Institutional Review of Higher Education Institutions in Albania

Report of the Institutional Review of University of Tirana

April 2017

REVIEW TEAM

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Date: April 2017

Contents

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

The University of Tirana (the University) is the largest public institution of higher education in Albania. It was originally established in 1957 as the State University of Tirana, whichbrought together six higher institutes operating in Tirana: the Institute of Science, the Pedagogical Institute, the Polytechnic Institute, the Institute of Medicine, the Institute of Agriculture, and the Institute of Economics and Law.

The Universityhas six faculties: the Faculty of Law; the Faculty of Social Sciences; the Faculty of Natural Sciences;the Faculty of History and Philology; the Faculty of Economics; andthe Faculty of Foreign Languages.Thereare also two institutes, in Applied Nuclear Physics, and in European Studies, and subsidiaries at Saranda and Kukes. **[SER pp.10-11; GID]**

The University offers first-cycle, second-cycle and third-cycle study programmes,virtually all of which are delivered in Albanian.Of the 174 programmes, 36 are bachelor's degrees, 100 are master's degrees and 38 are doctoral degrees.In 2016-17 the University recruited nearly 15,500 students to first-cycle programmes and over 7,600 to the second cycle. There are nearly 800 full-time and over 1,100 part-time academic staff, as well as over 300 support staff.**[GID]**

The University is committed to strengthening its international recognition and has been an international partner institutionin a number of European Union and other co-operation programmes. It has also signed co-operation agreements with various European and world universities and institutions with the aim of benefiting Universitystudents and staff.

The University of Tirana is submitting for accreditation by the Albanian Agency for Accreditation of Higher Education for the first time.

Summary report

A Self-Evaluation Report (SER) was developed by a team at the University which included academic and support staffrepresentativesfrom each of the six faculties. A draftwas circulated to all University staff before being finalised and approved by the Rector.

The review team was provided with theSERand an initial portfolio of supporting evidence eight weeks in advance of the review visit. The SER was structured in accordance with the Evaluation Areas and the State Quality Standards.However, there was scope to improve the referencing and provision of documentation. The bulk of the original evidence was in Albanian but on request from the review team, this was supplemented by additional documentation prior to and during the visit, some of which was translated into English.The tranches of documents helped the team to familiarise themselves with aspects of the structure, policies, management procedures and the nature of teaching and research activity undertaken by the University. Evidence considered included University Regulations, data on staff and student achievement, various procedural documents, a range of external agreements and examples of programme information.

The visit took place over three days. The review team was made up of four senior higher education reviewers from the UK and two experienced higher education members of staff from Albanian institutions. The review team was supported by Review Managers and note-takers provided by APAAL, the agency responsible for reviews of higher education in Albania. A series of meetings took place during the three 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 Rector, senior managers, students from all three cycles, lecturers, administrative and support staff,and local employers. Notes were taken at meetings. As part of a tour of University facilities, the review team visited two faculties, viewinglibraries, teaching spaces and laboratories. Having reviewed all evidence available, the team reached the conclusions set out below.

The University meets the standards partly for the Organisation and its Management. The review team identified several weaknesses and recommendations. The team identified the absence of a clear statement of the University's mission and objectives in the 2009 Statute, and the delay in developing a revised Statute to take account of the 2015 higher education law,as a weakness. It recommended thatthe University adjusts and improves its Statute to include a clear statement of its mission and objectives.The team, given there was no current, recent and complete development strategy,recommended that the University develops and implements a development strategy which includes its mission and purpose and sets appropriate objectives. Given that an annual report was not submitted to the Ministry in 2016, the team recommended that the University ensures that an annual report is submitted to the Ministry in a timely manner in accordance with legal and statutory expectations.Finally, the team recommended that the University ensures that market research is undertaken centrally to inform its development strategy, mission and purpose.The review team did not identify any examples of good practiceoraffirmations in relation to this evaluation area.

