e-resources. Training and support for accessing academic literature is available from the library staff and teachers, and courses in academic writing and research methods are also provided.

6.4 Tutoring and academic advising take place throughout the academic year. However, the review panel heard from students that they did not have a specific tutor, although they felt they are helped by academics more generally. The role and responsibility of the academic advisers is defined in a document, and each member of full-time academic staff supports a group of students. The review team heard that prior to the COVID-19 restrictions there had been a system of tutoring whereby students had a named tutor but that this had not yet been re-introduced for all students. The review team **recommends** that prompt steps are taken to ensure that the individual tutoring system is consistently implemented for the support of all students.

6.5 Academic support is also available to students from the Students Support Office who provide information on study opportunities and inform students of university policy. Students seeking support may also contact administrative staff. Departmental coordinators are frequently the first point of contact for students requiring information about their academic obligations, deadlines, or general questions about the regulations.

6.6 EUT has determined that the main reasons for students to drop out of their studies are academic or financial. In cases of financial difficulty, it may be possible to arrange a new payment schedule that meets the needs of the student. Full or partial scholarships are available, including financial support for excellent students and students who belong to disadvantaged social groups.

6.7 Scholarships and assistance are available for students with disabilities. Special needs or requests from students with disabilities are regularly transmitted to the meeting of the Student Council, or to the Rector for further action. The review team was made aware of examples where needs were met for students with disabilities, such as access to seminar rooms on the ground floor.

6.8 Additional support is available to students who face difficulty fulfilling academic obligations. In order to reduce the dropout rate, the Student Support Office staff and

academic advisers try to proactively identify those cases and contact students to inform them of their options and the potential sources of support available to them.

6.9 Students are provided with mobility opportunities, primarily through the Erasmus+ programme and foreign partner universities' cooperation agreements. Academic support staff told the review team that opportunities for students, such as these, are shared through emails and on social media.

6.10 The Career Advising Office works closely with the career advisers of each faculty or department. It provides support to students for the preparation of job applications and interviews and assists the faculties with the organisation of the EUT Open Day and Job Fairs. It can also help with mentoring and networking and tracks the career destinations of graduates. During the final year of studies, EUT provides student internship opportunities with organisations and private companies with whom they have cooperation agreements.

6.11 The Learning Management System (LMS) is a system that aims to improve the quality, transparency and efficiency of student services. Students can submit and track their requests online and communication takes place between offices through the system.

6.12 EUT organises activities both social and academic in which students can participate, providing an opportunity to improve social skills, expand networks and apply knowledge obtained, all of which are beneficial when applying to careers.

6.13 The IQAC (Internal Quality Assurance Commission) seeks student feedback on the learning facilities and resources through focus groups that evaluate student satisfaction with different aspects of student life, quality of teaching and learning resources. These focus groups also check whether students are aware of support activities and find them useful. In addition, this provides students the opportunity to suggest what they want to see improved.

6.14 In conclusion, EUT provides students with support and resources in many ways such as the Learning Management System, Student Support Office, Careers Advising Office and study spaces. Scholarships provide access to higher education to a more diverse student population and support is provided to students with disabilities. The review team therefore concludes that Standard 1.6: Learning resources and student support is **met**.

## **Standard 1.7 Information management**

**Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.**

### **Findings**

7.1 EUT has a number of data management systems, including the University Managing System Information (UMIS), a financial management system for students' contracts with the institution, a library system, Co-operative Online Bibliographic System and Services (COBISS), and a virtual learning environment.

7.2 UMIS is the main system used to manage data related to student admissions, personal data of students, students' status, and academic records. It is used to collect and analyse statistical data as required by the Ministry of Education and Sport. Its main modules are:

- Student Management System, which contains the personal information, course and programme registrations, and marks of each student until graduation
- Study Programmes and Course Management, which records information about study programmes and courses, including the associated credits, registration, and assessment criteria
- Report Generator together with Microsoft Reporting Services facilitates the gathering and processing of data, to produce internal and external reports, including those required by the Ministry of Education and Sport
- Web Module, which allows students to access their records and to register for courses
- Timetable Module, which schedules the teaching hours and provides information on each course, their class hours, the location, teacher, and other relevant information
- eBooks Module, which controls registration for the library's books pool.

