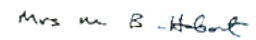# Institutional Review of
Higher Education Institutions
in Albania

Report of the Institutional Review
of the Armed Forces Academy
May 2017
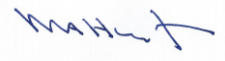
Review Team:

1   Mrs Mandy Hobart   Lead Reviewer

2   Professor Mark Hunt   Reviewer

3   Dr Benita Stavre   Reviewer

Date: 25 to 26 May 2017

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About this review

The overall aim of Institutional Review is to assess the extent to which each HEI meets the Albanian State Quality Standards, which came into force in 2011. Institutional Review is a peer-review process with each review team composed of a mix of UK reviewers appointed by QAA and Albanian reviewers appointed by APAAL. The review team is led by a QAA Reviewer.

The resulting reports will serve not only for institutional accreditation based on the extent to which the HEI meets the standards, but will also inform the HEIs, Albanian government, the public and students of how each HEI meets the standards. This report also helps the HEI to identify priorities for enhancement (the process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported). The Albanian State Quality Standards have been grouped under five 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 action in progress and weaknesses for each Evaluation Area, together with a judgement as to how well the HEI meets the standards. The Judgements that the reviewers may assign are: standards are fully met; standards are substantially met; standards are partly met; or standards are not met.

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

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

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

The context of the review

The Armed Forces Academy (AAF) is a public higher education institution and part of the Ministry of Defence educational system, delivering and managing its national higher education provision. Its mission is the 'Education and qualification of military and civilian personnel at all levels of management of the Armed Forces as well as other institutions of security…in the field of security and defence'. The Academy delivers its programmes in partnership with universities in Albania and abroad and with NATO partner institutions.

The origins of military education in Albania date back to the founding of the new Albanian state with the first military school being established in 1926 followed by the Royal Military Officers School in 1928. After a period of occupation during the Second World War, a new 'Higher Military School' was established in May 1958 following a decision by the Council of Ministers, under the command of Colonel Thomas Xhixho. The first Academy programmes included social sciences studies; however, its main focus was on a three-year military professional education programme.

In September 1961, following a further Decision of the Council of Ministers, the Higher Military School was renamed the Military Academy, with a mission to deliver 'senior military education'. For several years the Academy continued to deliver the three-year military education programme, along with a one-year preparatory course for officers. In January 1966, the Military Academy switched its focus to preparing officers for new roles including strategic and logistical command. Following the restructuring of the army in 1982-83, the Academy introduced a selection procedure for staff which reflected requirements for academic expertise, and military and scientific research became part of the Academy's mission. A separate structure for Military Scientific Studies was created which undertook research into the military history of Albania and associated emerging military priorities. Degree provision has been offered by the Academy since the late 1970s, and the Academy has awarded 147 doctorates, 119 Master of Science and 112 master's degrees. Around 7,500 officers have studied at the Academy and gone on to fulfil senior roles within the Armed Forces. However, at the time of the review degree studies had been suspended as a result of restructuring and review by the Ministry of Defence.

Summary report

The Armed Forces Academy (the Academy) is a public institution with a campus located in Tirana on a military base which also houses the Ministry of Defence and the Doctrine Research Centre. The Academy has a remit to support students to undertake first-cycle programmes at universities in Albania and abroad, and until 2014 delivered second-cycle and third-cycle programmes until these were suspended pending a review of programmes as part of the strategy of the Ministry of Defence for the longer term development of the Armed Forces 2016-25. The Academy has a single Faculty of Security and Defence which comprises the Department of Operations, the Department of Leadership and Social Sciences, the Department Strategy and History, the Foreign Languages Centre and the Department of New Officer Preparation. The Academy was granted special status by the Ministry of Education in March 2017 under Article 60 of the Law on Higher Education. The Academy has 88 students enrolled on full-time first-cycle programmes studying at other higher universities, as well as students on language programmes and on the Higher Officers Course, Command and General Staff Course, Captains Career Course and the Officer Course. Non-degree courses last between four and 10 months.

A self-evaluation report (SED) was developed by a team at the Academy which included senior officers, academic and support staff and a student representative. Separate reports were drafted for each of the Areas, and following review and discussion by the team, combined into the single self-evaluation report and approved by the Rector.

The visit took place over one and a half days on 25 and 26 May The review team was made up of two senior higher education reviewers from the UK and one experienced higher education member of staff from an Albanian university. The review team was supported by the Review Manager and a note-taker provided by the Albanian Accreditation Agency for Higher Education. The review team received a self-evaluation report and the portfolio of supporting evidence eight weeks in advance of the review visit, later supplemented by additional documentation requested. In all, some 110 documents enabled the team to familiarise itself with the structure, policies, management procedures and nature of teaching and research activity undertaken by the Academy. Evidence included the Statute of the Academy, Academic Regulations, the Ethical Code, annual reports, cooperation agreements, evidence of deliberative meetings, the Institution Development Strategy, student handbooks and student and staff surveys.

The review team met with the Rector, senior managers, students, lecturers, administrative and support staff during the review visit. Discussion supported the clarification of procedures, responsibilities, current provision and viewpoints. Notes were taken at all meetings. As part of a tour of the main campus the review team viewed the library, teaching areas, language laboratories, the museum and sports facilities. The team was provided with a presentation on the Simulation Centre and was able to see students engaging with simulations.

The Academy has clear procedures for the management and organisation of its courses. The provision offered by the Foreign Languages centre along with the range of partnership agreements with universities and NATO institutions, effectively supports military personnel in their professional and academic development and represents good practice. The lack of ongoing support for third-cycle students to complete their doctoral qualifications, while a result of external decision, represents a weakness which should be addressed as a priority. The Academy is recommended to explore options with partner organisations to facilitate students to complete their studies, though the team acknowledges this will require Ministry support and approval. ***Chapter III Standards I.1- I.6, Standard II.1, Standard II.3***, and ***Standards III.1- 4*** are substantially met.

The responsibilities for resources are clearly set out in the Statute and Regulations of the Academy of the Armed Forces. The review team identified good practice in the range of academic and practical facilities available to support student learning, including the high-quality language laboratories and teaching resources and the museum resource, which provides historical materials and context to support military strategy and leadership studies. There were no weaknesses or recommendations identified. The review team affirms the plans in place to upgrade the central heating systems and to ensure emergency exits in all areas meet standards requirements. The team concluded that *Chapter III Standard IIV.1-4*, *Standard II.2, Standards VI.1-3, Standard VII.1-6, Standards V.1-2* are substantially met.

The Academy has regulated processes to ensure the management of its provision. The team considers the externality offered by the Lessons-Learned Centre which serves to improve the quality of programme management and delivery through impartial evaluation of provision is good practice. The academic staff have limited opportunities to engage in research which would support postgraduate provision, which along with the impact on potential to inform the development of new programmes to meet future military expertise represent weaknesses. The identification of appropriate higher education provision for validation based on current provision and curriculum links, and the re-establishment of a research unit to support postgraduate achievement are recommended. The review team did not identify any affirmations in this area. The team found the requirements of *Chapter I Standard I.1-12* to be substantially met.

The responsibilities for the management of Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research are set out in the statute and regulations. The review team did not identify any aspect of good practice. Weaknesses were identified in the Academy 's limited staff research infrastructure which has been unable to prioritise scientific research and to evaluate the outcomes in scientific projects. The review team recommends that the Academy works with the Ministry of Education and Science to develop a research plan which builds staff research capacity, promotes research outcomes, manages dissemination and assesses research performance. The review team did not identify any affirmations. *Chapter I Standards II.1-4, Standards I.1-8* were found to be substantially met.

The Academy is committed to meeting its students' needs, which it undertakes by engaging students in the decision-taking bodies of the Academy, providing accessible teaching, resources, tutoring and support. It provides both curricular and extracurricular on campus facilities for its students. The team affirms that the Academy and its staff have identified the need for improving electronic and online services provided to students and staff which is being supported by a programme to digitise library resources. No examples of good practices, weaknesses or recommendations were identified for this evaluation area. *Chapter I Standards III.1-9* were found to be fully met.

Summary of findings

Good practice

The review team identified the following features of good practice:

- the high quality and interactive Foreign Languages Centre provision which supports military personnel to study abroad (paragraph 1.8; *Chapter III Standard II.1*)
- the range of partnership agreements with universities and NATO institutions, effectively supports military personnel in their professional and academic development (paragraph 1.12; *Chapter III Standard III.2* and *Standard III.3*)
- the museum resources which provide historical materials and provide context to support military strategy and leadership studies (paragraph 2.12; *Chapter III Standard VII.4*)
- the extensive range of academic and practical facilities available to support student learning including the high quality language laboratories, high tech warfare Simulation Centre and the extensive range of teaching resources (paragraph 2.13; *Chapter III Standard V.1*)
- the externality offered by the Lessons-Learned Centre serves to improve the quality of programme management and delivery through impartial evaluation of provision (paragraph 3.8; *Chapter I Standard I.1* and *Chapter I Standard I.10*).