The University meets the standards substantiallyfor Resourcing.The responsibilities for resources are set out in the Statute and Regulations of the University.The review team identified several weaknesses and consequent recommendations. The team recommended that the University should address a weakness by implementing a comprehensive, consistent and documented approach to the periodic assessment of staff performance and skills. It also recommended that a weakness should be remedied via the review and revision of the website to ensure a consistent, bilingual, fit-for-purpose platform meeting the needs of all stakeholders. In the light of an identified weakness, given continuing pressure on the

environment and infrastructure for academic and scientific performance, the team recommended that the University should take steps to ensure that there are sufficient resources to ensure the adequacy of that environment and infrastructure.The review team did not identify any examples of good practice or affirmationsin relation to this evaluation area.

The University meets the standards substantiallyfor the Curriculum.The review team recommended that the University should remedy a weakness by reviewing the database of study programmes to ensure that it is current, accurate and in line with legal requirements. The team also recommended that the University should address the weakness of low student mobility by developing and implementing a strategic approach to increasing student mobility. The review team did not identify any examples of good practice or affirmationsin relation to this evaluation area.

The University partly meets the standards for Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research. The review team identified several weaknesses and respective recommendations.To address the weakness of there being no clear, documentary evidence of a moderation system, the team recommended that the University should ensure that there is a clear, documented policy and procedure which outlines the institutional approach to assessment.It also recommended that the University should tackle a weakness by developing and publishing a formal policy on plagiarism and other academic misconduct.The need for a clear, documented University policy on the quality assurance of study programmes was adjudged to be a weakness and resulted in a recommendation to clarify and publish the University's approach to the quality assurance of study programmes. Finally, the University was recommended to remedy a weakness by developing and implementing a formal research strategy to guide institutional research priorities.The team did not identify any good practice or affirmationsin relation to this evaluation area.

The University meets the standards substantially for the Students and their Support. The review team identified insufficient provision of, and access to, both textbooks and online materialsas a weakness. The review team recommended that the University should act to improve provision of,and access to, library books and online resources.The team also recommended the establishment of a formal health policy, with procedures for evaluation of its effectiveness, to address the weakness of lack of a clear policy to pursue preventative and curative policies to improve students' health. Given an identified weakness that statistical data on the employment of its graduates are not kept, the team recommended that the University should establish a structure and procedures for the collection and storage of data concerning the employment of its graduates. The review team affirmed the steps taken by the University to improve support for employment through the creation of Careers Centres.No good practice was identifiedin relation to this evaluation area.

The Standards are substantially met in three Evaluation Areas and partly met in two Evaluation Areas.In summary, the review team recommends that the State Quality Standards are partly met.

Summary of findings

Good practice

The review team identified no features of good practice.

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weaknesses:

- The absence of a clear statement of the University's mission and objectives in the Statute approved in 2009 and the delay in developing a revised Statute to take account of the 2015 higher education law (paragraph 1.1; ***Chapter III Standard I.1***)
- The absence of a current, recent and complete development strategy (paragraph 1.5; ***Chapter III Standard I.5***)
- An annual report was not submitted to the Ministry in 2016 (paragraph 1.6; ***Chapter III Standard I.6***)
- The lack of institutional-level market research to underpin the University's mission and purpose (paragraph 1.8; ***Chapter III Standard III.1***)
- Lack of evidence for a comprehensive, consistent and documented approach to the periodic assessment of staff performance and skills (paragraph 2.4; ***Chapter III Standard IV.3***)
- The website's inconsistent content, format and style, its underdevelopment of key sections, and its reliance on Albanian (paragraph 2.7; ***Chapter III Standard VII.1; Chapter III, Standard VII.2***)
- Continuing pressure on the environment and infrastructure for academic and scientific performance(paragraph 2.9; ***Chapter III Standard V.1***)
- The database of study programmes is outdated, contains duplications and lack of legal documentation (paragraph 3.1; ***Chapter I Standard I.1***)
- Low student mobility across European programmes (paragraph 3.10; ***Chapter I Standard I.10***)
- The absence of clear, documentary evidence of a moderation system which would assure stakeholders that assessment processes are valid, accurate and fair (paragraph 4.2; ***Chapter I Standard II.2***)
- The absence of a formal policy on plagiarism and other academic misconduct.(paragraph 4.3; ***Chapter I Standard II.2***)
- The lack of a clear, documented University policy on the quality assurance of study programmes (paragraph 4.4; ***Chapter I, Standard II.3***)
- The absence of a formal research strategy to guide priorities (paragraph 4.8; ***Chapter I Standard I.4; Chapter I Standard I.5***)
- Insufficient provision of, and access to, both textbooks and online materials (paragraph 5.5; ***Chapter I Standard III.5***)
- The lack of a clear policy to pursue preventative and curative approaches to improvingstudents' health (paragraph 5.8; ***Chapter I Standard III.8***)
- Statistical data on the employment of all its graduates are not kept (paragraph 5.9; ***Chapter I Standard III.9***).

