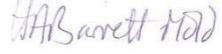




Institutional Review of Higher Education Institutions in Albania

**Report of University of Gjirokastra
May 2017**

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Date: 11-12 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 actions in progress and weaknesses for each Evaluation Area, together with a judgement as to how well the HEI meets the standards. The judgements that the reviewers may assign are: standards are fully met; standards are substantially met; standards are partly met; or standards are not met.

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

- **State Quality Standards are 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 this review

'Eqrem Cabej' University of Gjirokastra was established on 12 November 1991 and consolidated the work of the Pedagogical Institute which was in place in 1971. The University of Gjirokastra is situated in the Southern Region in Albania. Higher education was previously provided in the region through other Albanian universities. In the academic year 1993-94, the University of Gjirokastra was further extended offering two new study programmes, namely that of Greek Language and Literature preparing teachers for the schools of the Greek minority and that of the English Language.

Currently the University has three faculties: Economic, Natural Sciences, and Education and Social Sciences with 14 departments. The mission of the University is focused on:

- the preparation of teachers for all levels of the pre-university education system
- the preparation of general nurses and midwife nurses
- the preparation of specialists in the field of economy
- the preparation of specialists in information technology
- serving as an important centre for research, science and publishing in the Southern Region.

The University can make available three cycles of study –bachelor's, master's and a PhD which has been approved in Albanology. All study programmes and their curricula are restructured in accordance with the requirements of the Bologna Declaration and the current legislation. The University has established partnerships and collaborations with universities of other countries.

Summary report

The University of Gjirokastra is a public university of higher education. It is based in Gjirokastra which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site just 30 miles from the border with Greece. The importance of the heritage and the proximity with Greece both impact on the work of the University. The University has many partnerships and works closely with others in the region in promoting regional priorities. It has a close partnership with the University of Ioannina in Greece to their mutual benefit and to the benefit of the Greek minority people living in Albania. This and the UNESCO designation has strengthened the very important work on cultural heritage which the University is central to. A specialist Balkan library held by the University is open to the local community to use and this is just one aspect of this work.

There were 1,627 students were enrolled at the time of the visit. Although the majority comes from the south of Albania there is a large student contingent coming from the Middle Albanian region, and some from Northern Albania. In the academic year 2016-17 around 124 full-time lecturers and 80 invited lecturers contribute teaching and scientific research activity; 70 per cent of the academic staff are qualified with scientific titles and academic qualifications at PhD. The University offers first second and third-cycle programmes.

A team at the University which involved a student representative developed the self-evaluative report (SER). The self-evaluation was helpful in establishing processes and procedures as well as setting out the offer of programmes. It depended quite heavily on the attached evidence, most of which remained in Albanian making its interpretation difficult for the English-speaking reviewers. The level of critical self-evaluation was not as extensive as would be hoped for. The drafts were circulated to a wider audience within the institution before being finalised and approved by the Rector.

The visit took place over two days on 11 and 12 May 2017. The review team was made up of three senior higher education reviewers from the UK and one experienced higher education member of staff from an Albanian institution. The review team was supported by the Review Manager and a note-taker provided by the Albanian Public Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (APAAL). The review team received a self-evaluation report and the portfolio of supporting evidence eight weeks in advance of the review visit, later supplemented by additional documentation requested. In all, some 217 documents enabled the team to familiarise themselves with the structure, policies, management procedures and nature of teaching and research activity undertaken by the University. Evidence included the Statute of the University, Academic Regulations, Annual Reports, admission and orientation procedures, list of external agreements and memoranda, examples of programme information and evidence of deliberative meetings.

The review team met with senior managers, students, lecturers, administrative and support staff, as well as external partners and employers during the review visit. Discussion supported the clarification of procedures, responsibilities and viewpoints. Notes were taken at all meetings. As part of a tour of the main campus the review team viewed the library, teaching areas, laboratories and offices.

The review team made the following findings. The standards for organisation and management are substantially met. The University is efficiently managed. The internal management bodies are the Academic Senate, the Board of Administration, the Rectorate, the Board of Ethics, the Board of Professors, the Faculty Boards, and the Councils of Departments. There are a number of internal mechanisms which ensure the efficient functioning and monitoring of the University within its autonomous limits, including the management functions of the vice-rectors and vice-deans, and its quality assurance

procedures embedded in its Statute, such as the operation of the Unit of Internal Security of Quality and the ad hoc commission for Internal quality, which the Rector set up for this review. The University works very effectively with its partners regionally, nationally and internationally. It attempts to monitor graduate employment through databases at departmental level, but there is little evidence of consistent or sustained data collection.

The standards for resources are substantially met. The University has established human resource policies which are supportive of the integration of academic and non-academic staff with equality being one of the priorities. The University operates an open, competitive process for all appointments. The use of new technologies has not yet translated to an embedded use of information technology in teaching techniques, limiting the range of approaches to teaching. The University uses three buildings and it has agreements with other organisations for the use of other facilities, while it makes plans to use another.

The standards for the Curriculum are substantially met. The University has developed a range of first and second-cycle programmes in primary and secondary education and first-cycle in nursing. The University has identified teacher training as a priority. It has developed first-cycle programmes in Greek Language and Literature to prepare teachers to serve the needs of the Greek-speaking minority in the region. The articulation of programmes with regional requirements as part of the University's third mission is good. The effectiveness of the distribution of information is good practice. Students are actively involved in research projects. Ongoing mentoring of new teachers is valuable but may have the effect of entrenching traditional teaching methods.

The standards for teaching, learning, assessment and research are substantially met. The University efficiently organises the implementation of its study programmes. Towards the end of each academic year departmental audits are carried out in accordance with the statutes and regulations of the University. Research related to regional development and to conservation of culture represents an important direction of the University's activity, as identified in its main acts and documents. A specific strategy for research is required and the level of research is not sufficient.

The standards for support needs for students are substantially met. Communication with students is effective. The University supports first-cycle students well. At induction, which is monitored by the Vice-Rector, departmental academic staff introduce students to exactly what they need to know about the University and their programmes. Academic staff also offer thesis preparation guidance, clear procedures for assignments and literature guidance through their lecturers and departments. The University encourages students' participation in University life. The student representatives from each year and each discipline are elected to a Student Council in January of each year. When in post, they elect three Student Senators, including a Student Council Head. The Student Council is an effective two-way conduit for students in which the University can convey information to the student body and gather and respond to valuable feedback from students.

Summary of findings

Good practice

The review team identified the following features of good practice:

- the University's range of cooperation with regional partners is outstanding (paragraph 1.11; **Chapter III Standard III.2**)
- the articulation of programmes with regional requirements as part of the University's third mission (paragraph 3.1; **Chapter I Standard I.1; Chapter 1 Standard I.3**)
- the distribution of information which is effective in ensuring that the target audience is well-informed(paragraph 3.4; **Chapter I Standard I.1**)
- a number of areas at both first and second-cycle level where students were actively involved in research projects in the departments of Geography, Mathematics and Physics (paragraph 3.13; **Chapter I Standard I.9**)
- collaborative work in the research of cultural heritage is good practice (paragraph 4.12; **Chapter II Standard I.6**).

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weaknesses:

- failure to systematically collect graduate employment data (paragraph 1.10; **Chapter III Standard III.2**)
- the lack of use of information technology which limits the range of teaching approaches (paragraph 2.13; **Chapter III Standard VII.2**)
- the lack of a strategic approach to supporting research (paragraph 4.11; **Chapter II Standard I.5**).

Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendations:

- the University should establish and implement a system to enable analysis of graduate employment in order to inform programme design and development (paragraph 1.10; **Chapter III Standard III.2**)
- that the University take steps to embed the use of information technology in the delivery of its programmes (paragraph 2.13; **Chapter III Standard VII.2**)
- that the University develops an institutional strategy in which priorities are identified and supported (paragraph 4.11; **Chapter II Standard I.5**).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

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 **substantially met**.

Summary Judgement

The reviewers recommend to the Accreditation Council that at the University of the State Quality Standards are **substantially met**.

