



# **Institutional Review of Higher Education Institutions in Albania**

**Report of the Institutional Review of HEI  
"Nehemia Gateway University"  
April 2017**

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## Contents

About this review.....	1
The context of this review .....	2
Summary report .....	3
Summary of findings .....	4
Detailed report .....	6
Evaluation Area 1: The Organisation and its Management.....	6
Evaluation Area 2: Resourcing.....	10
Evaluation Area 3: The Curriculum.....	13
Evaluation Area 4: Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research .....	16
Evaluation Area 5: Students and their Support.....	19

## 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

HEI Nehemia Gateway University (the Institution) is a private institution located in the town of Pogradec in South East Albania. It is part of the global network of the Nehemia Gateway Group with its headquarters in Nuremberg, Germany. The location for the Institution was chosen to help individuals rebuild their personal lives through student-centred learning and quality teaching, and help Albanians to make connections with European and global communities. The Institution is financed through the Nehemia Gateway Albania Foundation, which has been operational since 1992. Initially, the Foundation supported elementary and secondary schools in Albania, but since 2005 it has provided opportunities for students to progress to higher education through the Institution.

The Institution mission statement is: "*Helping and empowering people to sustainably shape and determine their own lives in dignity and independence.*"

The Institution has four main objectives:

- 1 To support students in their desire for higher education.
- 2 To enable students to become responsible, self-thinking and cooperative leaders and experts who show initiative.
- 3 To facilitate the educational process through dynamic and high quality programmes.
- 4 To cooperate in research projects with other institutions.

The Institution has two faculties, namely the Faculty of Business and Technology and the Faculty of Humanities. Each faculty has one department: the Department of Business and Economics offers the bachelor's programme in Economy and Businesses and the Department of Education and Ethics offers the Master of Science in Leadership and Assessment in Education.

The Institution is part of the Nehemia Gateway Foundation and some administrative services are provided by the Foundation, for example human resources, financial management, marketing, library, IT Services, facility management and legal issues.

Currently, the Institution offers only two higher education programmes, namely the Bachelor in Economy and Businesses and the Master of Science in Leadership and Assessment in Education, although the Institution plans to offer more in the near future.

In total, there are 56 students enrolled across the three years of the bachelor's programme and 11 in the second year of the master's programme. Of these 67 students, seven are from Uganda, three from South Sudan, two from Tanzania, two from Cuba, one from Mexico and one from Germany, the rest being of Albanian citizenship.

The Institution employs 23 staff, of whom seven are full-time academic staff. Of the 23 staff employed, nine have foreign citizenship. The Institution also relies heavily on part-time lecturers and have a large pool to draw on for this use.

The Institution has a self-contained campus in Pogradec, which has facilities for teaching and supporting staff and students. This includes lecture and seminar rooms, a library, computer areas, sports facilities, a medical and welfare centre and a restaurant.

## Summary report

A self-evaluation report was developed by a team at the Institution, which included the Head of the Institution, the Deputy Head of the Institution, the Head of Quality Management and a student representative. Drafts were circulated to a wider audience within the Institution before being finalised and approved by the President and the self-evaluation writing team. The Institution cooperated fully in the evaluation process, the documentation was provided in English, and additional documentation was provided on request.

The visit took place over two days. 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 institution. The review team was supported by a review manager and note-taker provided by APAAL, the agency responsible for reviews of higher education in Albania. The review team was provided with a self-evaluation report and a portfolio of supporting evidence seven weeks in advance of the review visit, supplemented by additional documentation requested. In all, some 80 documents were considered, and enabled the team to familiarise themselves with the structure, policies and management procedures, and the nature of teaching and research activity undertaken by the Institution. Evidence considered included the Statute of the Institution, Academic Regulations, Annual Reports, evaluations and financial reviews, handbooks, minutes of meetings, admission and orientation procedures, the range of external agreements and examples of programme information and evidence from deliberative meetings.

A series of meetings took place during the two days of the review visit, which allowed the review team to gain a clearer understanding of responsibilities, procedures and the views of staff and students. The review team met with the President, Executive Director, Head of Institution, Deputy Head of Institution, senior managers, students, lecturers and administrative and support staff. Notes were taken at all meetings. As part of a tour of the campus the review team viewed the library, teaching spaces and IT facilities. Having reviewed all the evidence available, the team reached the conclusions set out below.

The Institution meets the standards fully for the Organisation and its Management. It has a published statute which clearly states the regulations on the functioning and management of the Institution in accordance with the Law of Higher Education, and this was the basis for the granting of a licence by the Ministry of Education and Sport.

The review team judged that it is an organisation driven by strong values which have a positive impact on the student experience, and that the Institution has a strong commitment to national and international mobility for both staff and students.

The conducting of the Market Research on Employability for a better understanding of the region is also a feature of good practice. The review team did not identify any weaknesses or recommendations related to this Evaluation Area. The review team affirmed the progress the Institution is making in moving towards the requirements of the new law on higher education.

The Institution meets the standards fully for Resourcing. The responsibilities for budgeting and resources are set out in the Institution Statute. The review team identified good practice at the Institution in facilitating the availability of practised, international staff who broaden students' learning experience. The review team did not identify any weaknesses or recommendations related to this Evaluation Area. The review team affirmed the Institution's move to digitise its student records system.