Recommendations

The review team made the following recommendations:

- The University promptly adjusts and improves its Statute to include a clear statement of its mission and objectives (paragraph 1.1; *Chapter III Standard I.1*)
- The University promptly develops and implements a development strategy which includes its mission and purpose, and sets appropriate objectives (paragraph 1.5; *Chapter III Standard I.5*)
- The University ensures that an annual report is submitted to the Ministry in a timely manner in accordance with legal and statutory expectations (paragraph 1.6; *Chapter III Standard I.6*)
- The University ensures that by 2018 market research is undertaken centrally to inform its development strategy, mission and purpose (paragraph 1.8; *Chapter III Standard III.1*)
- The University, by 2018, should implement a comprehensive, consistent and documented approach to the periodic assessment of staff performance and skills (paragraph 2.4; *Chapter III Standard IV.3*)
- The University should review and revise the website by September 2018, to ensure a consistent, bilingual, fit-for-purpose platform meeting the needs of all stakeholders (paragraph 2.7; *Chapter III Standard VII.1; Chapter III Standard VII.2*)
- The University should take timely steps to ensure that there are sufficient resources to ensure the adequacy of the environment and infrastructure for academic and scientific performance (paragraph 2.9; *Chapter III Standard V.1*)
- The University should, by the start of the next academic year, review the database of study programmes to ensure that it is current, accurate and in line with legal requirements (paragraph 3.1; *Chapter I Standard I.1*)
- The University should develop and implement a strategic approach to increasing student mobility (by August 2018) (paragraph 3.10; *Chapter I Standard I.10*)
- The University should ensure that there is a clear, documented policy and procedure which outlines the institutional approach to assessment(by August 2018) (paragraph 4.2; *Chapter I Standard II.2*)
- The University develops and implements a formal policy on plagiarism and other academic misconduct(by August 2018) (paragraph 4.3; *Chapter I Standard II.2*)
- The University should clarify and publish its approach to the quality assurance of study programmes(by August 2018) (paragraph 4.4; *Chapter I Standard II.3*)
- The University should develop and implement a formal research strategy to guide institutional research priorities(by August 2018) (paragraph 4.8; *Chapter I Standard I.4; Chapter I, Standard I.5*)
- The University should take systematicaction to improve provision of,and access to, library books and online resources (paragraph 5.5; *Chapter I Standard III.5*)
- The University should establish a formal health policy, with procedures for evaluation of its effectiveness(by August 2018) (paragraph 5.8; *Chapter I Standard III.8*)
- The University should establish a structure and procedures for the collection and storage of data concerning the employment of its graduates(by August 2018) (paragraph 5.9; *Chapter I Standard III.9*)

Affirmation of action being taken

The review team affirms the following action already in progress:

- Steps taken by the University to improve support for employment through the creation of Careers Centres (paragraph 5.9; *Chapter I Standard III.9*).

Summary of judgements for each Evaluation Area

1   The Standards for the Organisation and its Management are **partly 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 **partly 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 Tirana the State Quality Standards are partly met.