Detailed report

Evaluation Area 1: The Organisation and its Management

1.1 The University of Gjirokastra (The University) governance and regulatory frameworks comply with the legislation in force aligned with its mission and objectives. It operates in accordance with Law No 9741, dated 21.5.2007, 'For Higher Education in Republic of Albania' and its amendments, as a public higher education institution according to the 91 articles of its internal legal Statute and 78 articles of its Regulation. [SER p.9; 1.1; 1.2] The University also has additional internal regulations at faculty level. [SER p. 9; 1.9] It continuously adjusts and improves its statute and regulations to improve the quality of its provision; for example, some of the more recent changes were in relation to the hiring of academic staff and the functioning of the ESSE3 system. [SER p.9, 1.3; 1.4; M11] In accordance with the new Law No 80/2015, dated 07.09.2015, 'On Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania', the University has already drafted and approved its new Statute and Regulation to conform to the new law when implemented. [SER p.9; 1.1a; 1.2a] [Chapter III Standard I.1]

1.2 The University is efficiently managed. The internal management bodies are the Academic Senate, the Board of Administration, the Rectorate, the Board of Ethics, the Board of Professors, the Faculty Boards, and the Councils of Departments. [SER p.9-10; 1.2, Articles 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19; 1.8; 1.10; M1;M3;M4; M11;M12;M15]

1.3 The University management authorities are the Rector and Vice-Rectors, the Deans and Vice-Deans of Faculty, and the Supervisors and Heads of Department. [SER p.11; 1.2, Articles 22, 23, 28, 29; M1; M4; M11] After receiving requests from all the offices and departments of the University, the Rectorate drafts and proposes the budget to the Academic Senate, where it is discussed and approved. It is then sent to the Administrative Council for final approval and submission to the Ministry of Education and Sport. [SER p.9; 1.2, Articles 12.7c; 13.2c, 13.2.e, 14.4.b; 1.5; B.6; B.7; B.8; M1; M3] [Chapter II Standard I.2; Chapter III Standard II.3]

1.4 Two faculties with separate regulations are moving to three faculties, [SER p.10; 1.2 Article 16; 1.9; C11] and together with their departments operate in the spirit of academic freedom. [1.1 Article 4] The Faculty Board is a collegial decision-making body with representatives elected from the academic staff of the faculty. It is headed by the Dean and makes decisions on, for example, teaching and scientific research issues, which often originate as proposals from departments. [1.2 Article 16; 1.9 Article 8, 3.a and b; M4] The University has established a Board of Professors through Academic Senate Decision, whose purpose is to manage doctoral studies, post-doctoral studies, scientific pedagogical qualifications and staff training. [SER p.10; 1.2 Article 16, p.18-19; 1.10] The Board of Professors is not functioning because the main units do not meet the necessary numbers of professors employed full-time. There is no impact as currently there are no cycle three students. [SER p.10-11; M2][Chapter II Standard I.2; Chapter III Standard II.3]

1.5 The Rectorate and Administration Council meet periodically and constructively debate matters related to a range of important University business, including the budget, the Development Strategy, and the Annual Report. They also debate more local matters, such as curriculum design and information technology updating. [1.14; C.1; 1.15; C.2; M1;M3;M12;M13] All collegial bodies operate in the same way and meet once a month during the academic year. [SER p.11; 1.2 Article 11] All the materials for consideration and discussion are made available to all members of, for instance, Faculty Council, Academic Senate and Administrative Council at least one working day before a meeting. [SER p.11;

1.2 Article 11, 2] The notice of one day is too short to consider materials for important meetings, and consequently there may not be enough time to communicate with those on the committees in order to share different views. The meetings do not use action plans and although actions are followed, an action plan would be specific and allocated to named individuals and be an easier way to share and track decisions across the University. **[M4]**
[Chapter III Standard I.3; Chapter III Standard II.3]

1.6 The University has a number of internal mechanisms which ensure its efficient functioning and monitoring within its autonomous limits. These include the management functions of the Vice-Rectors and Vice-Deans, and its quality assurance procedures embedded in its Statute, such as the operation of the Unit of Internal Security of Quality and the commission for Internal quality, which the Rector set up for this review. **[SER p.11; 1.12; 1.2 Articles 67-72]** The University publishes a brief summary of Unit of Internal Security of Quality every year on the University website. [\[www.uoqj.edu.al \(as on 03/04/17 and 22/05/17\); 1.2 Article 72; C.10\]](http://www.uoqj.edu.al) The Vice-Rector for Science and International Relations and the International Relations and Scientific Projects Directorate enable the University to benefit from European and international programmes, such as the Tempus U3M project, and apply for others, such as Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020. The University concedes that it needs to continue to develop projects in order to support its mission and its finances. **[SER p.12; 1.13; M2; M4; C.9]** **[Chapter III Standard I.4]**

1.7 The University has an effective Developmental Strategy which clearly states its mission and a series of nine objectives to achieve it. They include maintaining up-to-date teaching and scientific research to address demand, and the development of new programmes and projects. **[SER, p.12; 1.14; C.1 p.8-9]** The strategy focuses on regional development and is compiled by the Rectorate after wide discussion in its management bodies and authorities. **[1.2 Article 13, 2.a; M3; M8; M13]** It addresses the improvement of infrastructure, the recruitment of new academic staff, teaching and learning, scientific research and studies, finances and financial resources. **[1.14 p.13-25]** It is open and direct throughout on the challenges facing the University and how it will attempt to overcome them. It concludes with a rigorous analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats which is not an action plan but rather a summary under the title of 'About the situation of UGJ'. **[1.14 p.27-29]** **[Chapter III Standard I.5]**

1.8 The Rector prepares the University's Annual Report and submits it to the Academic Senate for approval before it is sent to the Ministry of Education and Sport and published on the University website. **[SER p.12; 1.2 Articles 13.4, 12.7.k; 1.15; C.2; M1]** All of the units of the University produce reports that feed into the overall Annual Report; for instance, the departments produce reports that feed into the faculty report and that goes to the Rectorate. **[1.6; M11]** The Annual Report outlines teaching activity, scientific research activity, objectives and duties for the future, and financial activities. **[1.15; C.2; M1]** **[Chapter III Standard I.6]**

1.9 The University has appropriate structures to accomplish its mission and purpose. It conducts its activity with respect for the principle of institutional autonomy and academic freedom, as expressed in its Statute and Regulation. **[SER p.13; 1.1 Articles 3-9; 1.2 Articles 3, 7-8, 49-51]** Organograms on the governing structure and on the organisation of one faculty, the Faculty of Education and Social Sciences, helpfully illustrated the University's structure. **[1.17; 1.18; C.11]** The University offers study programmes in all three study cycles, Bachelor, Master of Science, Professional Master and PhD **[SER p.13; 1.1 Articles 16, 17; 1.2 Article 34]** in two faculties and 12 departments **[1.1 Article 4]** and it is currently planning to develop a third faculty, the Faculty of Economics. **[SER p.13; 1.1a Article 8]** It has its own website (see also paragraph 1.6). **[Chapter III Standard II.1]**

1.10 The primary way that the University keeps updated with regional economic, social and educational development is through its extensive regional network contacts (see paragraph 1.11). It attempts to monitor graduate employment through databases at departmental level, but there was little evidence of consistent or sustained data collection at department level or University level to make this a more informative data set. The University recognised that the information was incomplete. [SER p.15; M4] The review team considers this failure to systematically collect graduate employment data is a **weakness**, and **recommends** that the University should establish and implement a system to enable analysis of graduate employment in order to inform programme design and development.