7.3 Data entry into the system is the responsibility of the Student Registration Office and the Academic Secretariat.

7.4 The University has a learning management system - UET LMS - that is based on an existing open-source programme. It provides all the usual functions and is used as a source of student performance data. Student attendance at classes is monitored, together with pass rates, graduation rates, progression data, and other aspects of student performance and achievement. The data is used to identify potential issues, so that action may be taken.

7.5 Academic staff performance data is collected from the two-yearly self-evaluation. The data includes teaching hours and courses taught, research publications and projects, and administrative responsibilities. The data is collected by the Human Resources Office and compiled into a report that goes to the Rector, Vice-Rector and Administrator. The data in the report is discussed with each Dean of Faculty and Head of Department and any deficiencies in individuals' performance are addressed.

7.6 Online surveys and focus groups are used to gain student satisfaction data. The surveys ask questions about the courses and the performance of the staff who teach them.

The data is analysed by the IT Office and used by the Heads of Department who take action with any member of staff if necessary.

7.7 Focus groups with students are conducted every year by the IQAC. The aim is to gather information about broader aspects of the student experience, including extracurricular activities and services, and support from administrative units. Following analysis by IQAC, a detailed report listing the key issues that arose from focus groups is produced and sent to the senior management.

7.8 The most recent external review of EUT, Report of the Institutional Review of EUT – ASCAL, recommended that 'the University should develop a clear strategy and process for data collection related to employment rate to strengthen the development of study programmes and the Alumni Organization'. In response, the University developed a strategy for the collection of employment data and to develop the alumni association. Together, these initiatives aim to maintain closer relationships with the alumni. Questionnaires are also presented each term and before graduation; after graduation questionnaires are used to track the careers of alumni. EUT has also participated in the international project, Graduates Advancement and Development of University capacities in Albania (GRADUA), in which graduates have been provided with increased support to help them easily integrate in the labour market.

7.9 EUT has effective processes in place for the collection of data, its analysis and use to inform decision making. As described above, data is gathered from a rich variety of sources, analysed by the IT Office, and provided to heads of department and others, as required. An annual report is generated which provides a comprehensive breakdown of student statistical data, including comparative statistics on study programmes such as regarding pass rate, graduation rate, employability, admission GPA scores and others. The team concluded that the wide range of management information collected, analysed and used to inform operational practice and decision making is a feature of **good practice**.

7.10 Some of the data collected and analysed is used as key performance indicators. Key performance indicators for the faculties include the number of students submitted to each level of programme, progression and completion data, graduation rate, and visibility in the community, which is measured in terms of media coverage, participation in professional events and the number of cooperation agreements. There are also key performance indicators for research that include the number and quality of publications and presentations at conferences.

7.11 In conclusion, the review team determined that EUT collects, analyses and uses relevant information for the effective management of its programmes and other activities and that therefore Standard 7: Information management is **met**.

## Standard 1.8 Public information

**Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.**

### Findings

8.1 EUT undertakes activities to share clear and accurate information publicly and uses a range of channels to communicate with students, university stakeholders and the wider public. EUT's website is an example of one significant channel of communication used and this publicly displays information on study qualifications, academic staff, news and research.

8.2 In order to manage the information on the website, the website administration specifies a person in charge of the information; content is approved by the Director of Communication and Public Relations. The review team noted, and was made aware of by EUT staff, errors on the English version of the website. Senior management informed the team that there had been technical difficulties when changing the language on the website. Nevertheless it remained the case that not all information published on the website could be considered accurate. Although the errors and inconsistencies observed were not sufficient to mislead the public, the situation indicates that systems for checking were not as robust as they could be. The review team therefore **recommends** EUT to strengthen the approach to institutional oversight of publicly published information in order to mitigate the risk of inaccurate or inconsistent information being released in the public domain.

8.3 EUT uses social media to share information on opportunities available to students. In addition, physical and visual materials such as brochures and promotional messaging are used. To provide broader information on the University and its history a study guide is published every year while also providing information on matters such as studying abroad and scholarships.

8.4 EUT hold events which put them in contact with students and prospective students, such as open weeks introducing the University to stakeholders, job fairs connecting students to future career opportunities and orientation week, which takes place ahead of the new academic year. During the visit, students mentioned EUT visits to their high schools had introduced them to EUT and the programmes of studies offered.