Detailed report

Evaluation Area 1: The Organisation and its Management

1.1   The University's governance and regulatory frameworks are designed to align with national legal requirements for higher education institutions. **[SER p.5; M1]**The University adjusts and improves its regulations as required. **[AE3-5]** The Statute, approved in 2009 and amended in 2013, sets out the University's internal organisation and management structures and defines individual and formal board responsibilities. However, the Statute does not contain a clear statement of the University's mission and objectives. **[Hard copy Statute dated 16 Dec 09; http://www.unitir.edu.al/images/STATUTI_UT_perditesuar_2016.pdf]** In addition, while the University has formed a working group to review the existing Statute and regulations against the expectations of the 2015 higher education law, a clear statement of the University's mission and objectives was unavailable at the time of the review visit. **[SER docs 1-64; AE1-93]**The team considers the absence of a clear statement of the University's mission and objectives in the Statute approved in 2009, and the delay in developing a revised Statute to take account of the 2015 higher education law, to be a **weakness**.The review teamtherefore **recommends** that the University promptly adjusts and improves its Statute to include a clear statement of its mission and objectives. **[Chapter III Standard I.1]**

1.2   The University has an appropriate management structure and formal decision-making bodies which meet Ministry expectations. **[SER pp.5-7;hard copy Statute dated 16 Dec 09]** Staff indicated that meetings of such bodies facilitate effective institutional management. **[Ms 1, 2 & 3]** However, the additional evidence provided by the University before the visit was limited to extracts from minutes, which failed to demonstrate effectively the efficiency of its organisational management. **[AE2; AE8; AE9-14]**

1.3   The University supports discussion and constructive debate in and between its formal decision-making bodies, which meet regularly. **[SER p.8; M1; M2; M3]** While staff indicated that information on agenda items is made available in advance, the University was unable to provide written evidence to support this. **[SER docs 1-64; AE1-93]** Members of the Rectorate and senior managers at faculty and department level are responsible for monitoring the implementation of decisions. **[SERp.8; M1; M2; M3; SER doc 10]**

1.4   The University ensures that the limits of its autonomy are respected and that it exercises autonomy within the confines of prevailing laws and regulations. **[SER pp.8-9; AE 22-24; M1; M2; M3]** Self-governance is evident in academic and administrative units, teaching and scientific activities, and financial and administrative matters. **[AE 15 & 16; M1;M2; M3]** The Internal Quality Assurance Unit and Department of Curricula and Standards provide supervision and internal evaluation of University activities. **[M2]** The former is mainly faculty-based, with the central unit providing a University view based on faculty input while the latter maintains University oversight of administrative matters relating to quality assurance. **[AE 22-24; M2]**The membership of the Internal Quality Assurance Unit is defined in the Statute and includes an external expert. **[Hard copy Statute dated 16 Dec 09 p.14]** However, the University has not made use of external consultants to assist in the supervision and internal evaluation of institutional activities.

1.5   The University states that its development strategy is closely linked to its mission and objectives, and discussions with staff appeared to support this view. **[SER p.9; M1; M2; M3]** The University included as part of its initial evidence base a summary of its strategic plan covering the period 2010-2012. However, this summary plan does not include the University's mission or purpose, nor does it set appropriate University objectives. **[SER docs**

10, 11] While the University was unable to provide a more recent and complete development strategy (the provided document constituted only a list of proposed activities), senior staff indicated that this would be produced by the Statute and regulations working group in due course (see paragraph 1.1). **[M3]** The team considered the absence of a current, recent and complete development strategy to be a **weakness**. The review team therefore **recommends** that the University promptly develops and implements a development strategy which includes its mission and purpose and sets appropriate objectives. **[Chapter III Standard I.5]**

1.6   The University stated in the self-evaluation report that the annual report to the Ministry of Education and Sports (the Ministry, MES) is submitted prior to 20 December each year. **[SER p.9]** However, an example of the annual report was not included as part of the evidence base. **[SER docs 1-64; AE1-93]** It was noted during the visit that an annual report had not been submitted to the Ministry in 2016,**[Meeting with Institutional Coordinato**r] and the team considered this to be a **weakness**.The review teamtherefore **recommends** that the University ensures that an annual report is submitted to the Ministry in a timely manner in accordance with legal and statutory expectations. **[Chapter III Standard I.6]**

1.7   Faculties and departments are organised in accordance with legal requirements.Management, executive, and administrative structures are separate from academic structures and organisational units. Academic staff are qualified appropriately and exercise autonomy and academic freedom in teaching, research and all other academic activities. The University has an official website and offers first, second and third-cycle programmes. **[SER pp.10-12; HEI info on APAAL site; M1; M2; M3; M6; M7]**