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weaknesses:

- the lack of systems to support the registered doctoral studies students to complete their studies (paragraph 1.10; *Chapter III Standard II.3*)
- limited opportunities for staff to engage in research which would support their teaching and the future supervision of master's and doctorate students (paragraph 3.12; *Chapter I Standard I.9*)
- the Academy delivers no full higher education programmes, and is unable to develop and review provision, or focus research activities on enhancement of postgraduate studies (paragraph 3.13; *Chapter I Standard I.8* and *Standard I.9*)
- the Academy's limited staff research infrastructure which has been unable to prioritise scientific research and to evaluate the outcomes in scientific projects (paragraph 4.10; *Chapter II Standard I.1-8*).

Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendations:

- the Academy explore options to facilitate registered PhD students to complete their third-cycle studies (High priority) (paragraph 1.10; *Chapter III Standard II.3*)
- that the Academy seek to re-establish a research unit to support the development and delivery of higher education (High priority) (paragraph 3.12; *Chapter I Standard I.9*)
- the identification of appropriate higher education provision for delivery based on validation of current practice-related courses at graduate diploma or certificate level (High priority) (paragraph 3.13; *Chapter I Standard I.9*)

- to develop a research plan which builds staff research capacity, promotes research outcomes, manages dissemination and assesses research performance (High priority) (paragraph 4.10; ***Chapter II Standard I.1-8***).

Affirmation of action being taken

The review team affirms the following actions already in progress:

- the plans in place to improve both emergency exits and the heating system (paragraph 2.14; ***Chapter III Standard V.1***)
- the need for improving electronic and online services provided to students and staff which is being supported by a programme to digitally store resources (paragraph 5.6; ***Chapter I Standard III.5***).

Summary of judgements for each Evaluation Area

1   The Standards for the Organisation and its Management are **substantially met**.
2   The Standards for Resourcing are **substantially met**.
3   The Standards for the Curriculum are **substantially 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 Council that at the Armed Forces Academy the State Quality Standards are **substantially met**.

Detailed report

Evaluation Area 1: The Organisation and its Management

1.1 The Armed Forces Academy is a public institution which provides programmes to support the professional development of military personnel and civilians who work with the military services. **[2; 5; 6; M2]** The Academy is responsible to the Ministry of Defence who provide its budget, appoint the senior staff and approve student numbers and admissions criteria. The Academy is also recognised by the Ministry of Education and Science. **[5; 6; 2]** The Statute and Regulations currently in place were approved by the Academic Senate in December 2016 and March 2017 respectively, and reflect the precepts of Article 132 of the Law on Higher Education. All programmes, approval of curricula and of programme delivery are managed in accordance with the regulations. **[5; 6; M2]** The AAF received recognition by the Ministry of Education and Science in March 2017 as an institution of higher education with special status under Article 60 of Law on Higher Education. **[M2; M3]** [*Chapter III Standard I.1*]

1.2 The organisation and structure of the Academy is clearly set out in the Statute and Regulations. **[5; 6; 7; 17]** The Academic Senate is the senior collegiate body within the Academy and is chaired by the Rector, who, under the terms of the Statute, must be a senior military officer appointed by the Ministry of Defence. **[5; 18; 73]** The Rector is appointed for a four-year period, which may be extended for a further four years only. **[5; 6]** The Senate is chaired by the Rector, with other members elected by academic staff also for a period of four years. All members of the Senate are required to hold higher degrees and academic titles such as Professor or Doctor and should have a postgraduate degree preferably from a European university or that of a member country of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development. **[5 Article 24; M2; 8]** The Head of Faculty/Dean is also a Ministry of Defence appointment and oversees the work of the Department of Operations, the Department of Leadership and Social Science, the Department of Strategy and History, the Foreign Languages Centre and the Department of New Officer Preparation. **[2; 5; 6]** [*Chapter III Standard II.1*]

1.3 As a public institution, the Academy is funded by the State, and receives its budget from the Ministry of Defence, and has clear procedures for the management of its budget. **[5]** The Administrator, who is nominated by the Board of Administration and approved by the Ministry of Defence, is responsible for drafting the annual and mid-term budgets based on information supplied by the Faculty and its Departments, as well as administrative departments. **[28; 78; M3; M5; M6]** Budgets are reviewed by the Senate and approved by and the Board of Administration as the senior administrative body, prior to being submitted to the Ministry of Defence for final approval. **[5; 6; 7]** Financial policies and budgets are also endorsed by the Ministry of Defence and reflect the broader strategic planning and development of education within the military. **[M2; 79; 72]** [*Chapter III Standard I.2*]

1.4 The Academy has a clear management structure to support the development of strategies and policies within its remit and limits of authority. The Rector is supported by the Rectorate which is made up of senior members of staff including the Vice-Rector, the Administrator, the Director of the Centre for Foreign Languages and the Heads of the Departments. **[5 Article 27; 2; 6; 67]** The Rectorate, chaired by the Rector, is responsible for the development of the Strategic Plan based on proposals from the Heads of Department, who in turn consider proposals from department committees. The Deanery is made up of Heads of Department and is the body responsible for the coordination and oversight of learning and teaching. **[5 Articles 14-15; 67; M3]** The Rectorate is responsible for presenting the Strategic Plan to the Academic Senate for approval. Constructive debate

is encouraged among staff at all levels, and minutes of meetings are made available to members of committees. **[67; 71; 5; 6]** Documents related to decisions are also made available to committee members, academic and support staff as well as students, as appropriate. **[30; M5; M6; 5]** The overall development strategy aligns to both the Government Strategy for Higher Education and Research and the longer term development strategy of the Ministry of Defence 2015-25. **[72; 5; M2]** [*Chapter III Standard I.3*]

1.5   The Academy continues to review and update its provision in response to short-term demands. The preparation of materials and the ongoing development of the Foreign Language Centre is focused on meeting the broader study needs and supporting opportunities for military staff to study abroad, a key responsibility given the current suspension of degrees taught at the Academy. **[21; 20]** Feedback from students and staff is also used to inform improvements to the curriculum. **[66; M4; 50]** [*Chapter III Standard I.3 and Standard I.5*]

1.6   The Academy has effective processes to ensure the ethical management of provision. An Ethics Council has been established and comprises five members of staff elected by the Academic Senate drawn from department representatives and a student representative. The Ethics Council is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Ethical Code and may investigate concerns and request information from academic and support staff regarding compliance or breaches of ethical practice. **[6; 9]** The Code is endorsed by the Academic Senate and aligned to the statutory legal regulations including Law no. 80/2015, dated 21.09.2015, 'On higher education and scientific research in institutions of higher education in the Republic of Albania'. **[9; M3; M2]** As students on degree programmes all currently study abroad in countries including the USA, the UK, Germany, Turkey and Italy, work is currently restricted to supporting the language development of students, monitoring of work on the professional development courses and consideration of students' dissertations, which are presented to the Academy. **[2; 9; M3; M5; 67.4]** Similarly, the Academy currently has no Council of Professors since its second and third-cycle programmes were suspended. **[19; 16; 73]** [*Chapter III Standard I.2, Standard I.4 and Standard II.1*]

1.7   The Academy produces an annual report which allows for reflection and the evaluation of its provision. The report is informed by staff and student feedback, achievement and progress against institutional priorities, and is shared with all staff. **[73; 44; 63; M3]** The annual report is reviewed by the Academic Senate prior to being sent to the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Defence. **[21; 5; 6]** Information on academic staff, workloads, student records and information is also made available to the Ministry of Education and Science as required, to evidence the Academy practices meeting regulatory requirements. **[2; 18]** [*Chapter III Standard I.6*]

1.8   Information about programmes offered by the Academy is made available on the AAF website. **[website]** Public information is managed in line with the Academy's Public Information Procedure **[13]** and made available through Ministry of Defence publications, the Army newspaper and Military Magazine. Catalogues of course and study programmes are also published. **[23; Military Magazine]** As the institution is currently suspended from offering degree programmes, it has developed a range of cooperation agreements with higher education institutions within Albania and beyond, which facilitates students to access programmes. **[19; 16; 101; 38; M3; M5]** The Academy plays a key role in preparing students for study abroad, whether at university or through attendance at one of the NATO academies, through the work of the Foreign Language Centre which is well resourced. The language courses are delivered to a high standard covering all four elements of language acquisition, and test results are recognised internationally. **[20; 55; 109; M4]** The duration of the courses, which are managed alongside other officer courses, enables students to reach good levels of fluency and gain a clear understanding of the country, customs and culture in

which they plan to study. **[109; M4]** The high quality and interactive Foreign Languages Centre provision, which supports military personnel to access programmes abroad, represents **good practice**. **[*Chapter III Standard II.1*]**

1.9   The Academy does not have a quality assurance department, and on a practical level the evaluation of the military training programmes, which support the career development of officers, is reviewed by the individual departments. Oversight is maintained by the Lessons-Learned Centre at the Training and Doctrine Command of the Ministry of Defence, which maintains an independent overview and effectively supports the evaluation of military education and the building of enhanced practices based on training outcomes. This is further discussed in paragraph 3.8. **[6; 5; 42] [*Chapter III Standard II.1*]**