[Chapter III Standard III.2]

1.11 The University's strategy of cooperation is embedded throughout its Developmental Strategy and is clearly stated in its Mission. [1.15; C.2] Its cooperative activities with regional, national and foreign institutions are administered by its International Relations Directorate. The main area of cooperation regionally is with schools and hospitals with whom it has agreements. [M4] Approximately 300 out of 400 teachers working in Gjirokastra and 82 per cent of hospital nursing staff are recruited from the University. Representatives from both employment areas expressed very high satisfaction with the graduates that they employed. [M8] Local politicians, the representative of the Chamber of Commerce and the Director of the Employment Office also spoke very highly of their needs being met by University graduates. [M8] New course design emerges out of labour market demand, such as the Bachelor in Tourism, based on the research from two projects, SEE JEWEL and Tempus U3M; the Bachelor in Public Administration, based on the fact that Gjirokastra is an important administrative centre; and the Bachelor in Mathematics and Information, based on regional labour market needs. The University's range of cooperation with regional partners, which informs and enables the development of innovative curricula meeting regional needs, is outstanding and is a feature of **good practice**. National and international level cooperation includes the successful University of Tirana Tempus U3M project and work with the Centre for Albanology Studies, the University of Palermo and the University of Ioannino. [SER p.15-16; 2.20; 1.20; B.12; C.12; C.7; C.9; M3; M8] **[Chapter III Standard III.2]**

1.12 The University pursues a cooperation strategy with other institutions to support its provision. It collaborates with the Regional Education Directorate Gjirokastra, other directorates and hospital centres to provide professional placements for its students. [SER p.16; M8] It collaborates with SHA 'Studenti' to provide student accommodation. It also works internally with the Department of History and the Department of Language, Literature and Greek Civilisation to offer cultural and artistic activities for its students. It collaborates externally with the Peace Corps to offer volunteer teachers and with the Italian and Greek Consulates in Gjirokastra to assist language teaching. [SER p.16; 1.19; 1.20] **[Chapter III Standard III.3]**

1.13 The University supports a modest amount of international mobility for academic staff and students through national and international agreements with other universities, through engagement with international programmes such as Erasmus+ and Tempus, and through staff attendance at international conferences. The academic staff have given papers at and attended international conferences, but funding for conferences is no longer available because of budgetary cuts. [4.8; M2; M14] Foreign academics are integrated through the collaborative projects with other universities, such as the cultural heritage project with the University of Macerata, and foreign students, such as two Polish students in the field of ethnography. [M3] Five members of the economic staff are currently involved in an exchange with the University of Galicia. [M11] The University has organised three international scientific conferences in four years. [4.7] It has also signed agreements with 48 partners that enable exchanges of students, but not all of these partners are international institutions. [1.20] **[Chapter III Standard III.4]**

Findings

Good practice

The review team identified the following feature of good practice:

- the University's range of cooperation with regional partners is outstanding (paragraph 1.11; ***Chapter III Standard III.2***).

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weakness:

- failure to systematically collect graduate employment data (paragraph 1.10; ***Chapter III Standard III.2***).

Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendation:

- the University should establish and implement a system to enable analysis of graduate employment in order to inform programme design and development (paragraph 1.10; ***Chapter III Standard III.2***).

Affirmation of action being taken

The review team did not affirm any actions already taking place.

Judgement

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

Evaluation Area 2: Resourcing

2.1 A clear organisation chart is available and published on the website.**[2.1]** The University has a policy of using part-time staff **[2.2]** prioritising high quality staff who meet the department needs. Employment criteria for full-time, part-time and invited academic staff are in line with legal requirements.**[M4]** The needs of students are emphasised. **[M4]** Jobs are advertised on the website and in the local media and criteria published. **[2.3]** Internal guidelines for recruitment and scoring applications are used. **[1.3]** Priority is placed on recruiting academic staff qualified in well-known international universities.**[M3; M11; 2.5, staff questionnaire]** Students stress the commitment of their teachers and the willingness of staff to provide additional support outside of classes. **[student questionnaire 90% good or very good; M5]** **[Chapter III Standard IV.1]**

2.2 The University has established human resource policies which are supportive of the integration of academic and non-academic staff with equality being one of the priorities. **[M4]** The University operates an open, competitive and objective process for all appointments. The identification of need for staff starts in the department and this information is then passed to the Dean. The Dean approves requests of departments and after this sends this request to the Rector. The Rector ensures that the request conforms to legislation. Applications are reviewed by an ad hoc commission from the respective faculty and interviews arranged. The winning candidate is proposed to the Rector for formal approval in accordance with legislation. **[1.3; B.5; M4]** The University has a large majority of staff with PhD qualifications. **[M4, 70%]** All employees of the University have health insurance since they pay the 'Obligatory contribution for Health Insurance'; such contribution is paid in accordance with required legislation. **[1.3; B.5; M4]** **[Chapter III Standard IV.2]**

2.3 The Information Day is a very important day to the University with all staff involved. It is the main occasion when information about the University is provided to potential students. It is supported by information available through leaflets, the website, posters, local radio and television and two-dimensional barcodes. The latter are posted around the building so that students can always find relevant information. The main focus is to pre-University students. Staff also take part in the Ministry of Education fair, and have been to all schools in the region to ensure that all are given good information about the University and its provision. **[M2; M5]** **[Chapter III Standard IV.2]**

2.4 As the University establishes specific projects with others, there are often training plans developed to underpin the project. For example, the online system of student data project had specific training requirements. Annual updating of staff curriculavitae allows the Dean of each faculty to analyse ongoing achievements of those staff. **[2.7; 2.8]** The Student Council is independent and makes a good contribution to improving quality of provision. For example, students indicated that extensive handwriting of notes in class was not helpful and agreed with themember of staff a preferred way forward.**[M1; M5]** Staff see the results of student questionnaires and if they indicate any weakness they address them, usually in conversation with a professor from the same subject area. **[M2; M3]** Open classes are held and include those from the area of teaching techniques and as such can offer help to lecturers in improving their approach to teaching. If underperformance persists following help the lecturer's contract is terminated. **[M1; M3]** **[Chapter III Standard IV.3]**

2.5 The creation of the Professors Council (tobe replaced by the Board of Professors) has provided the Universitywith the opportunity for promoting its staff and giving the scientific titles such as Associate Professor and 'Docent'. In the last academic year, 21 lecturers were promoted to Associate Professor and 38 lecturers were promoted to 'docent'.**[2.4; 2.10; 2.1]** **[Chapter III Standard IV.3]**

2.6 Social activities are organised in the University. There are a variety of activities at sports clubs and theatre activities with professionals. Specific examples include competition of poetry written by students of the University, inter-university football matches, and students Council of Gjirokastra University. **[B5; M4]****[Chapter III Standard IV.4]**

2.7 Management of human resources is effective.**[1.1; M3; M4; M11; Staff questionnaire]** A large majority of staff indicate the staff support by the University is good or very good.**[staff questionnaire]** New lecturers are mentored by senior lecturers. **[M2]** Foreign Professors are integrated through collaborative projects with other universities. **[M3]** Less experienced staff are helped with teaching and research by working together with more experienced colleagues. However, this can lead to a continuation of particular ways of teaching and limit a wider range of techniques. Students and some staff indicate that the use of information technology in classes is very limited, and students voiced that they belong to a generation of those using technology in their lives generally, and would like this to be a greater part of the delivery of their classes. **[M4; M5; M10]** Open classes such as public lectures and seminars can at best be a window on a greater variety of teaching techniques as they are delivered by more experienced staff and staff from other universities, including many from abroad, such as from Sweden. Open classes usually refer to research or other work, which may well include pedagogy. **[C2; M3]** New academic staff are involved in teaching seminars and exercises before they progress to delivering lectures.**[M4; M5; M10]** However, the use of new technologies has not yet translated to an embedded use of information technology in teaching techniques. **[Chapter III Standard II.2]**

2.8 Financial resources are used according to rules and standards as a public institution of higher education. **[1.6]** Departments put forward their proposals for the budget and then submit these to the Faculty, the Rectorate and then to the Academic Senate for approval, then to the Board of Administration for final sign-off prior to being submitted to the Ministry of Education.**[2.12; 2.13]** Debate takes place to ensure the interest of all parties - not all needs can be met although all are considered. **[M3; M11]** A large majority of staff feel that the transparency of allocations and the usage is good or very good.**[B.6; B.7; B.8; staff questionnaire]** **[Chapter III Standard VI.1]**

2.9 The budget is detailed and the University provides the necessary means to implement the financial policy through the Chancellor and the Economies Directorate within the Rector Unit. **[2.13; 2.14]** The University respects the basic rules and principles of accounting and administering the public finances as established by the current legislation. The University periodically analyses the indicators monitoring the financial policy implementation through periodic reviews of the budget and the reallocation of funds as necessary. **[2.13; 2.14; B.5; B.6; B.7; B.8; Chapter III Standard VI.2]** The University is subjected to financial audits by the Ministry of Education and Sport. After being analysed and discussed within the relevant structures, the financial activity report is discussed in the Senate meetings and is made public on the website. **[B.6; B.7; B.8]** **[Chapter III Standard VI.3]**

2.10 The University has worked with the Ministry of Education and Science in order to establish some online presence although the full process is not yet in place. There is online access to the lesson schedule, exams, fees, and regulations. The University collects, analyses and uses relevant information for effective management of the academic life and activities associated with it. It has upgraded the Wi-Fi system and it is now available across the campus. **[M2; M5; B.10]** **[Chapter III Standard VII.1]**

2.11 The University is in the first steps of creating an overall database and as such it is incomplete. Some departments have databases of their previous students. The alumni office is collecting information about leavers although this is not yet comprehensive or

analysed; however, the University has strong links with the University of Ioannina with whom it expects to share the outcomes of database information. **[M4] [Chapter III Standard VII.1]**

2.12 Some information technology is available in the teaching rooms and the majority of students are of the opinion that the computer facilities are good and that access to the electronic system is good or very good. **[student questionnaire]** There are three classrooms specifically equipped to teach standard techniques in information technology. **[M5; M10]** Students have confidential accounts to access their area and email addresses. Wi-Fi is freely available to students. This has improved communication with students who can now be contacted individually or collectively when they need to be advised of something or to receive lecture materials. **[M2; M5]** All lecturers have their own desk-top computers.