1.8   Graduate employment is monitored by Careers Centres in each faculty. **[SER pp.12-13; M6; M7]** Academic staff, employers and placement providers indicated that there are strong links between local and regional organisations and departments and programmes. This enables faculties, departments and programmes to be informed appropriately on regional economic development opportunities. **[M5; M6]** However, the University did not provide any evidence of institutional-level market research undertaken to support its mission or purpose. **[1-64; AE 1-93]** While staff provided examples of market research undertaken to underpin the development of programmes, the team considers the lack of institutional-level market research to underpin the University's mission and purpose to be a **weakness**. The review team therefore **recommends** that the University ensures that by 2018 market research is undertaken centrally to inform its development strategy, mission and purpose. **[Chapter III Standard III.1]**

1.9   The University has a network of partners at national and regional level, which includes higher education institutions, public bodies and business organisations. **[SER p,13; AE 17-19]** The International Relations Office overseas the development of collaboration with overseas partners while department offices maintain oversight of local and regional collaborations. **[M3; M5; M6; M7]** Similarly, collaboration with other organisations to provide students with professional practice opportunities is managed at department level.

1.10   The University has established and implemented policies to support international mobility of academic staff and students. **[SER p.13; FE19; FE5; FE20; FE8; AE75-AE93; FE18; FE20-30;M3; M5; M6; M7]** However, low take-up of international mobility opportunities for staff and students is acknowledged as a continuing challenge by senior staff and a priority area for future development. **[M1; M3]**

Findings

Good practice

The review team did not identify features of good practice.

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weaknesses:

- the absence of a clear statement of the University's mission and objectives in the Statute approved in 2009 and the delay in developing a revised Statute to take account of the 2015 higher education law (paragraph 1.1; *Chapter III Standard I.1*)
- the absence of a current, recent and complete development strategy (paragraph 1.5; *Chapter II, Standard I.5*)
- an annual report had not been submitted to the Ministry in 2016 (paragraph 1.6; *Chapter III Standard I.6*)
- the lack of institutional-level market research to underpin the University's mission and purpose(paragraph 1.8;*Chapter III Standard III.1*).

Recommendations

The review team made the following recommendations:

- the University promptly adjusts and improves its Statute to include a clear statement of its mission and objectives(paragraph 1.1; *Chapter III Standard I.1*)
- the University promptly develops and implements a development strategy which includes its mission and purpose and sets appropriate objectives (paragraph 1.5; *Chapter III Standard I.5*)
- the University ensures that an annual report is submitted to the Ministry in a timely manner in accordance with legal and statutory expectations(paragraph 1.6; *Chapter III Standard I.6*)
- the University ensures that by 2018 market research is undertaken centrally to inform its development strategy, mission and purpose (paragraph 1.8;*Chapter III Standard III.1*).

Affirmation of action being taken

The review team did not make any affirmations.

Judgement

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

Evaluation Area 2: Resourcing

2.1   The University has a clear structure which sets out the responsibilities for management of resourcing to meet requirements of the State Quality Standards. **[UoT Statute; UoT Regulations; M1;M7; http://www.unitir.edu.al/index.php/sq/rreth-nesh/organizimi/struktura-organizative]**. The University's employment of staff is governed by both external statutes and the University's own regulations. **[UoT Statute; UoT Regulations]** Records of full-time and part-time posts are maintained. **[2.2; 2.3; 2.4]**The Human Directory department advertises vacant posts on the Public Procurement Agency website. Employment criteria are made available to interested parties through the University website **[2.1 Advertisement in Public Procurement Agency; www.app.gov.al; M7; SER pp.15-16]**.The employment procedure for administrative staff is the same as for academic staff, and is based on the Labour Code **[M7; UoT Statute; UoT Regulations]**.