1.10   Student progress is monitored by senior academic staff who discuss individual student performance and gain feedback from students on study-related matters. **[M5; M4; 85; 80]** The Department of Courses gathers information about student teaching and administrative issues and makes information available to students as required. **[7; 63]** However, due to the suspension of third-cycle programmes, the Academy has not been able to put in place systems to enable doctorate students to complete their qualifications. Data shows that 73 students who commenced their studies between 2010 and 2014 have yet to complete their doctoral qualifications. **[104; M3; M5]** While this is not within the control of the Academy, the lack of systems to support the registered doctoral studies students to complete their studies represents a **weakness**. The team **recommends** as a high priority that the Academy explore options to facilitate registered PhD students to complete their third-cycle studies before the currency of their research is compromised. **[*Chapter III Standard II.3*]**

1.11   Employability and career development information is sought by the Academy from units of the Armed Forces about students who have completed programmes, and the information helps to inform further programme developments. Quotas for admission to programmes are approved by the General Staff of the Ministry of Defence based on analysis of the Armed Forces requirements, and competitive entry criteria are applied. **[22; 6; M3]** All students who complete programmes are employed by the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defence. **[*Chapter III Standard III.1*]**

1.12   A framework and strategy for cooperation with academies in foreign countries such as Kosovo, Turkey, Italy and Greece supports military personnel to study abroad, with 38 of the current teaching staff having themselves studied abroad. Partnerships are based on Ministry of Defence strategy and cooperation priorities, which also allows for collaboration with institutions including the Consortium Defence Academies, the Marshall Centre, the NATO College of Defence and the Senior Centre for Defence Studies in Italy. **[16; M3; M4]** In addition, the Academy has agreements with universities in Albania to support development of provision and first-cycle studies. **[14; 16; 75]** The Academy's work with other military academies includes joint research activities and scientific research in line with its policy for integrating foreign researchers and academic staff in its activities. **[14; M2]** These arrangements complement the work undertaken with the Ministry of Defence, and ensure that scientific research and the structuring of provision meets the requirement of the Higher Education Directorate and Scientific Research. The range of partnership agreements with universities and NATO institutions, effectively supports military personnel in their professional and academic development and is a feature of **good practice**. **[*Chapter III Standard III.2 and Standard III.3*]**

1.13   Work with NATO academies allows for foreign students to undertake studies at the Academy. Students from a range of countries including Kosovo, Montenegro, Georgia, Italy, Greece and Macedonia are able to study at the Academy, particularly on the Senior Course on Security and Defence Studies, where 60 per cent of students are recruited from outside

Albania. **[107; 49; 2; M3]** The Academy has a policy for also welcoming foreign research and teaching staff and encourages its own staff to undertake teaching exchanges. **[2; 5]** **[*Chapter III Standard III.4*]**

1.14   The review team considers that the Academy substantially meets the quality standards for management and its organisation. The provision offered by the Foreign Languages Centre, along with the range of partnership agreements with universities and NATO institutions, effectively supports military personnel in their professional and academic development and represents good practice. The lack of ongoing support for third-cycle students to complete their doctoral qualifications, while a result of external decision, represents a weakness. The review team recommends the Academy explore options with partner organisations to facilitate students to complete their studies, though the team acknowledges this will require Ministry support and approval.

Findings

Good practice

The review team identified the following features of good practice:

- the high quality and interactive Foreign Languages Centre provision which supports military personnel to study abroad (paragraph 1.8; *Chapter III Standard II.1*)
- the range of partnership agreements with universities and NATO institutions, effectively supports military personnel in their professional and academic development (paragraph 1.12; *Chapter III Standard III.2* and *Standard III.3*).

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weakness:

- the lack of systems to support the registered doctoral studies students to complete their studies (paragraph 1.10; *Chapter III Standard II.3*).

Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendation:

- that the Academy explore options to facilitate registered PhD students to complete their third-cycle studies (High priority) (paragraph 1.10; *Chapter III Standard II.3*).

Affirmation of action being taken

The review team did not affirm any actions already in progress.

Judgement

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

Evaluation Area 2: Resourcing

2.1   AAF manages the recruitment of academic and administrative staff according to criteria and procedures which are outlined in the Statute and Regulations and which clarify responsibilities. **[36; 5; 6; 3 p.14; 27]** All vacancies are advertised and published on the official Ministry of Defence website and are backed up with job descriptions and criteria for appointments. **[3 p.14; Law no 80/2015 - dated 21-05-07; 3 p.14 - Ref 2h - The Minister of Defence Order]** Promotion of staff is based upon participation in scientific training and scientific conferences at home and abroad, as well as reflecting work undertaken in collaboration with institutions within the region, including NATO member states. **[3 p.14]** The Academy is the only institution of higher education in the Republic of Albania undertaking education and research in the field of 'security and defence'. The recruitment of academic staff is based upon personnel who have completed studies and qualifications in academies, colleges and the universities of NATO countries. **[3 p.14]** Currently the Academy does not meet the 70 per cent quota of academic staff with scientific degrees and titles specified in the Higher Education Law, but does meet the conditions of Article 17, Paragraph 7 of this law. **[6 article 25 paragraph 4; Particular Law exemptions; M6; 18; 26] [***Chapter III Standard IV.1***]**

2.2   The educational qualifications and entry requirements for military staff to access provision is based upon the policies and institutional obligations as determined by the Ministry of Defence. An information day is scheduled for new staff working both in academic and administrative departments and leaflets are provided setting out key information. The Academy offers social and cultural activities including promotional events, retirement ceremonies and award ceremonies to strengthen the relationships and instil a positive staff climate within the Academy. The military cultural centre offers free courses for the children of the staff in sports, painting and music. Life insurance is provided for all military personnel and also to those participating in peacekeeping missions abroad. **[3 p.14; 77] [ESG 1.5 Teaching Staff; ***Chapter III Standard IV.2***]**

2.3   Academic staff training and qualifications are managed on the basis of the annual matrix for each staff member. **[Ref. 34 of the SED]** Monthly and annual evaluation of staff achievements are conducted by line managers, and the results and outcomes are placed in the personal files of each academic staff member. The regulations in force assign staff responsibilities based on job roles. **[Ref. 2.j of the SED; 3 p.15; M6]** The Academy implements clear rules based upon state law **[Law n. 80/2015]** for assigning responsibilities to respective job functions. The job description for each position is approved by the Rector. **[74; 3 p.15] [***Chapter III Standard II.2***]**

2.4   The Academy implements training plans for academic staff **[3 p.15 - Ref i - Annual Personnel Education/Training Plan]** based upon priorities defined in the development projects they are engaged with. **[3 p.15]** Military and civilian teaching staff are trained and assigned duties in line with the agreements and cooperation plans approved by the Ministry of Defence in association with Alliance member countries and Western academies. **[27 - Ref 2b]** The Academy operates in accordance with the approved policies and standards set by the Ministry of Defence, through which staff are subject to monthly and annual evaluation of achievements. An electronic and hard copy file is kept by the Personnel Department. In respect to the promotion of staff to gain academic titles, the Academy uses representatives of other educational and research institutions at home as well as, for example, from the NATO College in Rome and Marshall Centre in Germany. **[3 p.15; 82] [***Chapter III Standard IV.3***]**

2.5   Effective procedures are in place to support the social integration and development of staff and students at the Academy. The Personnel Department organises social and

cultural activities which are available to all. These include excursions, tours to historical sites, cultural, artistic and sports events with other higher education related activities, which may be of interest to personnel in or working with the Armed Forces. The Academy also provides a range of high quality facilities that staff and students can access, these include specialised sports halls and sports fields, covering a range of sports. **[32; 109; site visit]** In addition, meetings are held to publicise its policies and programmes with various social groups including presentations to the press and the local community. **[3 p.15; 77; M5]** **[*Chapter III Standard IV.4*]**

2.6   The Academy has clear financial management procedures. As part of the Military Education programme, the Academy is financed by the state budget. However, statutory regulations enable the Academy to generate additional income through attracting non-Albanian military personnel to its provision. **[M2; 81; website; 28]** The allocation of financial resources is based on the state budget structure and public financial management arrangements. **[28; 5; 6]** Budget planning covers a five-year period and includes both short and long-term plans. Guidance is provided by both the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Defence as well as by the General Staff of the Armed Forces. **[3 p.16]** The approved budget consists of funds for 'salary', 'social and health security', 'goods and services' and 'investment'. The budget for 'goods and services' includes office expenses, exercise, food, books and publications, liaison, storage, travelling expenses (home and abroad), civil-military cooperation and royalties. **[28; 79; M2; M5; M2; M5]** **[*Chapter III Standard VI.2*]**