The Institution meets the standards fully for the Curriculum. The two study programmes that it delivers are both clearly aligned with the Mission and the wider Nehemia Gateway Group's *Vision 2020*, which emphasise that it is an international aid organisation with education as

one of its four guiding 'pillars'. The review team identified good practice in the Institution's dual programmes, which integrate theory and practice to promote employability and in the various steps taken to achieve Albanian students' mobility in Europe and beyond.

The Institution meets the standards substantially for Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research. The Institution has appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure efficient organisation and documentation of the study programmes. The review team identified good practice in the the internship opportunities and support for them during this process, as well as the diversity of people at the Institution, with Albanian and foreign students, academic staff and support staff. The review team considered the absence of a research policy and a low level of institutional research, including the lack of a PhD programme, to be a weakness and recommends that the Institution should increase the focus on scientific research and develop and implement its own research policy. The review team did not identify any affirmations under the Evaluation Area Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research.

The Institution meets the standards fully for Students and their Support. The responsibilities for Students and their Support are clearly set out in the Statute of the Institution. The review team identified three areas of good practice. Firstly, all the courses are offered in English and most of these courses are taught by international lecturers; secondly, the Institution offers employment to graduated students; and finally, the dual study programmes, and theoretical and also practical training through internships that is offered to the students, helps them to better gain the ability and skills for future employment, as referenced above. The review team did not identify and weaknesses, recommendations or affirmations related to this Evaluation Area.

## Summary of findings

### Good practice

The review team identified the following features of good practice:

- An organisation driven by strong values which have a positive impact on the student experience (paragraph 1.2; **Chapter III Standard I.1**)
- Market Research on Employability, which the Institution has conducted for a better understanding of the region's needs (paragraph 1.13; **Chapter III Standard III.1**)
- The Institution's commitment to national and international mobility for both staff and students (paragraph 1.13; **Chapter III Standard III.4**)
- The availability and commitment of practised, international staff who broaden students' learning experience (paragraph 2.2; **Chapter III Standard IV.1**)
- The Institution's dual programmes, which integrate theory and practice to promote employability (paragraph 3.8 and 5.9; **Chapter I Standard I.11, Chapter I Standard III.9**)
- The various steps taken to achieve Albanian students' mobility in Europe and beyond (paragraph 3.9; **Chapter I Standard I.10**)
- The Institution provides many internship opportunities for students and supports them during this process (paragraph 4.1; **Chapter I Standard II.1**)
- Diversity of nationalities with Albanian and foreign students, academic staff and support staff (paragraph 4.6; **Chapter II Standard I.3**)
- All the courses are offered in English and some of these courses are taught by international lecturers (paragraph 5.6; **Chapter I Standard III.6**)
- The Institution offers employment to its graduated students (paragraph 5.9; **Chapter I Standard III.9**).

## Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weakness:

- There is no research policy and a low level of institutional research, including the lack of a PhD programme (paragraph 4.5; **Chapter II Standard I.2**).

## Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendation:

- The Institution should increase the focus on scientific research and develop and implement its own research policy (paragraph 4.5; **Chapter II Standard I.2**).

## Affirmation of action being taken

The review team affirms the following actions already in progress:

- The progress made in moving towards the requirements of the new law on higher education (paragraph 1.11; **Chapter III Standard I.1**)
- The Institution's move to digitise its student records system (paragraph 2.11; **Chapter III Standard VIII.1**).

## Summary of judgements for each Evaluation Area

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

## Summary judgement

The reviewers recommend to the Accreditation Council that at Nehemia Gateway University the State Quality Standards are fully met.



## Detailed report

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

1.1 The Institution has a published statute [A6] which clearly states the regulations on the functioning and management of the Institution in accordance with the Law of Higher Education, and which was the basis for the granting of a licence [A5] by the Ministry of Education and Sport. The contents of the Statute [A6] include details of the Mission, Objectives, Structure, Financing and Auditing of the Institution. Staff [M1; M2; M3; M6] and students [M4] are familiar with their rights, roles and responsibilities as outlined in the Statute, and the Institution management [M2; M3] is aware of the need to adapt these in view of the new law on higher education in Albania and the developing requirements of the Institution. The review team **affirms** the progress made by the Institution in moving towards the requirements of the new law on higher education. The new structure is proposed to become an Academy with an Administrative Board, an Academic Senate and a reduction from two to one faculties, and the Institution is ready to put this in place when required. The Executive Director will become the administrator and the Head of the Institution, the Rector [A1; M2; M3].

1.2 Nehemia operates according to the values, philosophy and principles of the Nehemia Gateway Group [M2; A1] and has a mission of 'Helping and empowering people to sustainably shape and determine their own lives in dignity and independence'. The objectives of the Institution reflect this mission and it was clear to the review team through discussions with staff [M2; M3; M5], students [M4], alumni and employers [M5] that this mission is followed and understood throughout the organisation, for example through the application of the objectives through strategic and operational activities. This is an institution driven by strong values which have a positive impact on the student experience, and the review team considers this to be a feature of **good practice**.

1.3 The Institution is governed by the Supervisory Board, with published terms of reference [A8]. The Institution has a clear Committee and reporting structure [B2; B1] which is also published on the Institution website [<http://www.ng-university.org/our-university/about/organizational-chart.html>]. The Supervisory Board appoints the Advisory Board, which is responsible for academic and ethical advice, particularly with regard to Institution strategy. [A1; A6]. The Head of the Institution is also appointed by the Supervisory Board [A1; A6] and is supported by the Senior Management Team, which is the executive body of the Institution. The Senior Management Team comprises the Head of the Institution, Heads of Faculties, the Executive Director, the Head of Marketing and the Head of the Research Agenda.