2.2   There is an aim to recruit qualified academic international staff.**[4.5; 4.6; M3; M6, SER pp.16-17]**. As noted at paragraph 1.10, faculty staff are supported to work with externallyfunded projects to promote international mobility for staff and students, including exchanges, though take-up is low. **[FE36;M3; M6]**.The self-evaluation report states that foreign academics sit on interview panels for professorships and that those promoted to Professor are expected to have at least one year's experience in a Western university. However, the review team was provided with no corroborating evidence. **[SER pp.16-17; 4.1;M8]**

2.3   The University states that staff make contributions to economic, social and environmental initiatives.The SER team included representatives from each Faculty.**[M2]**In accordance with the University's integration policy, academic and support staff contribute to'info days', where students receive information aboutstudies and extracurricular commitments.**[SER p.19; 2.7; FE41; FE16]**

2.4   The institution reports various means by which it aims periodically to assess staff performance.These includeevaluation by theRectorate and the Dean's office, annual meetings to analyse academic and research work,and annual reports on academic and research performance at the department level.Each member of academic staff completes a personal assessment card of their teaching and research performance, submitted at the end of every academic year. Students complete annual evaluations of programme delivery and lecturer performance.Specific practice varies across faculties.**[SER pp.16-17; M2; M3; M5; M6; 2.6; 17]**While the review team was provided with examples of evaluation, including assessments of lecturers and evidence of data on research output, they were unable to discern a comprehensive, consistent and documented approach to the periodic assessment of staff performance and skills, and considered this to be a **weakness**.**[4.1; 4.3; 4.4; 2.6]**The team therefore **recommends** that the University, by 2018, should implement a comprehensive, consistent and documented approach to the periodic assessment of staff performance and skills. **[Chapter III Standard IV.3]**

2.5   The University seeks to foster a sense of community and integration among its staff and students. **[SER p.17]** Staff and students confirmed their participation in joint activities, including attendance at recruitment fairs, social events and sports competitions,and stated that this helpsto promote integration into the University community. **[SER p.17; 2.5; 2.7; M2; M4; M6]**

2.6   The University has transparent procedures for the management of financial resources.Financial management complies with statutory requirements, with accounts going to the Ministry of Education and Sport annually.**[SER pp.18-19; AE16-31; AE 27-28; 2; 5; M7]**.The budget is delegated to each faculty for support in the delivery of key priorities. **[UoT**

Statute; UoT Regulations; M1; M2; M3; M6; M7]Requests from departments and faculties are reviewed by the Senate and the Administration Board, and then approved by the Rectorate. **[UoT Statute; UoT Regulations;M2; M7; M6; FE11; AE1; 7]**Final responsibility for management and administration of the budget lies with the Rector and the Chancellor, supported by the Economics Directorate. **[UoT Statute; UoT Regulations;M7; M1]**.The results of financial audit are made public.**[UoT Statute; UoT Regulations; SER p.18-20; AE 27-31; http://www.unitir.edu.al/images/Komunikimi/Programi_Vjetor_i_Auditimit_Viti_2015.pdf]**

2.7   The framework for management of University information systems is set out in the relevant regulation.**[AE36]**The information management infrastructure includes aStudent Management System as well as HR and Payroll modules.There is also a database for student registration and assessment results. **[SER p.20; M6; M8; AE36]**All elements operate across faculties. The student system provides students with online lesson plans, course information, examination schedules, and teaching materials.**[Campus tour; M4; M8]**The institutional website includes standard information on institutional, academic, cultural and social activities. **[SER p.20; 2.7; Campus tour; http://www.unitir.edu.al/]**The review team noted, however, that there is significant variation in format and content across faculties with some providing comprehensive information on study programmes and aspects of the student experience and others offering limited information. **[eg,http://www.feut.edu.al/; http://www.fhf.edu.al/; http://fdut.edu.al/; http://fshs-ut.edu.al/]**Moreover, the main University website is predominantly in Albanian.Some pages translate into English while others are marked as 'under construction'.**[http://www.unitir.edu.al/;http://www.unitir.edu.al/index.php/sq/rreth-nesh/organizimi; M7]** Students in all three cycles noted the variation between faculties and suggested a need for general improvement.**[M4a; M4b; M8]** The team noted the website's inconsistent content, format and style, its underdevelopment of key sections, and its reliance on Albanian, and judges this to be a **weakness**.The review team therefore **recommends** that the University reviews and revises the website by September 2018, to ensure a consistent, bilingual, fit-for-purpose platform meeting the needs of all stakeholders. **[Chapter III Standard VII.1; Chapter III Standard VII.2**]