2.7   The Administration Board as the highest administrative collegial body is responsible for the financial and administrative management of the Academy. This includes the structure of financial management, financial policy implementation and the accounting rules. To ensure budget transparency budgets are discussed at both department and central level. **[5; 6; M3]** The finance section is responsible for the accounting rules and the indicators for monitoring financial policy implementation. The budget is controlled and audited by the Ministry of Defence. **[3 p.16-17; 67.6; M3; M6]** Due to a range of bilateral agreements, a large part of the budget is allocated for travelling expenses (both home and abroad), in order to support students travelling to other countries for both short and longer-term studies. **[16; 19; M3]** The short-term budget is first discussed at individual departmental level including the Department of Operations, the Department of Leadership and Social Sciences, the Department Strategy and History, the Foreign Languages Centre, the Department of New Officer Preparation, the Rectorate and Administration Support Unit, in order to identify demands and priorities. **[2; 6; M3; 78]** The overall budget is subsequently discussed by the Academic Senate and sent to the Ministry of Defence for approval. Allocation and monitoring of budgets is undertaken by the Administration Board, in accordance with approved regulations and associated documentation. Once budgets are approved departments are responsible for its monitoring and implementation. **[6; 5; 28; 3 p.16; M2; M5]** **[*Chapter III Standard VI.1; Chapter III Standard VI.2*]**

2.8   The Academy is subject to controls, inspections and financial audits as well as internal audit by the Ministry of Defence which effectively assures compliance with statutory requirements. It makes public the results of all financial audits, and a financial activity report is presented to an open meeting of staff and students. Audit reports are reviewed by the administration section to address and make improvements to any control weaknesses. **[79; 28; 3 p.17; M3]** **[*Chapter III Standard VI.3*]**

2.9   Information systems at the Academy are subject to the laws of the Ministry of Defence, for example 'On the rights of being informed' (Law no. 9887) and 'On the protection of personal data' (Law no. 813). Restrictions apply in respect to classified documents and other classified information related to plans and personnel. Strategic information is provided at the level of the Ministry of Defence. **[56; M1; M6; 6; ESG 1.8 Public Information]** **[*Chapter III Standard VII.1*]**

2.10   Information technology requirements are appropriate to the needs of staff and students. The Academy has a local area network (LAN), provides computer equipment (123 PCs), computer labs, printers, scanners, servers and a range of software and database applications. Staff and student laboratories for foreign language learning are available in the Foreign Language Centre. Students have access to an extremely sophisticated range of high tech simulation facilities (Simulation Training Centre), auditorium, computer rooms and two libraries. Distance learning is a target for future development. **[30; 29; M4; 102; M6; 2; 109; ESG 1.6 Learning Resources and Student Support] [*Chapter III Standard VII.2*]**

2.11   The Academy has a clear master plan for the management of its real estate to ensure both renovation of facilities and security in line with Ministry of Defence plans. Academy administrators manage the asset inventories on an annual basis. The Academy senior staff supervise both construction and reconstruction projects in cooperation with the Training and Doctrine Command, the General Staff of the Armed Forces and Ministry of Defence. **[32; 35; 105; M6] [*Chapter III Standard VII.3*]**

2.12   The Academy has two libraries which store and manage all student work and broader resources, including dissertations, scientific magazines and newspapers. Archives of the Armed Forces and Armed Forces Museum are also available to staff and students. **[108]** Both libraries are of good quality both in terms of book provision (8,630 titles and 41,543 copies) and in terms of quiet study working space. **[2; 108; 209]** The Academy has established an Evaluation Committee to manage all gifts and purchases and administers the requirements of readers and library researchers. Literature and scientific works are stored, handled and processed according to the standards defined in Law (Law no. 8576) for the libraries of the Republic of Albania. **[67; 3 p.18; M6; site visit; 54]** In addition, the Armed Forces Museum provides an excellent and unique facility in providing a useful and relevant historical context to the work of the students and their leadership studies. The review team considered the museum resources which provide historical materials and context to support military strategy and leadership studies to be an aspect of **good practice**. **[3 p.18; 108; M4] [*Chapter III Standard VII.4*]**

2.13   The Academy infrastructure is sufficient to carry out its activities and support the long-term development plan of the institution. The Academy facilities for academic staff are in accordance with the quality and standards of higher education. **[17; 36; 5]** The tour of resources undertaken by the review team would indicate that the physical resources available were of a good standard. **[2; 108; 109; site visit; M4; M5] [*Chapter III Standard VII.5*]** Periodic surveys are undertaken with students, including students from Albania and from abroad, to evaluate facilities in order to improve the services offered. **[42; 44; 66; M4]** The Academy also has access to a range of training sources including: firing ranges, Special Forces training area, parachute tower and training ranges at Biza, Feken and Bunavi. The extensive range of academic and practical facilities available to support student learning including the high quality language laboratories, the high tech warfare Simulation Centre and the extensive range of teaching resources are considered an aspect of **good practice**. **[32; 10; 72; M2; M4] [*Chapter III Standard VII.6*]**

2.14   Teaching facilities have good acoustics, natural light, are protected from moisture and temperature fluctuations, and located away from industrial and polluted areas. The estate meets the norms of usable space, for example, 3.8 - 4.0 m^2/student minimum and 7.5 - 8.0 m^2/student maximum. A fire protection system and a system against atmospheric discharge is in place. The Academy has alternative sources of electricity supply and back up water tanks, and provides space for practical training of students in the defence and security programmes. Practical training is also supported by visits, battles, exercises at home and abroad with NATO member countries. However, some exits from buildings do not have emergency staircases and the heating system only partially covers the campus. Emergency exits and the improvement to the heating system are scheduled for completion as part of the

mid-term development plan of the Academy between 2018 and 2020. **[105; 72]** The review team **affirms** that the plans in place to improve both emergency exits and the heating system should be completed by 2020 at the latest. **[3 p.19; 105; 32]** [*Chapter III Standard V.1*]

2.15   Teaching secretaries are responsible for storing hardcopy documents. Documentation is administered by the teaching secretary who is responsible for maintaining the electronic registration of students and curricula data. The Academy has a basic register of students in both hardcopy and electronic format. Student grades are stored on a database. **[3 p.19; 31; M6] [ESG 1.7 Information Management**; *Chapter III Standard V.2*]

2.16   The responsibilities for resources are clearly set out in the Statute and Regulations of the Academy of the Armed Forces. The review team identified good practices in the range of academic and practical facilities available to support student learning including the high-quality language laboratories and teaching resources and the museum resource which provides historical materials and context to support military strategy and leadership studies. There were no weaknesses or recommendations identified. The review team affirms the plans in place to upgrade the central heating systems and to ensure emergency exits in all areas meet standards requirements.

Findings

Good practice

The review team identified the following features of good practice:

- the museum resources which provide historical materials and context to support military strategy and leadership studies (paragraph 2.12; *Chapter III Standard VII.4*)
- the extensive range of academic and practical facilities available to support student learning including the high quality language laboratories, high tech warfare Simulation Centre and the extensive range of teaching resources (paragraph 2.13; *Chapter III Standard V.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 plans in place to improve both emergency exits and the heating system (paragraph 2.14; *Chapter III Standard V.1*).

Judgement

The Standards for Resourcing are substantially met.

Evaluation Area 3: The Curriculum

3.1 The Academy clearly defines its priority study programmes based on the professional military education needs of the General Staff of the Armed Forces. **[57; 72]** It offers five non-degree courses, which last from four to 10 months including: the Officer Commissioning Course; Captains Career Course; Command and General Staff Officer Course; Officer Higher Course; and Senior Course on Security and Defence Studies. The courses provide professional education to military personnel at all levels, and to civilian leaders involved in the security and defence functions. **[25; 2]** The academic offer of the Academy is aligned with the Bologna Process of credits. The Academy supports students to engage with first-cycle study programmes in collaboration with other higher education institutions in Albania and abroad. **[23; M5]** At the time of the visit, 77 students were attending bachelor studies in military or military-related subject areas at higher education institutions in Turkey, Greece, Italy, Germany, USA and Albania. **[5 Art 56; 2; 110; 19]** The Academy is also approved by the Ministry of Education and Science to offer a Professional Master's study programme in Security and Defence and a Master of Science in the 'Study of Security and Defence', (Order No. 396, date 10.08.2011). **[2; 25; M2]** The Academy is also approved to offer a third-cycle doctorate programme in the field of security and defence studies, licensed by the Ministry of Defence under Order No. 502, date 07.10.2011. The curricula of the second and third-cycle programmes have been restructured to meet the requirements of the Law on Higher Education 80/2015, to offer 60 credits aligned to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), 120 ECTS, and applications for approval have been sent to the Ministry of Education and Science. Credits are transferable and student mobility is encouraged. **[45; 55; M4; 6 Art. 46; 5 Art. 46, 57, 59; 2; 23]** [*Chapter I Standard I.8; Chapter I Standard I.10*]