8.5 Students can find information on their progress and exams through the UMIS which they have access to once their enrolment is completed electronically by Registry.

8.6 Students confirmed that they receive information on social media channels, through emails and on the website. Students also mentioned that the LMS is informative, providing them the opportunity to communicate with professors and help them understand how to complain or appeal, if needed.

8.7 EUT publishes information on its activities across many different channels to inform the public, students and prospective students of their offering. Although the review team recommends that EUT would benefit from a strengthened institutional oversight of publicly published information in order to mitigate risk, the errors and inconsistencies in public information were not sufficiently serious as to mislead the public. The team therefore concludes that, overall, Standard 1.8: Public information is **met**.



### **Standard 1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes**

**Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.**

#### **Findings**

- 9.1 Departments carry the responsibility for coordinating the study programmes they offer, to develop their curricula to ensure compliance with the principles and criteria set out in regulatory acts, and to ensure their updating with relevant new developments in science and labour market demands. Requests for changes to curricula normally originate, therefore, in the departments. Proposals are reviewed by the Decanate, before submission for approval to the EUT Academic Senate, after consultation with the Curricula Office. The Department also consults its Labour Market Board. The proposal must receive a final approval from the Academic Senate and the Board of Administration.
- 9.2 Programmes of study at EUT undergo periodic evaluation, with the intention of improving institutional academic performance. The Curricula Office coordinates the work with the departments for the development of the existing curricula, in accordance with the requirements of the labour market and any changes in legislation.
- 9.3 Information that feeds into the annual evaluation includes the results of student surveys and focus groups that is analysed by IQAC and reported to faculties and departments. Student opinion is also sought through the departmental-level meetings with students. The suitability of programmes for the labour market is assessed by employability statistics, prepared by the Alumni Office, and input from the relevant Department's Labour Market Board.
- 9.4 As described in paragraph 9.9, programmes of study at EUT undergo periodic reaccreditation by the Albanian Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency (HEQAA) and other agencies. There is no separate internal process for comprehensive periodic review. However, programmes undergo an evaluation process on an annual basis.
- 9.5 Systematic annual monitoring of the curriculum and its delivery are described in the Internal Quality Assurance Manual. The curriculum is assessed in terms of its alignment with societal development and the changing needs of the Albanian, regional, and international labour market. Example reports on syllabus monitoring activity by IQAC identify areas for improvement.
- 9.6 The delivery of the curriculum, in terms of the teaching, learning and assessment activities, is evaluated to ensure that the methods employed are appropriate, up to date and effective. Student performance data is analysed, together with information from student surveys and focus groups. Example reports for individual programmes show the evaluation is detailed and discerning, with clear identification of areas requiring action.
- 9.7 IQAC also prepares reports summarising institution-wide performance, such as feedback from the online student survey, and reviews of the mid-term and final examinations.
- 9.8 There are also defined evaluation processes for research and student support services.

9.9 Following the annual evaluation, any required changes are made to the programmes of study. Albanian law allows higher education institutions to change up to 20% of any single programme. The changes must be formally approved by the Academic Senate, must be accurately described in the diploma, and the Ministry is informed within six months from the start of the academic year. If the changes to a curriculum are more substantial, the institution must formally request the reorganisation of the programme and obtain the approval of the Ministry of Education and Sports. Any changes, small or large, must be recorded on the University Study programmes webpage.

9.10 The decision to close an academic programme following an evaluation is normally related to a drop in student numbers, reduced employability of the graduates, or other economic considerations.

9.11 EUT monitors and, within the boundaries of the regulatory framework of Albania, periodically reviews its programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and that they are responsive to the needs of students and society. The monitoring and review processes result in clear action planning and there is evidence that these lead to improvements. The review team concludes, therefore, that Standard 9: Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes is **met**.