2.8   The University has an administrative infrastructure thatsupports academic and technical staff, helping to ensure that University activities are undertaken effectively. **[SER p.22; M2; M3; M4; M5; M6; M7; Campus tour]**

2.9   The University owns its own campus and buildings, which are located in different parts of the city of Tirana. **[SER p.21,2.8; 2.10; Campus tour]**Responsibilities for the management of resources and facilities are clearly set out in the University Statute and Regulations.Responsibility for estates is held by the Department of Funds Management and Investment, part of Rectorate. **[UT Statute; UT Regulations; M1; M7; SER p.21]**The University states that it has appropriate facilities to meet statutory requirements and satisfy learning and teaching requirements. **[SER pp.21-23; 2.9; 2.10]** However, it also acknowledged that as student numbers havegrown and plans for a central campus have been put on hold for financial reasons, pressure on space has increased. Funding has been unsuccessfully sought from the government to resolve this. **[SER p.21-23; M1; M3; M7; Campus tour]**The University has addressed the issue by extending teaching hours and redeveloping some buildings but students and staff remain of the view that space and facilities need to be improved.Furthermore, the context is one in which the University has not developed other facilities, including a central library and comprehensive accessibility for students with physical disabilities.Students also noted that many classrooms do not have Wi-Fi access.**[M1; M3; M4; M7; Campus tour; 2.8]** The review team concludes that the continuing pressure on the environment and infrastructure for academic and scientific performance is a **weakness**. It accordingly **recommends** that the University should take

timely steps to ensure that there are sufficient resources to ensure the adequacy of the environment and infrastructure for academic and scientific achievement.**[Chapter III Standard V.1]**

2.10   The University registers and preserves official documents in accordance with legal expectations, via its integrated information management system. **[SER p.23-24; SER 43; AE30-32]**Several departments, including Protocol and Archive, Information Technology and Human Resources, hold responsibility for the preservation of relevant documentation in hard copy and electronically. **[SER 23-24; M2; M7]**

Findings

Good practice

The review team did not identify features of good practice.

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weaknesses:

- lack of evidence for a comprehensive, consistent and documented approach to the periodic assessment of staff performance and skills (paragraph 2.4; *Chapter III Standard IV.3*)
- the website's inconsistent content, format and style, its underdevelopment of key sections, and its reliance on Albanian (paragraph 2.7; *Chapter III Standard VII.1; Chapter III Standard VII.2*)
- continuing pressure on the environment and infrastructure for academic and scientific performance (paragraph 2.9; **Chapter III Standard V.1**).

Recommendations

The review team made the following recommendations:

- the University, by 2018, should implement a comprehensive, consistent and documented approach to the periodic assessment of staff performance and skills(paragraph 2.4; *Chapter III Standard IV.3*)
- the University should review and revise the website by September 2018, to ensure a consistent, bilingual, fit-for-purpose platform meeting the needs of all stakeholders (paragraph 2.7; *Chapter III Standard VII.1; Chapter III Standard VII.2*)
- the University should take timely steps to ensure that there are sufficient resources to ensure the adequacy of the environment and infrastructure for academic and scientific achievement(paragraph 2.9; *Chapter III Standard V.1*).

Affirmation of action being taken

The review team did not make any affirmations.

Judgement

The Standards for Resourcing are substantially met.

Evaluation Area 3: The Curriculum

3.1   The University offers a wide range of study programmes and is characterised by the diversity of its faculties, branches, directions, study profiles, specialisation and qualifications **[SER p.25; AE16]**. Study programmes acrossall three study cyclesare available: bachelor's (36 study programmes), master's (100 study programmes) and PhD (38 study programmes).**[AE8]** The review team noted that the database of the University's study programmes on theAPAALsite is outdated, contains duplications and lacks reference to legal documentation, and considered this to be a **weakness[UT-Institution profile; http://www.aaal.edu.al/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=690&Itemid=306&lang=en]**.It therefore **recommends** that, by the start of the next academic year,the University reviews the database of study programmes to ensure that it is current, accurate and in line with legal requirements.Study programmes in all the three cycles accord with the University's strategic vision.They areaimed at the development of education, culture, science and economics to serve human freedom and dignity, the diversity of ideas, the establishment and consolidation of a democratic society, the rule of law, and the improvement of welfare and human dignity, carried out via transparent legal activities.**[SER p.25; FE16][Chapter I Standard I.1]**