3.2 Provision is currently restricted as a result of Ministry of Defence review of requirements. The Academy is not able to offer bachelor programmes, rather it supports first-cycle studies delivered in cooperation with other home or foreign higher education institutions. **[75; 101; 77; M3]** In the academic year 2016-17, 77 students were reported to be carrying out their bachelor studies in partnership institutions abroad. **[19; 106]** The Academy's full-time staff take part in the first-cycle curriculum development of some of the partnership institutions which host bachelor AAF students. **[M5; 16; 41]** Military Attachés in host countries are assigned to assist the students studying in universities abroad. Military Attachés assist with managing the documentation of the students and compile reports on the student's progress which are forwarded to both the Academy and the Ministry of Defence. **[M3; M4]** Equivalence procedures of the first-cycle programmes are carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science. **[6]** [*Chapter I Standard I.7 and Chapter I Standard I.8*]

3.3 The Academy has effective provision to support staff and students who wish to progress to study or research abroad. Foreign language provision is offered through the Foreign Language Centre, a unit attached to the Faculty of Security and Defence. The Centre provides foreign language courses for the military and civilian personnel in English, French, Turkish, Greek, Serbian, German, Italian and Macedonian. **[6 Art. 36-37; 5 Art 14; 20; 109; site tour]** The Centre includes the Translation and Testing Department whose work supports student progression to study programmes abroad. **[17; 25; 109]** The Language Centre library offers 2,000 titles in support of the teaching process and has materials to support independent study. **[M6; site tour]** [*Chapter I Standard I.4*]

3.4 Clear mechanisms and procedures are in place for the production and publication of information. Departments are responsible for the production of syllabus information based on approved programmes. **[38; 39; 40; 5; 6]** Information about study programmes is made public by means of hardcopy material (brochures), online publications through the Ministry of Defence website or military press publications. **[81; 96; website; 13]** The promotion of the

Academy's academic offer is undertaken by the Marketing Department of the Ministry of Defence who also retain editorial control. **[M6; 67]** [*Chapter I Standard I.1; Chapter I Standard 1.6*]

3.5   Admission policy and procedures are clear and defined as part of the Regulations of the Academy. Admissions are conducted in line with the state standards, academic and infrastructure capacities defined by the Ministry of Education and Science and the needs of the Ministry of Defence. **[6 Article 46]** The recruitment centre staff are responsible for the admission process, including evaluation of application folders and interviews in line with criteria set. **[M6; M4; 63; key performance indicators]** Quotas for foreign students are drafted and sent to the Ministry of Education and Science for approval. **[22; 6]** [*Chapter I Standard I.1*]

3.6   The curriculum of the study programmes brings together aspects of theoretical, practical and research-based learning, which support academic and practice-based knowledge and understanding. **[38; 39; 40; 88.1]** Foreign language teaching is carried out in accordance with the Ministry of Defence requirements. Programmes are designed to accommodate engagement by military staff from other NATO member states, for example the Senior Course on Security and Defence Studies which is delivered in English, and recruits around 60 per cent of students from abroad. **[106; 107; 2]** Diplomas and supplements are provided in both in Albanian and English. **[14; M6; 87]** Planning and development of curriculum delivery centres on disciplines related to tactical, strategic and operational aspects of military operations and strategy. **[23; 102; 62]** Assessment policies comply with the standards of the Higher Education Law in Albania and the standards of the NATO standardised agreement that implement a common NATO standard (STANAGs). **[7; 50]** [*Chapter I Standard I.1; Chapter I Standard I.10*]

3.7   Study programmes are designed to fit the long-term development plan of the Armed Forces 2016-20 and to support the development of staff. **[72; 5; M5]** Programmes are designed to meet the needs of different categories of students including those of the security and defence sector and the education of the foreign military specialists. **[25; 20]** Study content is largely of a military nature, including international operations, and supports the preparation of attachés and representatives posted to international NATO headquarters and to appointments in the European Union and with the United Nations. **[72; 15]** Provision is also made available to civilian personnel working for central government institutions. **[M3]** The activity of the Academy is managed in accordance with the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015-20, the National Security and the Military Strategy. **[15; 3 Chap. I, Stand. 1, 4]** [*Chapter I Standard I.2; Standard I.3*]

3.8   The quality assurance of provision is undertaken centrally by the Ministry of Defence. The Lessons-Learned Centre at the Training and Doctrine Command is responsible for the collection and processing of data including student feedback, teaching observation records, internal programme reviews, and identifying and communicating recommended actions to support and assure the quality of provision. **[42; 56; 44]** The externality offered by the Lessons-Learned Centre, a part of the Training and Doctrine Command of the Ministry of Defence, serves to improve the quality of programme management and delivery through impartial evaluation of provision, and is an example of **good practice**. **[12; 44; M3; M5]** To support internal management of courses, the Department of Courses supports and monitors delivery of courses at the Academy, and is responsible for oversight of curricula completion and the practical application of the learning and training processes. **[6 Article 44; 69]** [*Chapter I Standard I.2*]

3.9   The programmes offered by the Academy are drafted in line with the Development Strategy of the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Education and Sport, and with the Defence Directives and Strategic Concept policies for the military education of NATO personnel. **[5;**

M5; 3 Standard I, I.4] Diplomas and certificates issued are registered through the Ministry of Defence and include key study areas and credits, including supplementary study, as appropriate. **[87]** The Academy does not currently offer any interdisciplinary programmes, but is planning to offer a joint diploma with the University of Tirana and with the Police Academy with the approval of the Ministry of Defence. **[M3; 72]** **[*Chapter I Standard I.4*]**

3.10   The teaching load of the faculty is managed in accordance with the bylaws of the Ministry of Education and expectation of the Ministry of Defence. **[46]** The teaching staff are also expected to engage in other activities linked to research or military priorities, in line with the Ministry of Defence directives, as well as course administration and research. **[88.3; 26; 27; M5]** The budget is allocated by the Ministry of Defence and includes the costs of curriculum delivery and approved research. **[28; M3; M5]** **[*Chapter I Standard I.5*]**

3.11   Clear course information is provided to students. Curriculum information and support literature is accessible to students electronically and also through resources identified in course catalogues. Course handbooks provide details of learning outcomes and course content. **[25; 88]** The Student's Manual includes admission criteria, procedures and relevant documentation, and the Orientation Programme sets out qualification objectives and course content. **[62; 100; M4; 38; 39; 40]** **[*Chapter I Standard I.6*]**

3.12   Second-cycle study programmes are designed to support the education and research priorities of the Armed Forces and other security institutions. **[53; 73]** Limited research undertaken by academic staff is focused on supporting programme development. The majority of teaching (70 per cent) is covered by full-time academic staff of the faculty, and supplemented by input and exchanges with partner institutions across NATO and Europe. This includes the Marshal Centre, the International School of Hamburg, La Sapiena University and the Centre of High Defence Studies in Rome. **[41; 88.3; 49]** For the second and third-cycle curricula, the Academy engages representatives from the fields of security and defence drawn from NATO partner country institutions. **[42; M3]** The Academy does not currently operate a research unit, resulting in limited opportunities for staff to engage in research that would support their teaching and the future supervision of master's and doctoral students, which represents a **weakness**. The review team **recommends** as a high priority that the Academy seeks to re-establish a research unit to support the development and delivery of higher education.

3.13   The second-cycle study programmes at the AAF have not had new enrolments since 2013, **[2]** due to the changes of the Law on Higher Education and the need to update their curricula, in line with its requirements (see paragraph 3.1). The delivery of the third-cycle programme has been suspended since 2015, as the remit of the Council of Professors did not meet the new HE Law in Albania (see paragraph 1.10). **[104; M3, M5; M6]** Currently, the Academy is not permitted by the Ministry of Defence to deliver any full higher education programmes at undergraduate or postgraduate level, and staff are not able to develop or review programmes, or focus research activities on enhancement of postgraduate studies, which the team identified as a **weakness**. The team **recommends** as a high priority the identification of appropriate higher education provision for delivery based on validation of current practice-related courses at graduate diploma or certificate level. **[*Chapter I Standard I.9*]**

3.14   The courses offered provide practical approaches of the theoretic knowledge, and include national and internationally relevant content. **[38; 39; 40; 88; 107; 25; M5]** **[*Chapter I Standard I.12*]** Teaching and learning strategies include seminars, group work, practical and planning exercises, case studies and topical research. **[44; M4; M5]** Students apply their knowledge in the context of military operations in country and abroad. The Simulation Centre provides a technology-based learning environment which supports practical training. Scenarios require students to make strategic decisions and to evaluate implications, which

as mentioned in paragraph 2.13, represents good practice. **[102]** The MoD cinema amphitheatre, the sport centre and the museum are made available to teaching needs upon request. **[Site visit; 109] [*Chapter I Standard I.11; Chapter I Standard I.12*]**

3.15   AAF encourages students' participation in cultural activities. **[M5]** A range of extracurricular activities are available to students including sports and external visits, and foreign language and art courses are offered to students' family members as appropriate. **[M4; M5; 61] [*Chapter I Standard I.11*]**

3.16   The Academy has clear processes to ensure the management of its provision. The externality offered by the Lessons-Learned Centre serves to improve the quality of programme management and delivery through impartial evaluation of provision, and is an example of good practice. The academic staff have limited opportunities to engage in research which would support postgraduate provision, as well as the development of new programmes to meet future military expertise, which represent weaknesses. The identification of appropriate higher education provision for validation based on current provision and curriculum links, and the re-establishment of a research unit to support postgraduate achievement are recommended. The review team did not identify any affirmations in this area.