1.4 Currently the Institution has two faculties and two departments, which provide academic leadership for the BA Economy and Business and the MSc Leadership and Assessment in Education. Currently, these are the Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Business and Technology [B2]. There are plans to grow up to five faculties as the Institution develops [A1; A6]. There are also two academic administrative functions, namely the Examinations Office and the Office for Quality Management and International Relations.

1.5 The Institution has submitted a new structure for approval by the Ministry [A1] to comply with the new law on higher education and is awaiting a response [A1; M2]. The Institution and its structures therefore work in accordance with the current Statute and are ready to respond when required.

1.6 The Institution Committees meet regularly according to a meeting calendar [B7] and have predetermined responsibilities and topics for discussion. Minutes are kept which demonstrate that they are carrying out their responsibilities effectively [A7; A9; A16; A17;

**A18; A19; A22; B8; B11].**

1.7 The financial management of the Institution, including budget setting and monitoring, is agreed through Financial Meetings, [A9] which have representation from the senior managers at the Institution and are based on proposals from the faculties [A1; M6]. Budgets are set annually and monitored continuously, with a Financial Statement being sent to the parent group every month [M6]. Financial Meetings take place four times per year and published accounts are produced, reviewed and audited annually [M6; A23; A27].

1.8 Staff are evaluated and promoted according to the Assessment Plan of the Institution, [A11; M3] based on the PEP Evaluation Form [A12]. Individual meetings take place between staff and the Executive Director, where performance against target is evaluated [M6].

1.9 The Institution does not have a separate Board of Ethics but as this is a small institution, these responsibilities are carried out by the Faculty Boards [A1]. Faculty Boards comprise the Head of Faculty, the Head of Department and student representatives [A1].

1.10 In addition to the committees referred to above, the Institution also has committees such as the Strategic Planning Committee [A19] and the Quality Assurance Committee, [B6] of which many staff are members [M6]. The agenda for meetings is published in advance, debate is encouraged in meetings, and minutes recording decisions made are published afterwards [A1; A7; A9; A16; A17; A18; A19; A22; B8; B11].

1.11 The organisation of the Institution shows a distinction between academic and administrative functions [B1; B2]. Although these must be interrelated at higher levels, at faculty level there is a clear dedication to academic matters concerning programme management and giving staff freedom to pursue academic research [A1; M3; M6].

1.12 The Institution's development strategy is consistent with the *Vision 2020* [A24] of the Nehemia Group. The Strategic Plan of the Institution [A10], the Annual Evaluation of the Strategic Plan [A25] and the Institutional Objectives Evaluation [A26] are well understood by staff [M1; M2; M3; M6]. The Institution values are Forgiveness, Respect, Integrity, Honesty, Compassion and Inspiration and these values are integral to the Institution's mission and objectives. The objectives are to support students in their desire for higher education, to enable students to become responsible, self-thinking and cooperative leaders and experts who show initiative, to facilitate the educational process through dynamic and quality programmes, and to cooperate with research projects in other institutions. The Institution publishes an Annual Report about its activities which it submits to the Ministry and which is available to staff through the website [<http://www.nehemiah-gateway.al/en/information/media-al.html>, B9].

1.13 The self-evaluation report [A1] states that the focus of the Institution is the development of the local region through the exposure of students to international business practices and experience. It goes on to say that it is the ambition of the founders of the Institution to contribute to the socio-economic development of the Ohrid Lake region of Albania through the programmes offered. The Institution has conducted Market Research on Employability for a better understanding of the region's needs and, based on that, has developed its study programmes, and this is a feature of **good practice**. The detail examined gives the Institution confidence in the aims and objectives of the programmes offered. [A53]. The Institution collaborates with local, national and international partners [A1; A34; A35; A39; C5] and this is also reflected in the diversity of international students attending the Institution [A2; M4; M5]. The Institution also has cooperation agreements with several higher education institutions in Albania and internationally [A32], including many from Germany where the Nehemia Group was initiated. The Institution also has links with South America and Africa, [M5] where some graduates are employed, as discussed in the

meeting with alumni, partners and employers [M5]. Full-time and part-time lecturers also have an international composition, [A2] with 70 per cent of guest lecturers coming from outside Albania [A33]. In summary, the Institution clearly demonstrates a commitment to national and international mobility for both staff [M2; M3] and students, [M4; M5] and the review team considers this to be **good practice**.

1.14 The Institution is also developing a very active link with the Institution of Korçë in Albania [M5]. The agreement was signed in 2017 and includes activities such as student and staff exchanges and plans for a joint master's programme [M5].

1.15 The Institution collects statistics on student admissions, nationality, retention, success and employment and these are published by programme, that is for both the first and second-cycle programme on the Institution website [<http://www.ng-university.org/our-university/about/facts-figures.html>]. Although there are relatively small numbers of students, the employment rates are high. The Institution also carries out market research on employment opportunities for its graduates [A53]. Therefore, the judgements reached by the review team, based on the above evidence, are that the standards in Evaluation Area 1 relating to autonomy, organisation and partnership are fully met.