2.13 Some classrooms have video projectors. **[M3; M10]** Advantages have included access to the academic internet and teleconferencing providing links to mathematics and science associations bringing journals and texts to support the work of staff and students. **[M3; M12]** Physics applications allow demonstrations for students to see some experiments. **[M14]** The need to have good information technology to undertake research is recognised. It has enabled access to academic papers, and improved communication with colleagues internationally. However, the lack of use of information technology which limits the range of teaching approaches is considered to be a **weakness**. The review team **recommends** that the University take steps to embed the use of information technology in the delivery of its programmes. Some areas are working with information technology on a daily basis such as the Head of international office who maintains links across the Balkans, Holland and Italy. **[M14; M15]** **[Chapter III Standard VII.2]**

2.14 The University has an accurate record of its real estate and responsibilities. The University has evidence of real estate; a physical inventory of buildings, with information about projects and plans for the function of each environment. Managers supervise construction using specialist staff according to Republic of Albania legislation. **[2.16]** The University manages its assets effectively and has a masterplan for future development. **[2.17]** There are plans to refurbish an existing building currently not in use and although this has been agreed locally and nationally and with UNESCO the funds are not yet in place. **[B.9; B.10; M3]** **[Chapter III Standard VII.3]**

2.15 The University offers a Master's of Science in Archaeology and Doctoral Studies in Albanology both of which help to support and develop the storage, maintenance and development of its academic, cultural and scientific heritage. In addition, poetry evenings are held, keeping alive traditional poems. **[1.14]** A specialist library serves Balkan interest, which contains much of interest to the Greek minority population such as textbooks in Greek and modern Greek/Albanian dictionaries and is available to the wider community. **[M10]** Staff and students are also able to access the national archive in Tirana, and archive of Athens for Albanian history. **[M14]** **[Chapter III Standard VII.4]**

2.16 Three buildings are in use with future plans to refurbish a further building available to the University. There are agreements with other organisations for sports provision such as the local stadium and sports club. **[M2; M4]** The theatre is used for drama activities. The hospital is used to provide a real work environment for nursing. **[M2; M5]** In general the classrooms meet demands. The library is small although it has an online catalogue. Information technology is in place in the library but further development is needed in order to give students greater access in this area. **[M10]** Partners of the University are very supportive and funding resulting from some projects has brought additions to University equipment such as a stereomicroscope with integrated camera and equipment for monitoring of mobile telephone frequency. **[B.9; B.10; M12]** **[Chapter III Standard VII.5]**

2.17 The University has an organisation diagram that indicates the ways in which different elements of the organisation relate to each other and how all aspects of the University work are included. It collects information from its alumni but as yet is not analysing the data although it does inform the University about labour market intelligence, as do the collaborative partnerships which the University has locally, regionally and internationally.

[2.19; M4] [Chapter III Standard VII.6]

2.18 Overall, the facilities, including the shared facilities, are appropriate for the programmes that the University offers.**[2.16]** The sound, air quality and temperature of the environment are adequate although fewer than half of students feel that the temperature is good or very good and students commented that the rooms can be very cold in the winter.**[2.20; student questionnaire; M5; M8]** The space per student is in accordance with legislation although the University has plans to increase this. **[Chapter III Standard V.1]**

2.19 The University meets the technical norms including fire protection but does not meet the criterion of emergency exit for any faculties with more than 200 students. Less than a third of students think the provision of lifts and emergency stairs is good or very good and **[student questionnaire; M5; M10]** access for students with a disability is poor.**[student questionnaire; M10]** Students value library facilities and staff.**[student questionnaire; M5, M1]** **[Chapter III Standard V.1]**

2.20 Student academic activity is regularly processed electronically. The educational secretaries develop and store the main cataloguing and archive for each faculty. These are maintained locally, as well as on a central server and tested for protection against disasters. There is a hard copy and digital register of the students, which is held by the departmental secretaries. Finance information is held centrally. The University is a member of the Albanian Network system. **[M2; M4; M1]** **[Chapter III Standard V.2]**

Findings

Good practice

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

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weakness:

- the lack of use of information technology which limits the range of teaching approaches(paragraph 2.13; **Chapter III Standard VII.2**).

Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendation:

- that the University take steps to embed the use of information technology in the delivery of its programmes (paragraph 2.13; **Chapter III Standard VII.2**).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

Judgement

The standards for Resourcing are substantially met.

Evaluation Area 3: The Curriculum

3.1 In order to fulfil its role as an institution oriented to the development needs of southern Albania, the University has developed a range of first and second-cycle programmes in primary and secondary education and of first-cycle programmes in nursing to prepare students for careers in these areas. [SER p.1; 1.14] The University has identified teacher training as a particular priority. [SER p.1; 1.14] It has also developed first-cycle programmes in Greek Language and Literature to prepare teachers to serve the needs of the Greek-speaking minority in the Gjirokastra region. [5.2] These activities have been enhanced through a cooperation agreement with Ioannina University. [C.12.] Building on its strength as a regional, vocationally oriented institution, it has expanded into other areas such as business studies, and has recently created a Faculty of Economics. [M1] The articulation of programmes with regional requirements as part of the University's third mission; to reach out and engage with society is thorough and represents **good practice**. This was confirmed by external stakeholders who employed graduates of the University. [M8] [Chapter I Standard I.1; Chapter IStandard I.3]

3.2 The University's programmes are organised according to Bologna principles into first, second and third cycle. Its second-cycle programmes are divided into Professional Master's and Master of Science degrees. [3.1] It has recently introduced a doctoral (third cycle) in Albanology, although no students have yet been registered. [SER p.26] In developing the programme the University will receive assistance from experts at the University of Tirana and the Centre for Albanology in Tirana. [M1]

3.3 Programmes of study are designed at departmental level in the first instance. Draft programmes are then sent to the Curriculum and Training Coordination Office within the Rectorate to ensure that they are in accordance with appropriate guidelines. The draft is then sent to the Faculty Council for approval, and finally to the Senate. [SER p.27; M4] External and internal stakeholders, including students, have the opportunity to make their input into programme design and review. [M5; M8; B.4] Overall, this is a robust procedure that fulfils the objective of ensuring that programmes are well designed and fit for purpose. Changes to programme design are managed in a similar way. [C3, example of procedure] [Chapter IStandard I.1]

3.4 Information about programmes offered by the University is widely distributed through its website and local print media. and two-dimensional barcodes have been used successfully to reach target audiences. [M2] Open days are held to publicise the offer to school leavers. [2.6; M2] Students from Albania and beyond reported that they were fully aware of the University offerings before they applied. This included students from the Greek minorityvillages where the Greek language is used.[M5] The distribution of information is **good practice** and it is effective in ensuring that the target audience is well-informed.School leavers who have successfully completed the Matura are eligible to apply for admission to first cycle programmes. [1.1 Article 16] International students are entitled to apply for entry within the context of bilateral agreements. Admission criteria for second and third cycle programmes are laid down by the individual faculty and posted on the website. These criteria define a methodology for articulating first and second cycle programmes of study to ensure that students' programmes of study are harmonised. [1.1 Article 17] [Chapter I Standard I.1]

3.5 There is currently no University-wide policy on continuing education, although general provision is made in the statute and rules of procedure. [1.2 Articles 2.2, 2.7; 1.1 Article 18] Individual departments and the Research and Development Centre in Education offer short courses intended to enhance the professional development of teachers in the region in and around Gjirokastra. [SER p.27; C.1p.11-12] The University has in the past offered part-time programmes for first and second-cycle qualifications. However, these are

no longer offered, following a policy decision by the Ministry of Education and Sport, and current programmes are being taught out.**[SER p.27] [Chapter I Standard I.2]**