Findings

Good practice

The review team identified the following feature of good practice:

- the externality offered by the Lessons-Learned Centre serves to improve the quality of programme management and delivery through impartial evaluation of provision (paragraph 3.8; *Chapter I Standard I.2*).

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weaknesses:

- limited opportunities for staff to engage in research which would support their teaching and the future supervision of master's and doctoral students (paragraph 3.12; *Chapter I Standard I.9*)
- the Academy delivers no full higher education programmes, and is unable to develop or review programmes, or focus research activities on enhancement of postgraduate studies (paragraph 3.13; *Chapter I Standard I.9*).

Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendations:

- the Academy seek to re-establish a research unit to support the development and delivery of higher education (High priority) (paragraph 3.12; *Chapter I Standard I.9*)
- the identification of appropriate higher education provision for delivery based on validation of current practice related courses at graduate diploma or certificate level (High priority) (paragraph 3.13; *Chapter I Standard I.9*).

Affirmation of action being taken

The review team did not affirm any actions already in progress.

Judgement

The Standards for the Curriculum are substantially met.

Evaluation Area 4: Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research

4.1   To date the Academy has supported the production of 147 Doctoral theses in the field of Defence and Security. **[2]** However, from 2014 doctoral studies were suspended due to restructuring, and currently the Academy has been unable to achieve a quorum of academic staff with the title of Professor. **[103]** The review team learnt that efforts were being made for the process to be carried out in cooperation with other universities but no confirmed plans had yet been made. **[M3]** As outlined in paragraph 3.1, the Academy has also offered a range of degree programmes in the field of security and defence including: Professional Master's, Master of Science, Executive Master's as well as PhD studies. To support students in their current and future studies, the Foreign Language Centre offers courses in English, German, Italian, French, Macedonian and Greek. However, during the visit, the review team learnt that the master's and PhD programmes are currently unaccredited by the Ministry of Education and Science and not operational. **[2; M2; M3]** In particular, the review team found that between 2010 and 2016 73 PhD students had been unable to complete their study programmes. As the students have been interrupted since 2014, and as set out in paragraph 1.10, the review team felt that this situation represented a significant weakness. A recommendation in paragraph 1.10 suggests that the Academy works with the Ministry of Education and Science to establish strategies to support third-cycle students to complete their qualifications. **[3 p.25, - Ref 3.a, 4. J - List of programmes offered and Armed forces military education concept; 3 p.24-25; 104] [ESG 1.4 Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification] [*Chapter I Standard II.1*]**

4.2   The Academy effectively coordinates the work of academic staff to ensure coherence of content, including sufficient capacity for the realisation of practical training, through practical exercises, practical lessons and battle analysis (Simulation Centre) at home and across allied territories. **[3 p.25 - Ref 4.a - Policies and procedures of teaching and learning; 3 p.24-25]** As noted in paragraphs 2.10 and 2.13, the Academy uses a range of good quality resources to support teaching and learning including: libraries, military museum, auditorium, cinema, gym and a range of sports facilities for the practical training of the students. The main Academy library has 7,300 titles, 35,000 books, 2,264 periodicals and journals, 117 dissertations and four study rooms. The library is open between 8am and 8pm and provides a range of supporting literature, including electronic library resources for each study programme. **[3 p.25; 48] [Chapter I Standard II.1]**

4.3   Effective procedures are in place for the management of assessment. Examination and testing arrangements are approved by the deliberative academic structures and made publicly available for academic staff and students through the regulations available via an electronic folder accessible by all personnel. **[5; 6; 7]** The assessment regulations respect both privacy and anonymity. Students have the full right of appeal for all examination results, reviewed by departments in accordance with the statute, the internal rules and the assessment regulations. **[44; 90; 62]** The results of examinations are given individually, respecting the principle of confidentiality for all students, and the outcomes from examinations are published on time to the agreed schedules. It was confirmed in meetings with staff that very few students make appeals. **[50; M6] [Chapter I Standard II.2]**

4.4   Academic staff performance is evaluated on an annual basis by the relevant department. **[49]** Students participate in the evaluation of lecturers and programmes through surveys and questionnaires organised by the Faculty of Security and Defence and by relevant departments. **[65; 66]** Study programmes are improved on an annual basis, based upon feedback from academic staff and students. During the period from May to June of each academic year a review of study programmes is carried out. The quality of

programmes is assessed by a range of statistics, including the employment of graduates. The Academy's graduates regularly serve in NATO commands and military headquarters, as well as in strategic and operational posts in Albania. **[77; 49] [ESG 1.9 Ongoing Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes] [Chapter I Standard II.3]**

4.5 The staffing levels are appropriate to meet the teaching and administrative requirements of the Academy. For the academic year 2016-17 the Academy had 71 academic staff and 37 administration support staff dedicated to supporting the learning of students, including 63 full-time academic staff with postgraduate qualifications. **[2; 3 p.25-26; 103; 38]** In addition, a significant number of the academic staff have been trained abroad to increase teaching quality and international experience. **[42; 2; 103]** The Leadership and Social Sciences Department develops didactic courses for new teachers on new teaching methods. **[18; 42]** To improve teaching quality, each lecturer in the Faculty of Security and Defence presents his/her lectures to the relevant department to discuss and exchange views before the lecture is given to students. **[42; 27; M5]** All academic, teaching, scientific and administrative staff are engaged in the continuous improvement in teaching to improve the learning on all study programmes. **[83; 103] [ESG 1.3 Student Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment] [Chapter I Standard II.4]**

4.6 The department is the basic teaching/research unit and includes homogeneous and interdisciplinary fields of study. Each department is organised in teaching groups which are identified in the academic structure, but the Academy does not have a specific research centre. **[M2; 103; 18]** The Academy works with the Doctrine Research Centre, a separate external centre belonging to the Ministry of Defence, which prepares material, scientific research, manuals and lessons learnt in the interests of the Armed Forces, including the review of programmes offered. **[42; 44; M3]** Each department promotes and coordinates the activities of teaching and research, while respecting the academic freedom of staff. **[M3; M5; 53; 54]** Departments analyse the results of research groups and agree the continuation or termination of cooperation agreements. **[6; 41]** Sources of funding for research are limited and academic staff have completed their research outcomes through individual study and co-authoring. **[53; 3 p.27; M3; M5] [Chapter II Standard I.1]**

4.7 The Academy is able to support some new scientific research groups and products, for example in partnership with the Doctrine Research Centre whose outcomes are published in the press, in magazines and conference booklets. **[53; 54; M3]** The Academy also collaborates with a range of universities and regional centres in the Balkans, for example the University of Tirana. **[16; 75]** In cooperation with TRADOC, a military magazine, a monthly scientific theoretical publication is published. Collaboration is also undertaken with international research study centres including: George Marshall Centre in Germany and the NATO College in Italy. **[3 p.27; 76; 16; M5] [Chapter II Standard I.2]** The Academy has collaborated with NATO Commands to collect and disseminate information related to operational matters which directly relate to the development of 'learning in operations'. **[73; 72; 16]** An online network has enabled coordinated participation in conferences and scientific publications. **[M3; M5]** The Academy has, for example, contributed to a project for drafting of the 'Air Force Strategy of NATO' and limited support is provided for academic staff to participate in scientific conferences held at home and abroad. **[53; 73; 54; 82; M3]** In January 2017 the Academy took part in two scientific activities: 'International Humanitarian Law' and the 'Treatment of Foreign Fighters', organised in cooperation with the Institute for International Humanitarian Law of San Remos, Marshall Centre Germany and the Centre for High Defence Studies, Italy. Outputs from these activities have influenced the decision-making of national institutions and NATO for the establishment of the NATO Centre of Excellence in Albania for the treatment of foreign fighters. **[72; M2; M3; 49]** In March 2016 three Academy Professors participated in the International Conference on Security in Istanbul, Turkey, and Academy staff have published in international scientific journals including: 'The Heritage' published by the University of Struga, Macedonia; 'Security Issues'

published by the Institute for Democracy and Mediation. **[3 p.27-28; M4; 55; M5] [Chapter II Standard I.3]**

4.8   Each academic department during the annual academic planning cycle produces a scientific activity plan to prioritise its research focus. Plans include at least one scientific research conference for academic staff and guests. **[53; 54]** Upon request the Academy provides expertise in the field of defence and security. However, the team could find limited evidence to demonstrate that the Academy has a clearly articulated and prioritised research plan as already indicated in paragraph 3.12. **[3 p.28; 53]** Around 80 per cent of academic staff have completed studies or qualified in academies and universities in western countries. Research priorities are part of the national development plan for the Armed Forces and the objectives are standardised with reference to NATO standards (NATO STANAGs) derived from the NATO Strategic Command Act. In discussion with staff at the Academy it became clear that scientific research priorities were under-developed since the research unit was suspended pending reorganisation by the Ministry of Education. **[M3; M5; 54] [Chapter II Standard I.4; Chapter II Standard I.5]**