## Findings

### Good practice

The review team identified the following features of good practice:

- An organisation driven by strong values which have a positive impact on the student experience (paragraph 1.2; **Chapter III Standard I.1**)
- The Institution has conducted Market Research on Employability for a better understanding of the region's needs (paragraph 1.13; **Chapter III Standard III.1**)
- The Institution's commitment to national and international mobility for both staff and students (paragraph 1.13; **Chapter III Standard III.4**).

### Weaknesses

The review team did not identify any weaknesses.

### Recommendations

The review team did not make any recommendations.

### Affirmation of action being taken

The review team made the following affirmation of action already in progress:

- The progress made in moving towards the requirements of the new law on higher education (paragraph 1.11; **Chapter III Standard I.1**).

## Judgement

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

## Evaluation Area 2: Resourcing

2.1 The responsibility for budgeting and resources is set out in the Institution Statute [A6]. The Institution's organisational chart is published in the Faculty Handbook and on the website. [A1 p.23; <http://www.ng-university.org/our-university/about/organizational-chart.html>]. The Human Resources and Operations (HRO) department is managed by the Institution's Executive Director but, generally, human resource management is outsourced to the Albanian Nehemia Gateway operation [A1 p.23; A2; A3; A33; A10; C2, section 8]. Job vacancies against defined criteria are advertised on the NG Gateway website [<http://www.nehemiah-gateway.al/en/career/job-vacancies.html>; A34; C2, section 8]. All appointees are issued with a standard contract in line with the Nehemia Gateway Group policy. Job descriptions for all posts are published in the Faculty Handbook [10; SER pp.26-29; Academic staff CV and contract files, available at the visit]. The Institution's promotion policy is published in the Faculty Handbook [C2; A10; A33].

2.2 While there are 24 full-time academic and professional staff, the Institution relies on experienced part-time and guest lecturers drawn from Albania and various countries overseas [A32; M1; M2; M3]. On appointment, guest lecturers are given an effective orientation, and are then resident at the Institution for two to three-week periods, often on several occasions through an academic cycle. After this, they are available via email. [Academic staff CV and contract files, available at the visit; M3]. Human Resources staff identify substitutes in the event of a guest lecturer being unavailable for any reason [M3; M6]. Students are appreciative of the quality and availability of teaching staff, and of the range of international experience on offer [M4]. The availability commitment of practised, international staff, who broaden students' learning experience, is considered a feature of good practice by the review team.

2.3 Institution and wider Nehemia Gateway Group information is shared at regular Institution meetings, on the institutional website, and via relevant handbooks including the comprehensive Policy Manual [A10; A11; A12; A13; C2]. Institution managers explained that promoting a sense of community for guest lecturers, who may be occasional visitors, is a priority [M3]. Academic and professional support staff met by the review team were knowledgeable about the mission of both the Institution and the foundation [M4; M6].

2.4 The Institution operates a policy for personnel evaluation for academic and administrative staff, with targets set against faculty objectives and job descriptions [Personnel folders viewed at visit]. Senior staff are evaluated by the Supervisory Board, which also evaluates its own performance [A7; A8; A9; A10; A37]. The Head of Quality Management analyses the data, which goes to faculty committees [A36; A37]. Staff including managers had all been evaluated and were able to identify positive outcomes [M3; M5; M6; Personnel folders viewed at visit].

2.5 Staff are aware of the ethos and aims of the Institution and the wider Nehemia Gateway Foundation. This is strengthened by many staff being resident on the multi-purpose campus, which also has a school and medical facilities. A range of social events and conferences, as well as formal meetings, are held to promote integration [A35; M1; M2; M3; M5; Campus tour; C3; M6].

2.6 In line with its overall mission, the Institution is financed primarily from donations and grants with a small amount of income from student fees. The majority of students are supported by NG's own Scholarship for Training and Education with Perspective (STEP) programme [A1 p.30; M1; M4; M6; B9; C2, section 8]. The Institution follows the Nehemia Gateway Group's financial policy and approach to financial management. However, it drafts its own annual budget which is required to align with the objectives laid out in the Nehemia Gateway Strategic Plan. [A6; C2, Section 8]. The budget is informed by faculty proposals,

set by the Senior Management Team, approved by the Supervisory Board and monitored at monthly Financial Meetings. Oversight lies with the Head of the Institution and the Executive Director [A3; A14; A52; A53; A40; A41; A5; C2, Section 8; M6].

2.7 Financial accounts are subject to external audit which, more recently, has included an additional financial review from an external consultant. The Supervisory Board receives all audit reports [A23; A19; A3; A14]. The review team was supplied with the audited, annual financial reports, and with a copy of the most recent report to the Ministry. A more comprehensive annual report was published on the Institution website until 2012. The Institution is intending to reintroduce the annual report and the review team would encourage the Institution in this ambition [B9; <http://www.nehemiah-gateway.al/en/information/media-al.html>]; C9; M2].

2.8 The Institution uses the Nehemia Group's information system. There is a functioning website, intranet and email system. The Institution has its own computers but most students have their own laptops [C2; M4; [www.ng-university.org](http://www.ng-university.org); Campus tour]. Policies and other information, including student recruitment and retention data, are published in documents such as the Statute, Faculty Handbook and Policy Manual, all of which are published on the website [A2; A7; A10; C2; <http://www.ng-university.org/our-university/about/facts-figures.html>]. Students are appreciative of the Institution 's information systems, for which they receive effective orientation [SER p.35; A42; M4].