3.6 The University's Development Strategy sets out the criteria for the range of academic programmes on offer. The Development Strategy also lays down the requirements for students to complete their qualifications. **[C1]** The design of programmes of study at the University includes those that cover two disciplinary areas, for example History and Geography, as well as single subject programmes aimed at the training of teachers. **[3.1]** A more recent development has been the introduction of programmes that integrate a discipline and a European language such as Italian. The University is developing a joint programme with the University of Macerata in Italy in the area of Administration of Cultural Heritage Assets. **[3.2]** Where appropriate, programmes aimed at producing trained teachers or health professionals include appropriate practicum experience. **[2.20]** At the end of a student's programme of study, he or she is issued with a diploma supplement which includes general information about the programme in terms of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits, and the individual courses taken and marks secured. **[3.12] [Chapter I Standard I.3; Chapter I Standard I.4]**

3.7 Teaching loads for academic staff are calculated with reference to government rules that require full-time staff to teach for 260 hours per year. Additional teaching is carried out by local arrangement and funded through the budget. **[SER p.28-9]** Each member of the academic staff is required to agree his or her work commitments, both teaching and research, for the year in writing with the Head of Department. **[3.3] [Chapter I Standard I.5]**

3.8 Once a student has enrolled, he or she is informed of all the relevant information concerning programmes of study through noticeboards on campus and through the website. Students approach the secretarial staff in the faculties for help if required. **[M11]** Teachers also introduce the curriculum and syllabuses to their students at the beginning of each course. **[M5]** Detailed specifications are available, which define the study programme objectives. **[3.4; 4.1] [Chapter I Standard I.6]**

3.9 First-cycle programmes include generic skills in the area of scientific methods and principles, information technology, and a foreign language, as well as skills related to the subject matter of the qualification. Programmes are designed with the specific goal to make students employable once they have graduated. Evidence from employers during the visit indicated clearly that this goal is achieved. **[M8]** Programmes are also designed in such a way as to allow a smooth transition to an appropriate second cycle either at this University or, where second-cycle programmes are not available, elsewhere. **[SER p.30] [Chapter I Standard I.7]**

3.10 The University supports its first-cycle students in a number of ways. It provides financial assistance on a merit basis in accordance with government policy. **[SER p.31]** Students are provided with careers advice services by agreement with outside bodies, and the University itself has established a Students' Counselling Centre. The position of Dean of Students has been established with responsibility to support students and raise concerns in the area of student welfare with University governing bodies. **[SERp.31]** However, no-one has yet been appointed to this position.

3.11 Teaching methods are stated to be largely traditional by both staff and students. **[M5;M11]** Individual lecturers engage in an ad hoc fashion in more interactive pedagogies. **[SER p.31]** The Department of Teaching Methodology within the Faculty of Education has made its open classes available to colleagues from other parts of the University. These often include presentation by international experts. **[M2]** Attendance at international conferences also facilitates exposure to pedagogical developments elsewhere. **[M11]** Newly appointed academic staff are mentored by senior colleagues. **[M11]** This mentoring is valuable but may

have the effect of entrenching traditional teaching methods. This area of the University's work should be reviewed. **[Chapter I Standard I.8]**

3.12 Students have been able to take advantage of access to the internet to facilitate their learning. In the case of students in mathematics and computing, their department's membership of international associations gives them online access to additional material. **[M12, M14]** Students' practical skills in the area of nursing are developed through the close relationship with local hospitals, where students also fulfil their practicum requirement, and by the University's participation in a multi-university project in the Western Balkans. **[2.20; M14]** **[Chapter I Standard I.8]**

3.13 At second-cycle level, 92 per cent of teaching is carried out by full-time staff, most of whom are research active. **[SER p.32-3; 4.7; 4.8]** Master of Science programmes benefit from research being carried out within the University. **[SER p.32]** The team heard of a number of areas at both first and second-cycle level where students were actively involved in research projects in the departments of Geography, Mathematics and Physics. **[M14]** These projects in areas such as developing a mobile phone application to facilitate tourism in the region gave students direct experience of collecting and processing fieldwork data. The team considers the engagement of students in the research carried out by the University to be a point of **good practice**. For professional master's programmes students are able to carry out practicums in appropriate professional organisations with which the University has agreements. **[3.8]** Student work is reported on by the organisations where they have been placed. **[SER p.32]** Guest lecturers are regularly invited to participate in teaching, especially on professional master's programmes. **[SER p.33; 3.9]** **[Chapter I Standard I.9]**

3.14 Student mobility within Europe and beyond is encouraged through various means. The programmes of study themselves are organised according to Bologna principles. Diplomas and diploma supplements are produced in Albanian and English and provide adequate information on courses studies and ECTS credits. **[SER p.33; 3.12]** The programmes of study are designed as far as possible to match similar ones elsewhere in Europe. Following government requirements, all second and third-cycle students must pass an internationally recognised test in English or another foreign language in order to receive their diplomas. **[SER p.33]** The University has a procedure for transferring credits from foreign universities that have established agreements with it for this purpose. Recognition of foreign degrees is subject to the approval of the Ministry of Education and Sport. **[SER p.33; 3.13]** **[Chapter I Standard I.10]**

3.15 The University structures its programmes of study in such a way as to provide practical activities and experience at both first and second-cycle levels. Programmes in the natural sciences require substantial laboratory-based work. **[3.14]** Diploma theses are required in second-cycle programmes and students are given appropriate supervision and guidance. **[4.3]** **[Chapter 1 Standard I.11]**

3.16 In general, the University endeavours to organise its programmes of study so as to align with labour market needs. **[SER p.26-7]** It keeps its programmes updated to ensure they are in harmony with labour market requirements. New programmes are reviewed at faculty level to ensure their relevance. The Curriculum and Training Coordination Office in the Rectorate also plays a role in this process. **[1.1 Article 6; M4]** Programmes of study include appropriate periods of work experience or practicums, as well as courses that relate to employment, although this is not done on a systematic basis. Absence of systematic employment data is an obstacle in this respect. **[SER p.35-6]** External stakeholders indicated that the University was responsive to suggestions on the curriculum. **[M8]** **[Chapter I Standard I.12]**

Findings

Good practice

The review team identified the following features of good practice:

- the articulation of programmes with regional requirements as part of the University's third mission (paragraph 3.1; **Chapter I Standard I.1; Chapter I Standard I.3**)
- the distribution of information which is effective in ensuring that the target audience is well-informed (paragraph 3.4; **Chapter I Standard I.1**)
- a number of areas at both first and second-cycle level where students were actively involved in research projects in the departments of Geography, Mathematics and Physics (paragraph 3.13; **Chapter I Standard I.9**).

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 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 The University efficiently organises the implementation of its study programmes. Towards the end of each academic year departmental audits are carried out in accordance with the statutes and regulations of the University. [1.1, **Regulations**; 1.2, **Statute of UGJ**] Regulations and course documentation have been drafted for each faculty and department. These are overseen by the Dean of the relevant faculty and the Head of Department. [4.1, **Copies of syllabuses and programmes of study**] The University conducts an annual analysis of teaching and programme implementation on a faculty and department basis. At the beginning of each academic year, open discussions are organised in order to coordinate the correct implementation of the curriculum. [1.1, **Regulations**] [**Chapter I Standard II.1**]

4.2 The University guarantees the realisation of practical and professional training of studentssuch as laboratory work, laboratory modules, practical lessons at the facility, supervised professional practice. Teaching practice is not always guaranteed where relevant and as a result faculties have not been able to regularly review student performance during their teaching practices outside the University. [M11; M12] The University has many cooperation agreements such as with the Regional Educational Directorates in different districts of the country, with the Omer Nishani Hospital Center, with local institutions such as municipalities, county councils, prefectures, and with other private institutions such as commercial banks, such as Raiffeisen Bank. [M3; M4; 2.20 3.8; 4.2]The University makes available the required literature and resources in its libraries, although some study areas are not provided with the most up-to-date material. [**Chapter I Standard II.1**]