## **Standard 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance**

**Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.**

### **Findings**

- 10.1 Albania's national framework includes external evaluation of higher education institutions and periodic accreditation of their programmes of study by the Albanian Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency (ASCAL).
- 10.2 ASCAL is the responsible body for conducting the evaluation process for the accreditation of higher education institutions and the study programmes they offer, as well as ongoing monitoring of their quality.
- 10.3 EUT is subject to cyclic institutional review conducted by government bodies such as the Ministry of Education and Sport. These reviews cover the student-facing university infrastructure and result in student enrolment quotas for each academic year. The University was reviewed in 2009 and 2016. In 2019, after its reorganisation and the opening of two new faculties, EUT underwent a partial institutional review, to extend its existing accreditation to the new faculties.
- 10.4 New programmes are accredited prior to issuing of the first diplomas to successful students, after which they are reviewed on a cyclical basis. At the time of the review visit, EUT had 17 study programmes undergoing the initial accreditation and seven undergoing periodic accreditation.
- 10.5 The Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES) is responsible for the evaluation of study programmes prior to their licensing or reorganisation. The reviews are conducted by ad hoc groups within the Ministry and include experienced reviewers in the respective field of study. The relevant department is responsible for addressing any recommendations set out in the review report.
- 10.6 Cyclical external review of programmes at EUT is carried out by ASCAL, who are experienced individuals in the field of the programme of study.
- 10.7 The Educational Services Centre (ESC), a public institution that reports to the MoES, monitors the correct application of admission criteria. At the beginning of each year, the EUT Student Registration Office submits a list of registered students in the first, second and third cycle of each programme. ESC provides each student with a unique matriculation number when all the legal admission criteria are fulfilled.
- 10.8 EUT undergoes audit reviews every year which are concluded with an annual report. For financial statements of each year the independent statutory auditor gives their opinion regarding the financial position, performance, compliance with the required accounting standards, the appropriate use of resources for the enhancement of the quality of teaching, research and services for students.
- 10.9 In 2017, Value the Person, a global consultancy company, was invited to undertake an organisational development assignment aiming to assist the University to significantly enhance overall management and profitability, in addition to providing an organisational platform for successfully achieving objectives. Information was gathered, recommendations were produced and then implemented.
- 10.10 Albania recently introduced a National Student Survey, carried out by the HEQAA. This will result in an analytical report of the questionnaire results together with institutional

and comparative analysis for different indicators of public interest and policymaking. The report must be made public and available to HEIs, the accreditation board and the MoES in decision-making and policymaking. The first survey was conducted in 2019; the results have not yet been published, since an earthquake in December 2019 caused repercussions for the entire system. The 2022 survey is currently underway.

10.11 In keeping with the legislative framework of Albania, EUT participates in a variety of cyclic external reviews and audits. These include both institutional, unit and academic programme levels. The review cycles require the relevant department or unit responding to recommendations and reporting on the steps taken to address them.

10.12 As an alternative to institutional or programme review by ASCAL, Albanian higher education institutions may apply for the institutional or study programme external review to be conducted by one of the ENQA member agencies. It is a measure of the progress that EUT has made in recent years with the establishment of policy, structures and an institutional culture of quality assurance, that the University sought international review in the form of this current UK QAA for Institutional Review to supplement reaccreditation of individual programmes.

10.13 Quality assurance at EUT is a continuous process that is aligned to the cycle of external review. The progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.

10.14 According to Albanian law, the validity of any institutional accreditation or programme accreditation may last no longer than six years. Around one year prior to the expiry of the current accreditation validity, an internal programme review starts. This process includes an evaluation of the programme against a set of standards and criteria defined by ASCAL. The report includes identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the programme in preparation for the external re-accreditation process.

10.15 Following an external review or accreditation, the reports, together with any recommendations for quality enhancement, are considered by the Accreditation Board at HEQAA. Those recommendations that are to be included in the accreditation decision are then transmitted to the University and are considered mandatory.

10.16 Recommendations received from external review, whether institution or programme, are discussed in meetings of the EUT Rectorate, department and Decanate and an action plan is agreed. Progress with the action plans is monitored internally by IQAC and Rectorate, and externally by the Accreditation Board.

10.17 The review team found awareness of external review recommendations to be widespread among staff at all levels, including in both academic and support units, as well as the processes for addressing them. Teaching staff reported that the recommendations were typically the main topic of discussion at the weekly departmental meetings. The relevant documents were shared with staff, although this normally happened after they became available online. Support staff also have weekly meetings in their units and the discussion will include any relevant external reviews.