2.9 The Institution is situated slightly outside Pogradec, within a small, newly built site belonging to Nehemia Gateway. The campus is multi-purpose with a school, health and sports facilities, and a guest house (used by visiting lecturers), as well as Institution buildings [Campus tour; A43]. The facilities team manages the estate and its other assets in line with the Assessment Plan. There is a Facilities and Information Technology Committee but it does not routinely meet, operational oversight being more normally undertaken by the Senior Management Team [A7; C2, Section 10; M6]. The Nehemia Gateway Group policy defines Institution evaluation and development of academic, cultural and scientific property [C2, Section 7]. The Institution 's work is supported by a team of administrators who provide support for students and staff [Campus tour; M4; M6].

2.10 Classrooms and other educational facilities are housed in several buildings, all of which are modern, light and well equipped. The original design of the building ensured that statutory norms are met [A43; SER p.37; M6; Campus tour]. The library is housed in a small room and has nearly 10,000 physical books in English and Albanian, plus access to a range of online resources. However, Institution managers, students, academic staff and alumni all acknowledge that library facilities need to be improved, particularly if student numbers increase [SER p.39; 43; Staff Survey, p.10; Student Survey; M4; M5; M2].

2.11 Information on study programmes is recorded in the Statutes, the Catalogue, and the Faculty Handbooks [A2; A10; A29]. Student records are currently in hard copy [Student files available at visit; Register]. There is a bespoke database on student recruitment and achievement but the Institution acknowledges that this needs to be improved [M6]. To address this, the Institution is trialling two commercial data systems but, at the time of the visit, had not made a formal decision on which would be implemented and by when [M6]. The review team therefore affirms the Institution 's move to digitise its student records system.

## **Findings**

### **Good practice**

The review team identified the following feature of good practice:

- The availability and commitment of practised, international staff who broaden students' learning experience (paragraph 2.2; **Chapter III Standard IV.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 Institution's move to digitise its student records system (paragraph 2.11; **Chapter III Standard VIII.1**).

## **Judgement**

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



## Evaluation Area 3: The Curriculum

3.1 The Institution delivers two study programmes, the BA Economy and Businesses and the MSc Leadership and Assessment in Education. Both are clearly aligned with the Mission and the wider Nehemia Gateway Group's *Vision 2020*, which emphasise that it is an international aid organisation with education as one of its four guiding 'pillars'. The Group stresses its orientation to the labour market and the needs of socially disadvantaged groups and views education as a key means of meeting this aim **[A20; A2; Programme leaflets; SER p.40; C3; C4]**.

3.2 The Institution's courses are 'dual programmes' which seek to integrate theory and practice, via cooperation with professional partners in enterprises, non-governmental organisations and public administration. All students are required to undertake practical placements as well as theoretical work **[M1; Programme leaflets; e.g., <http://www.ng-university.org/study-programs/ba-economy-businesses.html>]**. There is open application to programmes and students may apply for individual modules in line with an institutional commitment to lifelong learning **[M1; Programme leaflets; SER p.43]**.

3.3 In line with the Strategic Plan, both the Institution and the Nehemia Gateway Group aspire to developing further study programmes. However, there is a recognition that any growth needs to be sustainable and to achieve this, it is foreseen that this will be through the development of modular programmes, which promote flexibility with less investment, and blended learning **[A6; M1; M2; M3; C3; C4]**. There is a Curriculum Committee which acts as a working group that gathers and functions upon request of the QA Committee. However, it has not yet convened and decisions about curriculum are made by the senior committees **[A7; M3; M1]**.

3.4 Both Institution programmes are accredited by foreign agencies, the Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation (FIBAA) from Germany, and the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACs) from the USA. The BA was re-accredited by FIBAA in 2015 with no conditions **[A51; Programme leaflets; M1; M3; A1 p.50; A48]**. Agreements with other higher education institutions in Germany, USA and Albania have been signed **[A28]**. Seventy per cent of academic staff are from outside Albania and students are drawn from Africa and Latin America as well as European countries **[M4; M6; Staff profiles available at visit]**. Study programmes are delivered in English **[Programme leaflets; A24; A29]**.

3.5 Institutional objectives are stated in Institution documentation including the Catalogue and Faculty Handbook **[A10; A29]**. Similarly, programme objectives are clearly defined in the Catalogue, where there are module descriptions with aims, content, learning outcomes, and assessment requirements. Credit is awarded in line with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) **[A29; A45]**.

3.6 The curriculum and learning outcomes for the BA Economy and Businesses move from the general to the specific. Modules cover basic requirements including research methods and study skills **[A24; A29; A45; SER pp.41-43; Programme leaflets]**. Delivery is staggered so that when specific cohorts are undertaking theoretical classes, other cohorts are doing practical training.

3.7 The development of the MSc Leadership and Assessment in Education met an Albanian Government initiative to encourage those working in education to get a professional master's award. It has been designed to emphasise learning and research, and to provide a practical and interactive approach seen as unusual within the Albanian higher education market **[MSc Programme leaflet; A24; A29; A45; A47; A48]**. The study programme includes a mandatory internship, which may involve work for the Nehemia



Gateway Group or an outside organisation. Students receive a clear, comprehensive booklet explaining the objectives and intended learning outcomes, assessment, roles and responsibilities, and sources of support [A47; M4; C5].