4.9   The Academy is committed to the design and implementation of regional and national research policies as part of its work to ensure provision complies with NATO standards. Membership of NATO ensures a focus on procedures and standards, training, publication and exchange of international experience. **[72; 73; M2; M3]** Academic staff are engaged in scientific activities under a framework of cooperation with educational institutions at home and with NATO academies overseas. **[54; M3; M5]** In addition, the Academy invites qualified lecturers from NATO countries to participate in the senior course on Security and Defence, a course which has been run eight times and attracts non-Albanian students from other armed services. The team learnt that 38 foreign lecturers have taught on the Academy's programmes. **[54; M4; 95; M5] [Chapter II Standard I.6]**

4.10   The Academy, in meeting the legal criteria for scientific degrees and academic titles, encourages members of faculty to publish in scientific magazines, mainly in neighbouring countries and beyond, for example in Italy, Kosovo and Macedonia. However, details as to the percentage of staff actively involved in publishing their research was unavailable. **[54; 53; M3]** The Academy in collaboration with the Centre of Doctrine Research prepares and publishes the 'Theoretical Scientific' magazine. **[54]** The Academy's research structure is currently under-developed and therefore research activities are limited and do not allow for in-depth evaluation of research strengths and weaknesses. **[73; M2; M3]** The Academy's limited staff research infrastructure, which has been unable to prioritise scientific research and to evaluate the outcomes in scientific projects, is a **weakness** and the review team **recommends** as a high priority that the Academy develop a research plan which builds staff research capacity, promotes research outcomes, manages dissemination and assesses research performance. **[M3; M5] [Chapter II Standards I.1-8]**

4.11   The responsibilities for the management of Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research are set out in the statute and regulations. The review team did not identify any aspects of good practice. Weaknesses were identified in the Academy's limited staff research infrastructure which has been unable to prioritise scientific projects. The review team recommends that the Academy works with the Ministry of Education and Science to develop a research plan which builds staff research capacity, promotes research outcomes, manages dissemination and assesses research performance. The review team did not identify any affirmations.

Findings

Good practice

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

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weakness:

- the Academy's limited staff research infrastructure which has been unable to prioritise scientific research and to evaluate the outcomes in scientific projects (paragraph 4.10; *Chapter II Standard I.1-8*).

Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendation:

- to develop a research plan which builds staff research capacity, promotes research outcomes, manages dissemination and assesses research performance (High priority) (paragraph 4.10; *Chapter II Standard I.1-8*).

Affirmation of action being taken

The review team did not make any affirmations.

Judgement

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

Evaluation Area 5: Students and their Support

5.1   Clear admissions and enrolment procedures are in place for the new students. The Academy has designed its mid-term students' admission policy as part of its Strategic Development Plan to ensure it meets statutory requirements. **[72]** The Academy's legal framework defines the required enrolment procedures and criteria for the admission of students to training courses, along with criteria for applicants to second and third-cycle programmes in accordance with the Ministry of Defence regulations. **[5; 62]** The Academy cooperates with the Ministry of Defence Personnel Recruitment Centre and draws up plans based on the military educational needs, and hosts the Commission that carries out candidates' testing. **[63; M6; M4]** Recruitment procedures, along with candidate interviews, are undertaken by the Admissions Commission which includes representatives from the Academy. Any cases of admissions appeals are reviewed by an ad hoc commission whose decisions are final. **[M4; M6]** At the time of the visit no students were being recruited to postgraduate provision. **[M1; M2]** The review team noted that, currently, mechanisms to support doctoral students to complete their programme have been suspended, and as discussed in paragraph 1.10, identified an area of weakness in the management of student learning and support. **[ESG Standard 1.3 Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment] [Chapter I Standard III]**

5.2   The Course Administrator from each department is responsible for the admissions documentation and records of previous and ongoing studies of the candidates. **[6 Art. 45]** Copies of the students' folders and progress documentation are stored and maintained by the Personnel Section. The data is entered onto specific registers, which are also backed-up electronically. **[6 Art 42; M6]** Internal and external communications are maintained through use of staff and students' email addresses recorded in the electronic and hardcopy files. **[M4; M5] [Chapter I Standard III.1; Chapter I Standard III.3]**

5.3   Appropriate mechanisms for provision of information are in place. Information about admissions and study courses is made available to candidates by means of the Ministry of Defence website, leaflets, hardcopy material including the Course Catalogue and meetings with Academy staff. **[59; 81; 25; M4]** The Academy cooperates with the Culture and Media Publication Centre at the Ministry of Defence to develop marketing campaigns with pre-university institutions and higher education institutions in Albania for undergraduate programmes. **[M6]** Foreign students may attend courses in line with partnership agreements; for the academic year 2016-17 only five students of non-Albanian citizenship (out of 17 students from partner institutions) were attending Academy courses. **[2]** The ratio of full-time academic staff to students is one staff member for every six students which meets Ministry of Education and Science standards. **[2; 103] [Chapter I Standard III.1; Chapter I Standard III.3]**

5.4   Student support and guidance is effectively provided by Academy staff. The Department of the Courses provides student guidance and counselling from registration to the graduation. **[6 Art. 45]** Each department assigns a lecturer, who tutors a student group, monitors and supports progress and offers counselling support and guidance about the Academy' legislation, course curricula and competence-based assessment criteria. **[60; 100; 62]** Course information and literature is exchanged electronically between academic staff and students through a shared-folder system, while more classified information is provided via the Ministry of Defence system. **[M5; M4]** Courses provide some guidance to support writing skills, but no systematic provision of the academic skill enhancement is provided to students. **[M6]** The Academy provides guidance on student mobility including opportunities to study at partner higher education institutions and NATO schools to support individual career development. **[55; 16; M4; M5]** Procedures for study transfer and progression between programmes and cycles are set out in the Academy's legal framework; **[6 Art.73]**

however, there have been no reported cases of partial study transfer to date. **[86; 2] [Chapter I Standard III.3; Chapter I Standard III.6]**

5.5   Policies and procedures are in place to ensure access for identified minority groups and to support the broader student experience. As a military institution, the Academy does not have procedures for the admission of students with disabilities, and a number of buildings are not accessible to students with restricted mobility. **[3 Chap.I, Standard III.4; M5; 109]** The Academy does have a policy for the admission and support of Roma and Balkan Egyptian students who have a higher education qualification, and who meet the entry requirements and are eligible through work with military services. **[99]** No part-time study is currently offered by the Academy. **[25; 81; M3]** Sports facilities are provided on campus and include an indoor sports centre with a gym, volley-ball court and judo facilities. Outdoor football pitches are also provided. Students are actively encouraged to participate in sports and to maintain a good level of physical fitness. **[Site visit; 77; 66] [Chapter I Standard III.4]**

5.6   Appropriate study facilities and resources are provided by the Academy. Books and other literature are available in a range of languages including Albanian, English and French through the main Academy Library, and in the Foreign Language Centre library. **[site visit; 109]** Both libraries display books, textbooks, journals, printed lectures, graduation papers, case studies, dissertations and leaflets, related to the programmes of study. **[29; site visit; 109; M5; M6]** Academic work and research materials are published by the Publishing Section of the Doctrine Centre and made available through the Academy Library. **[M6]** Staff and students have registration cards and can access the library from 8am – 8pm on weekdays. They also have access to online materials through links to other websites provided through the library computers. **[site visit; M6]** The Academy's budget includes funding for the enrichment of the library, based on department needs and requests. **[28; 78; M5; M6]** Currently the Academy library holds no online texts or resources of its own. The academic staff use NATO online resources in a shared-folder system, and strategic material can be accessed through the Ministry of Defence repository. **[M5]** To improve availability of resources for students, the Academy library staff are working on an institutional project for the digitisation of its library stock. The team **affirms** that the Academy recognises the need for improving electronic and online services provided to students and staff which is being supported by a programme to digitise resources. **[site visit] [Chapter I Standard III.5]**

5.7   The Academy encourages student participation in its committees. Students are represented on the Academic Senate and in the Council of Ethics. **[5; 9; 67]** Student members of the Academic Senate are elected in compliance with the requirements of the Law on Higher Education 80/2015, and are able to participate in, and contribute to, the decision-making process. **[5 Art.24; 64; M4]** Students participated in the drafting of the self-evaluation document, and take an active part in quality assurance procedures in the Academy through providing feedback and through discussions at a range of levels with the staff. **[5 Art.80; 66; 68; 80]** Where students have concerns, these can be raised directly through the course/group tutor or with key staff at department and faculty level. **[62; 66; M4] [Chapter I Standard III.7]**