4.3 The University has clearly defined rules and procedures for assessment. These are approved by the responsible University structures and are well known to all students and academic staff. Assessment of students' work is handled at departmental and faculty level within an overall framework. [**SER p.27**] Eighty per cent of the assessment for a course is based on written examinations, conducted by a commission of two teachers. [M13]The University promulgates its examination regulations through faculty channels and on its website. [<http://www.uogj.edu.al/uploads/file/RREGULLORE%20E%20UGJ-.pdf>] Faculties have specific examination and assessment regulations based on University regulations. [<http://www.uogj.edu.al/index.php?page=organet-dreituese-te-universitetit>] The University has adopted graduation rules and procedures that provide students with official, legally recognised documentation. [1.2; 1.1] Anonymity and confidentiality is respected during examination assessment. After examinations have been marked, the examination commission is responsible for communicating grades to students according to deadlines set in the regulation. A procedure allows students to appeal within 24 hours of the announcement of their grades if they are dissatisfied. [M13]A commission set up in accordance with regulations at the faculty and programme level reviews cases. [1.1; 1.9] Students can see their personalexamination results. Students are familiar with the assessment procedures and felt that they were appropriate and fair. [M5; M13;<http://www.uogj.edu.al/index.php?page=sherbime-online-student>] [**Chapter I Standard II.2**]

4.4 Programmes of study are constantly revised and improved in light of feedback from students and employers and the experience of other universities. Programmes and teaching activity are reviewed and evaluated by the governing structures.[2.7; M5; M8] Each member of the academic staff completes a self-evaluation report of research activity. This is submitted and revised each academic year. [2.8; M14]Students complete questionnaires expressing opinions about curricula and academic staff performance and are represented on the Student Council. Feedback to students regarding the use made of their opinions is not

systematically shared across the student body.**[M3; M5; M6; M11; M12; M13]** **[Chapter I Standard II.3; Chapter I Standard II.4]**

4.5 The University does not currently hold a complete database covering the employment of its graduates. Nevertheless, it strives to monitor its graduates by maintaining contacts with them and by creating department-level databases.**[M2; M3; M4; M12; M13; M14]** The University also has limited activity regarding the continuing professional development of its graduates. This process has progressed more at the Faculty and Department of Teaching. **[M11; M12]** **[Chapter I Standard II.3]**

4.6 The University has developed support mechanisms for teaching innovations, for example the Curriculum and Training Office, whose mission is to improve the University's teaching and to enhance its quality. **[M3; M4; M11; M12]** The University supports academic staff efforts to raise their qualification levels through doctoral studies and other training. **[4.4; M1]** A council has also been approved by a decision of the Academic Senate to assure teaching quality. This council is chaired by the Rector and reports to the Academic Senate. The University is involved in several cooperation projects funded by the European Union, for example through the TEMPUS programme. These projects focus on programme design, sharing experience, and curricula and teaching improvement. The University does not systematically maintain records concerning teachers who are not performing well, although there are mechanisms in place to support those individuals. **[M3; M4; M11; M12]** Exchanges of academic staff with universities such as Galicia in Spain, Silesia in Poland, Turku in Finland, Patra and Thessaloniki in Greece, Nicosia in Cyprus and Halmstad in Sweden have taken place and help to expose staff to different approaches to teaching. These have been facilitated through bilateral agreements and through Erasmus+. **[1.13]** Where the University does not have the appropriate infrastructure to implement teaching programmes, it uses facilities elsewhere. **[M3; M4; M5]** **[Chapter I Standard II.4]**

4.7 The University recognises as a strong point the high number of qualified staff and the diversity of areas it covers; 70 per cent of academic staff hold titles and scientific degrees. Staff members who are PhD students mostly work on regional topics consistent with the strategic development of the University. **[M1; M3; M4]** The basic departmental units are grouped according to their respective teaching disciplines, and their research is linked to their areas of teaching expertise. **[1.17; 1.14]** They promote, coordinate and administer teaching, research and other academic activities. Departments are more focused on teaching and scholarship than on research. They respect the academic freedom of academic staff and their right to use available materials and financial resources for the programmes of study. Financial support for research has been insufficient. Research responsibility and control is individual rather than departmental. **[M4; M10; M11]** **[Chapter II Standard I.1]**

4.8 The University supports new scientific research groups and projects. It welcomes and encourages research proposals and its support will, in part be, based on the approved financial resources. **[4.6]** It cooperates with other public and private research institutions, especially in the field of teaching. **[1.13]** Continuous improvement of research and teaching quality is facilitated by interaction with institutions elsewhere in Albania and abroad. **[1.19; 1.20]** Funds for research support are limited, and the number of projects where the University is involved is low; at the time of the visit there were two projects. **[M11]** **[Chapter II Standard I.2]**

4.9 The University organises scientific conferences and participates in other institutions' activities. This is regularly reflected on the website. Each faculty has organised conferences in partnership with other universities from Albania and abroad, including three in the last five years. **[4.7; <http://www.uogj.edu.al/index.php?page=njoftime-11>]** The University supports research in the natural sciences, education sciences and social sciences fields. It provides laboratory facilities, although these are not always sufficient. **[4.8]** The University has signed

several agreements with higher education institutions in Albania and abroad.[\[http://www.uogi.edu.al/index.php?page=marredhenie-dy-paleshe\]; 1.19; 1.20\]](http://www.uogi.edu.al/index.php?page=marredhenie-dy-paleshe) The University regularly organises ceremonial meetings related to research achievements, such as ceremonies for the submission of academic titles, research in Albanology, cultural heritage, or environment conservation. [\[www.uogi.edu.al/index.php?page=njoftime-11\]; 4.8\]](http://www.uogi.edu.al/index.php?page=njoftime-11)
[Chapter II Standard I.3]

4.10 The University's scientific research priorities are set by Departments and research centres in accordance with the University's development strategy. **[1.14]** These priorities are in accordance with the University's institutional objectives, national and regional development strategies, and the strategy of the Ministry of Education and Science. The University has its own plan for the establishment and functioning of research centres within faculties, two of which are already active. The University budget provides a support fund for innovation projects. **[M4; M11]** It promotes scientific debate in priority areas of research. This is accomplished through the organisation of academic days, open lectures, and seminars, in which academic staff are engaged in discussing ideas and scientific achievements. **[M11] [Chapter II Standard I.4]**

4.11 Although the University's scientific research priorities are set by Departments and research centres in accordance with the University's development strategy, the five-year development strategy does not demonstrate a long-term vision. **[1.14]** The University does not highlight its priorities in creating a specific research profile in line with its strategic development programme. This gap allows for an individual interpretation of the applicability of research to the development strategy. **[M4; M11; M14]** Some current areas where research activities are concentrated are the environment, cultural heritage, regional economic development, and teacher qualification. Collaboration with important regional and national partners shows strong links in certain areas such as the financial management of local government institutions, Albanology, healthcare, or professional education. **[M8; M14; M15, M4]** In some areas the staff research is thorough, relevant to the region, and involves students. However, the overall amount and staff involvement in research is limited which can impact on the curriculum. **[1.6; B7; M8; M14]** The lack of a strategic approach to supporting research is a **weakness**. The review team **recommends** that the University develops an institutional strategy in which priorities are identified and supported. **[Chapter II Standard I.5]**

4.12 Research related to regional development and to conservation of culture represents an important direction of the University's activity, and is identified in its main acts and documents. **[1.14]** In particular, the University collaborates with The Centre of Albanological Studies. The University mission stresses its main focus on the 'need for change and transformation and the development of real capacities for our society', specifically to include 'serving as an important researching scientific and publishing centre of the Southern Region'. **[SER introduction]** The Centre of Albanological Studies is engaged through collaboration with teaching and projects which include jointly organised annual conferences. International partners include the University of Palermo and the University of Ioannina in Northern Greece. The University also works with the University of Ioannina on the research of the common architectural heritage of Northern Greece and Southern Albania, as well as the cultural heritage through language and literature supported by the publication of the first large modern Greek/Albanian dictionary and the specialist library referred to in paragraph 2.15. **[M8; M10]** This collaborative work in the research of cultural heritage is **good practice**. It impacts positively on the Greek Minority and on the Southern Region as specified in the University mission. **[SER introduction; C12; M8; M10; M12; M13; M14]** Other collaborations include the Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Biological and Environmental Research, and other universities of the Republic of Albania. The University encourages new researchers' involvement in research, but it may wish to consider providing

greater facilities and support to them. [<http://www.uogj.edu.al/index.php?page=njoftime-11>; **M11] [Chapter II Standard I.6]**