3.8 As noted above, both study programmes are defined as 'dual programmes', which combine theoretical and practical approaches to help meet the mission and strategic objectives of the Institution and the wider organisation. Students on both study programmes speak very positively about the internship opportunities, reporting that experiences have been beneficial and that they felt well supported by Institution staff. Both groups quoted consequent or potential employment opportunities. Albanian students are particularly appreciative of the opportunity to study and work in the English language [M4]. Alumni are similarly positive, saying that internships had enabled them to acquire posts with Nehemia Gateway partners outside Albania and, in the case of the MSc, to enhance their careers [M5]. Local employers feel that the programmes help meet socio-economic needs for the Pogradec and Korçë region [M5]. The review team formed the view that the Institution's dual programmes, which integrate theory and practice to promote employability, are a feature of **good practice** [A48].

3.9 As noted, the Institution's curriculum is closely aligned with ECTS and this was confirmed in the context of the 2015 FIBAA accreditation [A29; A45; A48; A51]. Considerable effort is made to promote an international context for learning. Students met by the review team were very positive about the availability of international staff and the opportunity to learn in English. Foreign students are also encouraged to visit the Institution's summer schools. There is a palpable commitment to promoting student exchange for students, including those from Albania [M1; C3; C4]. Students enjoy study trips to Germany and other European countries. The Institution has also registered for the Erasmus Programme [A30; M4; M5]. The review team concludes that the various steps taken to achieve Albanian students' mobility in Europe and beyond constitute a feature of **good practice**.

3.10 As described at paragraph 3.8, the Institution offers dual programmes designed to integrate theory and practice with the aim of promoting student employability. As such, both programmes show an explicit commitment to getting students into employment. Students observed that informal careers advice is also available but that the role of coaches and mentors within study programmes is more significant [M4; A27; A49]. In addition, the Institution takes steps to employ its graduates either in Albania or at partner organisations overseas [M4]. Alumni Surveys are conducted after graduation both to set up lasting links and to enable reflection on the effectiveness of study programmes [A26; A27; A56; M1; M3; M5]. The Institution seeks to monitor student employment. This is easier where students are working with one of the Nehemia Gateway Group's partner organisations, for example in Uganda, but more challenging for Albanian graduates [M3; M5]. Accordingly, the Institution is aiming to strengthen the monitoring of employment data.

## **Findings**

### **Good practice**

The review team identified the following features of good practice:

- The Institution's dual programmes, which integrate theory and practice to promote employability (paragraph 3.8; **Chapter I Standard I.11**)
- The various steps taken to achieve Albanian students' mobility in Europe and beyond (paragraph 3.9; **Chapter I Standard I.10**).

### **Weaknesses**

The review team did not identify any weaknesses.

### **Recommendations**

The review team did not make any recommendations.

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

The review team did not make any affirmations.

### **Judgement**

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

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

4.1 The Institution is composed of two faculties and they currently offer two academic programmes, namely the BA in Economy and Businesses offered under the Faculty of Business and Technology and the MSc in Leadership and Assessment in Education offered under the Faculty of Humanities **[A5]**. The Institution has applied to the Ministry of Education and Sport for a structural change: to become an Academy and to have just one faculty, namely the Faculty of Social Sciences and Business, with three departments **[A1 p.56; M2]**. These would be the Department of Management, the Department of Leadership and one research institute. The Institution is waiting for the response from the Ministry and will then start the legal change **[A1 p.56]**. The Institution has appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure efficient organisation and documentation of the study programmes **[A33; A49; A59; M3]**. The structure of the programme content is discussed in the department as the basic unit for curricula development **[C9]**. Syllabi and curricula of study programmes are designed to meet the overall objectives of the study programme, which are very clearly stated in the Institution Statute and Strategic Plan **[A10]**. Both study programmes offered by the institution work as 'dual programmes' combining theoretical and practical approaches to help meet the mission and strategic objectives of the Institution. Students expressed very positive views about the internship opportunities, reporting that the experiences gained have been extremely beneficial, and that they felt well supported by Institution staff. The review team considers that the fact the Institution provides many internships opportunities for students and supports them during this process to be a feature of **good practice [A51; M4]**. The Institution has an appropriate infrastructure comprising facilities and equipment **[Campus tour]**.

4.2 All examination rules are approved and made public to the students **[A1 p.57]**. Assessment results are published in a manner which preserves confidentiality principles and expectations **[M4]**. The intranet system is available through the institution and students are notified that their final grades are available by this means, they then visit the Examinations Office to receive them. **[A54]**. Students have the right to contact professors for any kind of clarification on the exam performance and their grades **[M4; M6]**. The Institution provides students who have fulfilled the requirements of their programme with an official diploma document which has been approved by the Institution **[M1; M2; M4]**. The bachelor's study programme is accredited by the German accreditation agency FIBAA on 26/02/2016, and from APAAL 2013. The master's programme is accredited by the German accreditation agency, FIBAA on 27/11/2015 **[A55]**.