5.8   The accommodation, social and cultural requirements of the students are provided for by the Academy. For students who do not live locally, the Academy has a supportive policy of providing on campus accommodation, a social infrastructure and catering facilities. **[site visit; 32; M4]** The Academy, as outlined in paragraph 5.5 provides a range of sports facilities through its sports centre. To further support the quality of life for staff and students, the Academy also provides a cinema amphitheatre and a range of cultural curricular and extracurricular activities, such as chess, football and volleyball championships, shooting competitions, and marathon participation. Visits to museums and cultural sites are also organised. **[M4; M5; 77] [Chapter I Standard III.8]**

5.9   A health centre, a specialist unit of psychology, as well as a physical therapy centre attached to the gym are located on site. **[32; M4]** Students are required to have annual fitness tests, and any medical treatment required that cannot be provided by the health centre is provided in cooperation with the Central Military Hospital in Tirana. The latter conducts medical check-ups for the students and provides free medical treatment for the staff and students. **[3 Chap.I, III.8; site visit] [Chapter I Standard III.8]**

5.10   The Academy's Personnel Recruitment Centre holds statistical data on the employment of its graduates, virtually all of whom are serving military personnel. **[2]** In line with the military legislation in force, 100 per cent of the Albanian students who graduate from the Academy's courses are employed in the Albanian military organisation. Recommendations made by the Academy are taken into consideration when students are posted to new jobs, especially in cases where high levels of professional skills are required. Alumni keep in touch with the Academy, and often return to complete further studies and training courses. **[61; 64; M3; M4]**

5.11   The Academy is committed to meeting its students' needs, which it undertakes by engaging students in the decision-taking bodies of the Academy, providing accessible teaching, resources, tutoring and support. It provides both curricular and extracurricular on-campus facilities for its students. The team affirms that the Academy and its staff have identified the need for improving electronic and online services provided to students and staff which is being supported by a programme to digitise library resources. No examples of good practices, weaknesses or recommendations were identified for this evaluation area.

Findings

Good practice

The review team did not identify any areas 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 action already in progress:

- the need for improving electronic and online services provided to students and staff which is being supported by a programme to digitally store resources (paragraph 5.6; *Chapter I Standard III.5*).

Judgement

The Standards for Students and their Support are fully met.

Evidence list

No. Evidence document
1. Deklarata mbi vertetesine e informacion (Albanian)
2. General Profile Data
3. SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT
4. RVB ne gjuhen shqipe (Self Assessment document in Albanian)
5. Statute
6. Regulations
7. Regulation of assessment
8. Regulation of the Senate
9. Ethical Code
10. Plan Veprimi
11. Urdher Komandant/Rektor per procesin e akreditimit (Albanian)
12. Fusha 1. Politikat dhe procedurat e Sig te Cilesise. (Albanian)
13. Politikat dhe procedurat e informimit publik (Albanian)
14. Strategjia e Zhvilimit Institucional (Albanian)
15. Strategjia per bashk/nderkomb. (Albanian)
16. Cooperation Agreements; examples for each faculty.doc
17. Organisational Structure and Chart.docx
18. The distribution structure of the academic staff in the HEI units.docx
19. LIST OF STUDENTS STUDYING ABROAD.xlsx
20. STANAG 6001 Edt. 4 LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY LEVELS.pdf
21. Raport vetvleresimi 2010 (Albanian)
22. Miratimi i kuotave per programet e studimit (Albanian)
23. Katalogu i programeve institucionale (Albanian)
24. Katalogu i programeve te studimit (Albanian)
25. Courses catalogue.pdf
26. Human resource management policies and procedures.doc
27. Key performance indicators of academic staff.doc
28. Financial management policies and procedures for allocation, budget control and internal audit.doc
29. Information systems to support teaching and learning.doc
30. Information systems to support institutional management.doc
31. Information management policies and procedures.doc
32. Management policies of accommodation and other physical resources.doc
33. Udhezimi i MM Nr. 8 date 20.05.2013 'Per kriteret e perzgjedhjes se pers. Pedagogjik (Albanian)
34. Plani vjetor i arsimimit/trajnimit te personelit (Albanian)
35. Summary of planned financial investment
36. Organisation Management Chart
37. AREA 3. The Curriculum
38. Examples of study plans and programmes for the study cycles 1, 2 and 3 for each faculty, including relevant syllabi.docx
39. Examples of study plans and programmes for the study cycles 1, 2 and 3 for each faculty, including relevant syllabi.docx
40. Examples of study plans and programmes for the study cycles 1, 2 and 3 for each faculty, including relevant syllabi.doc
41. Procedures for drafting and approving the study programmes for each faculty cycles 1, 2, recently approved.doc
42 Procedures for supporting and improving the quality of study programmes.docx

43. <u>Shembuj te raporteve te vleresimit</u> (Albanian)
44<u>2. Examples of periodic assessment reports of the study programmes.doc</u>
45. <u>LEARNING CREDIT POLICY. ALB.doc</u>
46. <u>Udhezim per normat e ngarkeses mesimore</u> (Albanian)
47 <u>Procedures for supporting and improving the quality of teaching.doc</u>
48 <u>AREA 4. Teaching, learning, evaluation and research</u>
49 <u>Profile of staff training on programmes of cycle 1 and 2 in each faculty.doc</u>
50 <u>Students evaluation policies and academic regulations of programmes.docx</u>
51. <u>Politikat e trajtimit te ankesave</u> (Albanian)
52. <u>Shembuj te evidencave te komisioneve</u> (Albanian)
53 <u>Research priorities and policies with examples of implementation at faculty/institution level.docx</u>
54 <u>The latest report of the evaluation of scientific research.docx</u>
55 <u>Policy or approach of staff and student mobility.docx</u>
56 <u>Procedures for supporting and improving the quality of teaching.doc</u>
57. <u>Koncepti i arsimimit ushtarak</u> (Albanian)
58. <u>Pyetsor</u> (Albanian)
59. <u>AREA 5 Students and their support</u>
60. <u>Students counselling, student's academic guide, support and mentoring.docx</u>
61. <u>Assistance given to the students for their career, employment and different consultation approaches.docx</u>
62. <u>Student's manual.docx</u>
63. <u>Students statistics, key performance indicatiors.docx</u>
64. <u>Students membership and representation in Higher Education Institutions Organizations.docx</u>
65. Staff Survey
66. Student Survey
67 Examples of minutes of meetings: 67.1 Academic Senate 67.2 Rector 67.3 Academic Assembly (Albanian) 67.4 Council of Ethics 67.5 Deanery 67.6 Board of Administration 67.7 Equivalency Board
68. Example of academic staff and student questionnaires including responses to Concerns
69. Competencies & attributes of the Department of Courses
70. Summary of evidence in documents in Albanian
71. Schedule of meetings 2016-17 of Boards, Councils and Committees
72. Institution Development Strategy
73. Annual Report sent to MAS (Albanian)
74. Job Description for Head of Department/ Senior Teacher
75. Agreement with External Institution - University of Tirana
76. Agreement between MOD of Albania & Ministry for Kosovo Security Forces
77. List of social integration activities for staff and students
78. Procedures for budget drafting and approval
79. Management and audit procedures
80. Questionnaire on infrastructure and facilities
81. Information leaflets
82. Copy of staff training plan for AAF
83. Performance evaluation example for academic staff
84. Plans for completion of work on emergency exits and heating systems (Albanian)

85. Example of monthly assessment documents
86. Procedures for progression of students from first to second cycle study
87. Diplomas and diploma supplements programmes and profile of achievement.
88. Examples of programmes of study including: 88.1 The curriculum and subject content 88.2 The programme model 88.3 Qualification of staff delivering the curriculum
89. New programme proposal and approval procedures
90. Description of management of Appeals and Complaints
91. List of graduate destinations for the previous 2 years or statement of types of jobs (Albanian)
93. Clarification of planning and management of research (Albanian)
94. Copy of AAF Research Strategy Plan
95. Examples of Research undertaken with Partner Institutions (Albanian)
96. Example of publications by AAF teaching staff
97. The Department's Scientific Research Activities Plan
98. An example of a Theoretical Paper in a Scientific Journal (Albanian)
99. Policy on entry of minority and marginalised social groups enrolments
100. Orientation Programme for young students (Albanian)
101. List of first cycle programme for 77 current students studying outside AAF
102 Albanian Armed Forces Simulation Training Centre presentation
103. List of current staff by department
104. Current status of doctoral students whose programme is suspended
105. Interim plan for building improvements
106. Examples of programme curricula from partner NATO institutions
107. Senior Course on Security and Defence Studies programme outline
108. Visit to Museum and talk on teaching support
109. Visit to Foreign Language Centre and evidence of resource
110. Statement on equivalence of titles
Meetings
M1 Meeting 1 with **Facilitator and SED Team**
M2 Meeting 2 with Rector
M3 Meeting 3 with Senior Staff
M4 Meeting 4 with Students
M5 Meeting 5 with Academic Staff
M6 Meeting 6 with Support Staff