10.18 In conclusion, the University undergoes external quality assurance, reports are produced and submitted and there is commitment to improvement based on recommendations set. The review team therefore concludes that Standard 10: Cyclical external quality assurance is **met**.

## Glossary

### **Action plan**

A plan developed by the institution after the QAA review report has been published, which is signed off by the head of the institution. It responds to the recommendations in the report and gives any plans to capitalise on the identified good practice.

### **Annual monitoring**

Checking a process or activity every year to see whether it meets expectations for standards and quality. Annual reports normally include information about student achievements and may comment on the evaluation of courses and modules.

### **Collaborative arrangement**

A formal arrangement between a degree-awarding body and another higher education provider. These may be degree-awarding bodies with which the institution collaborates to deliver higher education qualifications on behalf of the degree-awarding bodies. Alternatively, they may be other delivery organisations who deliver part or all of the institution's higher education programmes.

### **Condition(s)**

Review teams set conditions where only one (or at most) two of the IQR standards are not fully met. They will only do this if they consider that the weaknesses can be rectified in a short space of time and in a way that can be sufficiently analysed through a brief desk-based exercise following specific actions undertaken by the institution.

### **Degree-awarding body**

Institutions that have authority, for example from a national agency, to issue their own awards.

### **Desk-based analysis**

An analysis by the review team of evidence, submitted by the institution, which enables the review team to identify its initial findings and subsequently supports the review team as it develops its review findings.

### **Enhancement**

See **quality enhancement**.

### **European Standards and Guidelines**

For details, including the full text on each standard, see [www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg](http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg).

### **Examples of practice**

A list of policies and practices that a review team may use when considering the extent to which an institution meets the standards for review. The examples should be considered as a guide only, in acknowledgment that not all of them will be appropriate for all institutions.

### **Externality**

The use of experts from outside a higher education provider, such as external examiners or external advisers, to assist in quality assurance procedures.

### **Facilitator**

The member of staff identified by the institution to act as the principal point of contact for the QAA officer and who will be available during the review visit to assist with any questions or requests for additional documentation.

**Good practice**

A feature of good practice is a process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to the institution's higher education provision.

**Lead student representative**

An optional voluntary role that is designed to allow students at the institution to play a central part in the organisation of the review.

**Oversight**

Objective scrutiny, monitoring and quality assurance of educational provision.

**Peer reviewers**

Members of the review team who make the decisions in relation to the review of the institution. Peer reviewers have experience of managing quality and academic standards in higher education or have recent experience of being a student in higher education.

**Periodic review**

An internal review of one or more programmes of study, undertaken by institutions periodically (typically once every five years), using nationally agreed reference points, to confirm that the programmes are of an appropriate academic standard and quality. The process typically involves experts from other higher education providers. It covers areas such as the continuing relevance of the programme, the currency of the curriculum and reference materials, the employability of graduates and the overall performance of students. Periodic review is one of the main processes whereby institutions can continue to assure themselves about the academic quality and standards of their awards.

**Programme of study**

An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification. UK higher education programmes must be approved and validated by UK degree-awarding bodies.

**Quality enhancement**

The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported.

**QAA officer**

The person appointed by QAA to manage the review programme and to act as the liaison between the review team and the institution.

**Quality assurance**

The systematic monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching, and the processes that support them, to make sure that the standards of academic awards meet the necessary standards, and that the quality of the student learning experience is being safeguarded and improved.

**Recognition of prior learning**

Assessing previous learning that has occurred in any of a range of contexts including school, college and university, and/or through life and work experiences.

**Recommendation**

Review teams make recommendations where they agree that an institution should consider developing or changing a process or a procedure in order to improve the institution's higher education provision.

**Reference points**

Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

**Self-evaluation document**

A self-evaluation report by an institution. The submission should include information about the institution as well as an assessment of the effectiveness of its quality systems.

**Student submission**

A document representing student views that describes what it is like to be a student at the institution, and how students' views are considered in the institution's decision-making and quality assurance processes.

**Validation**

The process by which an institution ensures that its academic programmes meet expected academic standards and that students will be provided with appropriate learning opportunities. It may also be applied to circumstances where a degree-awarding institution gives approval for its awards to be offered by a partner institution or organisation.

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2022  
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB  
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Email: [accreditation@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:accreditation@qaa.ac.uk)  
Website: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)