4.3 The Institution has developed, and is implementing, an Assessment Plan, **[A11]** which includes comparing the programme requirements with other similar programmes and reviewing the curriculum content **[A49]**. Module Descriptions are reviewed every three years and student views are taken into account on a regular basis through surveys of their study programme **[A1 p.58; A49]**. Employers are asked to participate in surveys regarding the students' performance during their internship, and student learning outcomes are also evaluated **[A50; A52; A56; A60]**. The Curriculum Committee and the Faculty Meetings also review the Curriculum **[A6]**. The departments are responsible for comparing the curriculum with similar programmes from other institutions of higher education and for reporting to the Head of Faculty once a year **[B9; M3; M6]**.

4.4 Improving teaching quality is a focus of the Institution and all the mechanisms for this are stated in the Assessment Plan of the institution **[A11]**. The evaluation process examines performance indicators of the programmes and has operational autonomy and access to the Institution's data. Teaching quality is also evaluated in this process **[A56]**. All academic staff go through an evaluation process that takes place every year. Academic staff

are evaluated by an online survey that has both closed and open questions [M3; M6]. The teaching staff enable students to complete the online evaluation form [M4]. The survey consists of the following elements: evaluation of the didactic competencies of the lecturer; effort of the students, learning progress and encouragement of interest among students; and general framework of the lectures [A1 p.59]. The Head of Quality Management at the Institution collects the data for further analysis [A56]. Results of the surveys are sent to the Head of Department and Head of Faculty [M3]. This is an effective and comprehensive process that fully meets the standards.

4.5 Research is mainly done on a personal basis by the academic staff and also at master's level by the students. The Institution does not offer PhD programmes. There is no research policy and a low level of institutional research, including the lack of a PhD programme, and the reviewers consider this to be a **weakness** [A1 p.61; M2; M3]. The review team **recommends** that Institution should increase the focus on scientific research and develop and implement its own research policy. It is a long-term goal of the institution to include a research agenda, which will follow the legal requirements for its development [A1 p.61; A10]. Nevertheless, the research at master's level is fully done at a very good scientific level. Topics are chosen very carefully, based on academic staff availability and also their areas of expertise [M3, M4, M6]. The discussion on the topics of the thesis is carried out at the department level, which supports the research area priorities. The students have two supervisors and their support is available when required [B6; M3; M4].

4.6 The Institution works towards the internationalisation process of the Nehemia Gateway Group. The Institution has diverse nationalities with Albanian and foreign students, academic staff and support staff and the review team considers this to be a feature of **good practice** [M6; **Students' files available at the visit**]. The organisational structure has both Albanian and foreign staff members. In addition to local students, the Institution also has international students from Mexico, Cuba, Germany, Tanzania, South Sudan and Uganda [A2; M4]. The review team identified that even though the institution isn't doing any scientific research internalisation, having international staff and students helps to increase the awareness and helps them to understand the need for research.

4.7 The individual research at academic staff level has a good level of performance based on their qualifications and publications [B7; M3]. Academic staff at the Institution have worked intensively towards their personal research and academic achievement [M6; **Professors' Survey**]. A publications list was provided during the visit at the institution, which supports this commitment [C7]. The review team suggests to the institution, as explained above, to coordinate between each other and work towards an institutional research policy.

## Findings

### Good practice

The review team identified the following features of good practice:

- The Institution provides many internship opportunities for students and supports them during this process (paragraph 4.1; **Chapter I Standard II.1**)
- Diversity of nationalities with Albanian and foreign students, academic staff and support staff (paragraph 4.6; **Chapter II Standard I.3**).

### Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weakness:

- There is no research policy and a low level of institutional research, including the lack of a PhD programme (paragraph 4.5; **Chapter II Standard I.2**).

### Recommendations

The review team made the following recommendation:

- The Institution should focus more on scientific research and develop and implement its own research policy (paragraph 4.5; **Chapter II Standard I.2**).

### 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 The responsibilities for Students and their Support are clearly set out in the Statute of the Institution [A6]. The admission procedure is in accordance with the legal requirements of the Albanian Law on Higher Education Institutions [A1 p.62]. The Institution offers only two study programmes, [A5] as described above. The enrollment procedure is clearly explained and published on the website of the institution [<http://www.ng-university.org>]. The documentation needed for admission is categorised as minimum admission requirements, application documents, and admission procedures and enrollment [A1 p.62]. The Institution requires a B2 level of English (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) for all the enrolled students, and an oral interview is part of the admission process [<http://www.ng-university.org/study-programs/how-to-apply.html>]. The Institution organises recruitment visits where academic and administrative staff visit high schools in the region and give presentations on the study programmes that they offer [M2]. They are planning to take part in the annual student fair that the Ministry of Education and Sport organises in Tirana [M2; M3]. A welcome week is organised at the beginning of each academic year, which facilitates the students' accommodation within the Institution [A46; M4].

5.2 Communication with the students is very good and is helped by the relatively small number of students [A2; A30; A31; A1 p.65]. The staff:student ratio is approximately 1:6 [A2; B9]. Informative and advisory meetings for students take place during the first weeks [A46; M4]. Every student and staff member has an internal personal email address and this supports the communication process [[name.surname@ng-university.org](mailto:name.surname@ng-university.org)], [[name.surname@nehemiah-gateway.org](mailto:name.surname@nehemiah-gateway.org)]. The Institution has personal files for each student, where each file comprises personal details from the application and admissions process, the contract between the student and the Institution, and the assessment results through the whole study period [A1 p.66; A59; M4]. The Institution has different elements and a multi-level approach to sharing information, which includes email accounts, access to the intranet of the Nehemia Gateway Group and the Institution, and hard copies of publications [A28; A49].