4.13 The University has made efforts towards the internationalisation of its research. Many national and international conferences have been organised, and academic staff have participated in other scientific activities in Albania and abroad. It has facilitated the publication of conference results through its indexed publication, University Research. [ISSN:2226-082X); <http://www.uogj.edu.al/index.php?page=seria-matematika-dhe-shkencat-e-natyres>] Internationalisation and publication of the University's research activities and results are nevertheless modest with six projects in 11 years, all of them belonging to the period before 2014. [1.13] [Chapter II Standard I.7]

4.14 The University tracks and analyses the scientific activity of its academic staff and units and is periodically informed by academic staff about their research activity. [2.8] Major directions of research are determined on the basis of the research topics of young PhDs. For this purpose, the University has cooperated with other universities and research centres within Albania. The University encourages young researchers to undertake their own research initiatives and to become engaged in regional and national research projects. Academic staff have participated in regional conferences organised by the University's partners. The University and/or its partners, have organised joint conferences with PhD students and other local partners. [M12; M10] The University deals with domestic and foreign businesses and takes into consideration economic and social factors. Agreements with private and public institutions have been signed. The majority of student practicums and internships take place at different businesses in the region, for example commercial banks (e.g. Raiffeisen Bank), the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Omer Nishani Hospital. [2.20] [Chapter II Standard I.8]

Findings

Good practice

The review team identified the following feature of good practice:

- collaborative work in the research of cultural heritage (paragraph 4.12; **Chapter II Standard I.6**).

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weakness:

- the lack of a strategic approach to supporting research (paragraph 4.11; **Chapter II Standard I.5**).

Recommendations

The review team made the following recommendation:

- that the University develops an institutional strategy in which priorities are identified and supported (paragraph 4.11; **Chapter II Standard I.5**).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

Judgement

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

Evaluation Area 5: Students and their Support

5.1 The University pursues the correct policy for new students' entrance. It recruits first-cycle students, in accordance with faculty and University regulations, in a variety of ways, including direct meetings with high school graduates, open days, the State Matura exams, the information day and its own website. **[SER p.46; 2.7 (in Albanian); website as on 04/04/17 and 22/05/17; 1.1 Article 16; 1.2 Article 39; M2; M5]** Its Career Counselling Office has responsibility for providing information for prospective students. The University is in regular contact with the Regional Education Directorate and Education to inform high school graduates. It follows its own admission process as detailed in its Regulation. **[1.1 Articles 21 to 23]** It uses its own lecturers to recruit second and third-cycle students in accordance with University and faculty regulations. **[SER p.46; 1.1 Article 17; 1.2 Article 40]** Individual departments handle student induction, but there is no overarching University policy. **[SER p.46]** The University pursues 'welcoming policies' for foreign students, but it does not have a structure for foreign student recruitment, which it admits is a weakness, although there are 'some' foreign students studying at the University. **[SER, p.46]** Hours for meeting with students are published, but these are with secretaries in the first instance, and only later referred to senior staff. Individual lecturers do not have regular contact office hours. **[SER p.46-47]** The University's overall lecturer-student ratio is 1:13, which is below the national average, although this figure is not broken down into laboratory and other programmes. **[SER p.47; 5.1 (in Albanian)]** **[Chapter I Standard III.1]**

5.2 The University informs and communicates with its students and academic staff in a variety of ways. It uses its announcement boards, email, its website and, where available, the bulletin of University researches for external communication. It uses the online database system (ESSE3) for internal communication. **[SER p.47]** All University staff members have official email addresses. **[SER p.47]** The University holds a file on each student which records student data from registration and other data, such as grades, from throughout the student's University life. **[SER p.47; B.1; B.2; B.3]** The University also holds contact details for all of its students, including home addresses, email addresses and phone numbers. **[SER p.47]** **[Chapter I Standard III.2]**

5.3 The University informs, orientates and mentors its students through its Student Counselling and Information Centre (SCIC), which has its own Statute. **[SER p.47; 1.1 Articles 27-28 (particularly 4 for Statute); M5; C5; C6; C11]** Students also receive advice and information, such as study programmes and timetables, from their departments and in their lectures. **[SER p.47-48; M5]** Students do not currently have individual tutors and they usually go to their Head of Department with questions, but this situation will change when the new post of Dean of Students is in place in the near future. **[M5]** There are, however, mentors for teacher training and nursing. In the second cycle one lecturer tutors six students. **[M12]** The University study programmes build in progressive development, from general information in the first year to more subject-specific subject work, including practicums, in later years. **[SER p.48; M5]** Although the self-evaluation report mistakenly states that 'changing study programs ... is not allowed in any Higher Education Institution of Albanian Republic', its Statute states that it offers students the opportunity to transfer programmes, but does not describe the criteria that they must meet to do so. **[SER p.48; 1.2 Article 43; M]** **[Chapter I Standard III.3]**

5.4 The University supports specific social category students **[SER p.48; Council of Ministers Decision, no. 911, dated 11.11.2015 (amended)]** and excuses fees for students from special categories, such as Roma students and Balkan Egyptians by setting a quota for their admission and following the guideline of the Ministry of Education and Sport. **[SER**

p.48] In addition, the University offers a study programme for the Greek student minority, the Bachelor and Masters in Language, Literature and Greek Civilisation, which is considered an asset for the University. **[SER p.48; 5.2 (in Albanian); M3; M11: M13]** The University supports students pursuing sports by offering special exam sessions and providing special classes. **[SER p.48]** It used to support students pursuing sports by offering part-time study, but, since 2014-15, this is no longer possible by law. **[SER p.48; Law of Higher Education nr 80 /2015, Article 69][Chapter I Standard III.4]**

5.5 The University provides basic literature and support for students. It guarantees a sufficient number of quality textbooks and complementary literature for its students' study. Students have access to a central University library and two smaller specialist libraries in the Italian and Greek Departments, whose resources include textbooks, scanned articles, electronic online databases and links to other national and international university libraries. **[SER p.48-49; 2.16; online library link as on 03/04/17; M4; Library tour]** The Standard and Curricula Office keeps a list of the literature of every course and every programme. **[SER p.48-49]** The University enriches the library steadily; for example, the spending for books has increased over recent years, from 7,000 Euro in 2015 to 11,000 Euro in 2016. **[SER p.48-49; 5.3; Library tour]** There is a line in the budget for the library. **[SER p.49; 4.6 final page item Libra per bibliotekën 2,000,000 (in Albanian)]** All students have a registration card for use to access literature and the University intends to introduce electronic library cards in future. Students were satisfied with the resources at their disposal in the University holdings, both hard copy and online. **[SER p.49; M5; Library tour]** **[Chapter I Standard III.5]**

5.6 The University supports first-cycle students well. At induction, which is monitored by the Vice-Rector, departmental academic staff introduce students to exactly what they need to know about the University and their programmes. **[M2; M5]** Academic staff also offer thesis preparation guidance, clear procedures for assignments and literature guidance through their lecturers and departments. **[SER p.49]** Although the University does not offer courses to help students in difficulties, there are planned meetings with lecturers written into syllabuses and unplanned meetings also take place. **[SER p. 49][Chapter I Standard III.6]**

5.7 The University encourages students' participation in University life. The student representatives from each year and each discipline are elected to the Student Council in January of each year. When in post, they elect three Student Senators, including a Student Council Head. **[SER p.49; Law no. 9741, dated 21.5.2007, 'For Higher Education in Republic of Albania' and its amendments, Article 55]** The Student Council is a two-way conduit for students; they give information to students about such things as events and they collect information about what students want, including complaints. **[M5]** Student Senate representatives serve on Academic Senate and on Faculty Councils in accordance, where they put forward proposals and ideas relating to, for instance, course syllabuses, study programmes and regulations. **[SER p.49-50; 5.4; M5]** The new Statute describes Student Councils and a Dean of Students. In the future students will be elected every two years to serve on the Academic Senate and on Faculty Student Councils. **[Law no.23.dt.21.04.2016; 1.1a (in Albanian)]** The current process of student representation is not completely clear. Their proposals come out of student meetings, from the Dean or through the 'box of enquiries'. The self-evaluation reportcites two examples of student proposals: one to change exam scheduling and another to increase professional practicum in professional institutions. **[SER p.50]** The University provides minimal financial support to student organisations because of competing budget demands. **[SER p.50; Chapter I Standard III.7]**

5.8 The University attempts to offerextracurricular activities, but support is restricted by its limited budget. It has in the past provided a poetry event, a football match and a party. Students provided more examples, including sport, theatre and entrepreneurship events.