5.3 The Institution provides information and orientation procedures for students and other stakeholders [A1 p.66, A6]. Information and orientation of students is a continuous process during the years of study. All information packages are posted on the website or intranet, or in the students' handbook [A55; <http://www.ng-university.org>]. Students are offered assistance, advice and orientation services throughout and after their studies [M4]. The mentoring system works very well within the Institution, especially for the students who come from abroad [M4; M6]. The institution adopts a mentoring and guidance policy for these students, helping with their everyday needs [M4]. Students can contact their professors during office hours, lectures and seminars [Students' questionnaire p.6]. An academic advisor is assigned to each student and has to be consulted at least once a quarter [M6]. This academic advisor will also be the mentor of the student during their practical training and will lead the subject-related preparation and implementation in Applied Science and during the thesis [C6].

5.4 The Institution pursues a supporting policy for students with disabilities or in special categories. [A1 p.67; A47] The Institution, as part of the Nehemia Group Albania, has for more than 20 years implemented the mission of helping people in need [A6; 10]. As it is stated in the regulation and by-laws of the Institution, it fulfills the same mission, supporting all people in spite of their origin, belief or nationality. The Institution mission is 'Helping people to help themselves' [A1 p.67].

5.5 The Institution has a library with almost 9,400 books. It offers multidisciplinary literature such as books, periodicals, encyclopedia, wall maps, newspapers, albums and

help with language or terminology [**Campus tour; A1 p.67; M5**]. The library literature is enriched by an annual budget for purchasing and other sources as well, such as donation [**A57**]. There are several other learning resources available electronically, and the Institution library has another partner, The Bavarian State Library [**Campus tour**]. The Institution has an online registration and provision of the literature where each registration requires some personal data of the relevant students such as first name, surname and email address. The library has the working time posted on the institution premises and opening hours are normally from 8:00-13:00 and 14:00-19:00 [**A1 p.67; <http://www.ng-university.org/student-services/library.html>**].

5.6 The Institution provides tutoring for first-cycle students through the administrative services and Students Service Centre [**A6; A1 p.68; M4**]. The alumni already employed from Nehemia Gateway Albania and the Institution also offer services and support. Support is offered to students from the first day at the institution through the Orientation Week [**A46; M4; M5**]. In addition to the formal tutoring process, daily lecturer and student contact provides further opportunities to support and facilitate the progress of first-cycle and second-cycle students [**M4; M6**]. The Institution offers different courses based on the identified needs and difficulties of students, especially for students in the English or German languages and intercultural communication [**M4**]. In the Institution, all the courses are offered in English and some of these courses are taught by international lecturers; the review team considers this to be a feature of **good practice** [**A49; M4**]. This is very positive for Albanian students, who are able to experience an international way of teaching and learning, but also it is important and helpful for international students [**A28**].

5.7 Students have the right to be represented at the institutional level of the Institution [**A6**]. They attend the Student Council [**A58**] which is an independent organisation within the Institution and which helps to promote and support the interests of students [**B11**]. Each programme has its representative within the Institution and there are four students' representatives in total [**M4; M6**]. The representatives of the students are from both the bachelor's and master's courses and they also participate in Faculty Meetings [**A1 p.69; M4**].

5.8 The Institution has created a Student Service Centre to facilitate student life [**A6; M4; C8**]. An opening party is given at the beginning of each year to welcome the new students and help them to get to know the facilities of the campus [**M4; M5**]. The Student Centre organises activities like sports, social activities, travel, journalism, conflict management, arts and culture, technology and innovation, and consultation [**A34; 42; C8**]. As international students are part of the Institution, this helps in the cultural exchange between them through organisation of several activities [**M4**]. Being together helps them share their cultural traditions and learn to respect and support each other [**M4**]. The Social and Medical building, as part of the campus, offers first-aid facilities, medical and massage treatment for all staff and students [**Campus tour**].

5.9 The Institution data shows very good rates of employment for its students, both Albanian and foreign. The Institution has several agreements with other institutions, public and private, for students' internships and future possible employment [**A32**]. The Institution offers employment to graduated students, and the review team considers this to be a feature of **good practice** [**A1 p.70; M5; C8**]. According to the Institution data all the first bachelor's students from this Institution have been employed at Nehemia Gateway Albania [**A1 p.70**]. Nehemia Gateway considers itself to be a 'business incubator' of new businesses and in this way it also assists its students to gain international work experience in projects of the Nehemia Gateway Group [**A1 p.70**]. The Institution has also developed market research on the employment of its graduates [**A53**] and the dual study programmes integrating theoretical and practical training, through internships, that is offered to students helps them to better gain the ability and skills for future employment. This is a feature of good practice

identified in Evaluation Area 4. **[M4; A32; C2; C5]**. An alumni structure is also part of the institution and supports the students with advice and mentoring **[A60]**.

## **Findings**

### **Good Practice**

The review team identified the following features of good practice:

- All the courses are offered in English and some of these courses are taught by international lecturers (paragraph 5.6; **Chapter I Standard III. 6**)
- The Institution offers employment to the graduated students (paragraph 5.9; **Chapter I Standard III.9**).

### **Weaknesses**

The review team did not identify any weaknesses.

### **Recommendations**

The review team did not make any recommendations.

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

The review team did not make any affirmations.

## **Judgement**

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