The University also engages periodically with the Red Cross and there was a theatrical performance on offer during the review visit. **[SER p.50; B5.2; M5][Chapter I Standard III.8]**

5.9 The University helps students find employment in a number of ways, including: professional practice placements, workshops such as a job fair, and its extensive regional contact network (see also paragraph 1.11). **[SER p.50; 1.1; Article 39]** The Career Counselling Office is specifically dedicated to future student employment. The University also provides departmental recommendations and hires some of its own students. **[SER p.50; 1.1 Article 39]** There is, however, no overall database at the University to collect statistical data on student employment, although some departments have databases (see also paragraph. 1.10). **[Chapter I Standard III.9]**

Findings

Good practice

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

Weaknesses

The review team did not identify any weaknesses.

Recommendations

The review team did not identify any recommendations.

Affirmation of action being taken

The review team did not affirm any actions already in progress

Judgement

The standards for Students and their Support are substantially met.

Evidence list

A. Evidence with self-evaluative report (SER)(Annex 4, SER)

Evidence, evaluation area 1: Organization and its Management

- [1.1]Regulation of the Institution
- [1.1a]New Regulation of the Institution
- [1.2]Statute of the UGJ
- [1.2a]New Statute of the UGJ
- [1.3]Modalities and standards of hiring academic staff
- [1.4]Rules and regulations of the functioning of the ESSE3 system
- [1.5]Senate's and Administrative Council's decisions for the Budget 2017
- [1.6]The budget of 2017 <http://uniel.edu.al/index.php/al/drejtoria-ekonomike>
- [1.7]Decisions of the Administrative Council of the last legislature
- [1.8]The Ethical Council and its rules and regulations
- [1.9]The rules and regulations of the Faculty of Education & Social Sciences and Faculty of Natural Sciences
- [1.10]Senate's Decision for the creation of the Council of Professors.
- [1.11]The Regulations of the Academic Senate of the UGJ
- [1.12]The decision for the creation of the Internal Quality Assurance Unit
- [1.13]List of International projects, where UGJ is a partner.
- [1.14]Development strategy of UGJ
- [1.15]Annual Report on academic and scientific activities of UGJ
- [1.16]Annual Report on academic and scientific activities of the Faculty of Education & Social Sciences and Faculty of Natural Sciences
- [1.17]Organizational Structure of UGJ
- [1.18]Structure of academic staff of UGJ
- [1.19]List of inter-institutional agreements for practical activities for the students of UGJ with other Institutions
- [1.20]List of cooperation agreements with other universities in and outside Albanian

Evidence, evaluation area 2: Resourcing

- [2.1] The organisation chart of the University of Gjirokastra
- [2.2] The list of part time academic staff
- [2.3] Announcement sample for a vacancy
- [2.4] The academic titles Prof. Assoc and Docent given by the Council of Professors
- [2.5] A sample table consisting of all the indicators for the recruiting lecturers
- [2.6] The report of the open days
- [2.7] Sample annual analysis provided by the departments
- [2.8] Evaluation chart of a lecturer's work and academic achievement
- [2.9] List of lecturers who have gone abroad to provide lectures at a western university
- [2.10] List of foreign professors who have been engaged in providing academic titles at UGJ
- [2.11] Sample written request of a lecturer who requires receiving the academic title Professor in another university
- [2.12] Budget report of 2016, and the decision of Administration Board
- [2.13] Project budgeting proposal made by a faculty or department
- [2.14] The organisation chart of the economic directory
- [2.15] Order concerning the approval of the transparency program
- [2.16] List of the institution's real estate
- [2.17] List of projects that have to do with the restoration of the UGJ environments
- [2.18] List of environments for the academic staff for each faculty
- [2.19] Report on the questionnaires
- [2.20] List of institutional agreements for the fulfilment of the professional practices

Evidence, evaluation area 3: The Curriculum

- [3.1]A list of study programmes offered by the UGJ
- [3.2]Institutional agreement with the University of Macerate'
- [3.3]Agreement for the organization of the annual workload of the academic staff in UGJ
- [3.4]An example of procedures followed in opening and establishing a second cycle study programme (Master of Sciences in Linguistics) Professional Master in Public Administration or first cycle programme (BA in English Language)
- [3.5] Statistics on the accomplishment of the teaching workload by the full time staff of the UGJ
- [3.6]The number of lecturers with /without academic titles
- [3.7]Extract from the procedures of opening the study programme – 'Master of Sciences in environmental protection'
- [3.8]A list of agreements on the professional practicum
- [3.9]A list of guest lecturers from the business or other fields.
- [3.10] A sample of every study programme, 'BA in English Language', 'Professional Master in Tourism' and PhD in Albanian Studies
- [3.11] A sample teaching plan
- [3.12] Supplement/appendix of the diploma
- [3.13]On the exchange of students to and from the UGJ
- [3.14] Study programmes which include the lab and the professional practice classes.

Evidence, evaluation area 4: Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research

- [4.1] Copy of a syllabus and study program for two cycles of study for each faculty
- [4.2] Students' practice procedure
- [4.3] Manual for the diploma preparation
- [4.4] Table with data on staff qualification
- [4.5] Agreements with the Municipality of Gjirokastra about Sports Areas
- [4.6] Document on the drafting of UGJ draft-budget
- [4.7] Information on scientific conferences organized by UGJ
- [4.8] Information on publications and conferences where staff has participated,
- [4.9] Cooperation agreement with public or private research institutions
- [4.10] – Academic days in UGJ

Evidence, evaluation area 5: Students and their Support

- [5.1] – Statistics of the student/ pedagogue relation
- [5.2] – The modality of the opening of the study program 'Bachelor in Language, Literature and Greek Civilization'
- [5.3]- A list with the latest literature enrichment
- [5.4] – The decision of the KIZ (Institutional Election Commission) for the election of the student members of the senate

B. List of additional documents (desk based evaluation phase).

- B.1. Register of academic records
- B.2.. Electronic register
- B.3. Student based registry
- B.4. An example of procedures followed in order to improve full time study programs
- B.5. Evidence of the following needed to University of Gjirokastra
- B.6. Report for the draft Budget 2017
- B.7. Report of Annual budget 2016
- B.8. Proposals of draft budgets from Departments
- B.9. List of Real Estates projects
- B.10. List of teaching spaces capacities
- B.11. Reports about student surveys.
- B.12. List of agreements for student practicum

C. List of additional documents (review visit)

- C.1. Development Strategy of UGJ, (Albanian- English)
- C. 2.Annual Report of UGJ 2016, (Albanian- English)
- C.3.An example of procedures followed in order to improve full time study programs, (Albanian- English)
- C.4A diagram about academic problems solving procedures (English)
- C.5. Terms of references of Career Counselling Office. (Albanian- English)
- Monthly activity plan of Career Counselling Office, (Albanian- English)
- C.6. Terms of references of Students Counselling Office, Monthly activity plan of Career Counselling Office (Albanian)
- C.7.ALUMNI DATABASE, (Albanian)
- C.8. Administrate regulation and terms of references for any administrative position, Neni 42, (Albanian- English)
- C.9. Reports of U3M Project, U3M, (English)
- C.10.Internal Quality Assurance Report 2014 (Albanian-hard copy at HEI)
- C.11. Structural Chart of 'Eqrem Çabej' University (Albanian- English)
- C.12. An example of partnership with Ioannina University (English)
- C.13. Agenda of meetings with participant's names according to pre-defined groups (Albanian- English)

Notes of Meetings

- M1, Meeting 1 with Rector
- M2, Meeting 2 with Self-evaluation team
- M3, Meeting 3 with Academic Senate (exc. Rector)
- M4, Meeting 4 with Rectorate (exc. Rector)
- M5, Meeting 5 with students
- M8, Meeting 8 with external partners and alumni
- M10, Tour of accommodation
- M11, Meeting 11 with heads of departments and administrative secretaries
- M12, Meeting 12 with professors and senior research staff
- M13, Meeting 13 with non-professoriate teaching staff
- M14, Meeting 14 with research-active junior staff
- M15, Meeting 15 with Administration Council and heads of administration

Staff Questionnaire

Student Questionnaire