3.2   As well as full-time study programmes across all three cycles, the University offers open and short-term courses and summer schools oriented to providingspecialised skills and training.**[SER p.26; M4; UT Statute; UT Regulations]**. Part-time provision is closing in line with the new Law on Higher Education **[FE27; M7]**.

3.3   The University's development strategy has not been updated since 2012,although the University is currently working on a new strategy and operational plan which will reflect the changes in the new Law (see Section 1.5).**[FE3; M3]**. Guidance on study programmes includes information about the diploma issued at the completion of studies, which is accompanied by the Diploma Supplement in line with European Standards and Guidelines.**[Student Guide (in Albanian): http://www.feut.edu.al/FEUT-%20Guida%20e%20studentit%202016.pdf; FE14]**

3.4   The University has two subsidiaries in Saranda and in Kukes, opened in response to municipalities' requests to develop campuses closer to students' homes.Recruitment has been lower than expected and closure is being considered. **[SER p.13, 40; M3]**.The faculties offer a number of interdisciplinary programmesdesigned to reflect developments in Albanian society and labour market needs.**[SER p.27]**Joint Master Programmes with foreign partner universities are offered.Students receivea diploma signed by both institutions.**[FE29]**Teaching staff from abroad are invited to the University to teachcourses, notably in the Faculty of Foreign Languages.**[FE24]**

3.5   The teaching load of lecturers is assigned in accordance with criteria set out in relevant by-laws. **[AE54; FE6; SER p.27]**Any additional teaching on top of the normal load is financed fromthe University's own resources.Teaching staff have individual annual agreementssetting out details regarding the teaching load, administrative tasks, research and other activities.**[AE39; M5]**

3.6   Programmes of study are made public on the official websites of the faculties.**[http://www.feut.edu.al/mba.html, http://www.feut.edu.al/master.html , http://fdut.edu.al/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/MASTER-I-SHKENCAVE-N%C3%8B-E-DREJT%C3%8B-PENALE-2016-2017.pdf etc]**They are also made available to high school graduates and other interested students through presentations and information brochures during the first week of the study programme.**[FE16; FE41;M4a;M4b;M6]**Admission criteria are defined by departments, approved by Academic Senate, and then published on the

website. **[M3; FE25; http://www.unitir.edu.al/]** Similarly,studentadmissions quotas are proposed by departments and faculties on the basis of capacity, then approved by Senate, before final approval by the Ministry of Education and Sport. **[FE25; FE21]**

3.7   Essential information on programmes, including objectives, modules with credits, and schedules are included on the website. **[http://www.feut.edu.al/mba.html , http://www.feut.edu.al/master.html]**The team was told that departments and career centres systematically informfirst-cyclestudents about employment opportunitiesbut most students actually progress to second cycle, and particularly professional master's, programmes at the University.**[SER p.28; M4; M6]** More limited attention to employability within first-cycle programmes has encouraged some departments to developintegrated study programmes, which emphasise basic knowledge and general scientific methods while also offering clearer transfer options to second-cycle study programmes. **[M3,Example of Faculty of Law]**

3.8   Academic staff routinely engage in research, which contributes to the quality of teaching, especially for second and third-cycle students.More than 75 per cent of academic staff have a PhD and 41 per centhave the academic title of Professor or Associate Professor.**[FE6;M4; M8]**Teaching methods vary across study programmes but they have been enhanced by the improved qualifications of teaching staff and exchange opportunities with European colleagues at the University and overseas. **[M6]**Departmentsdetermine the coordinators of study programmes, who are responsible for the content and performance of individual courses as well as for supporting students.They are supported by administrative, IT and other non-academic staff in assistingstudents.**[M6; Campus tour; M7; FE28]**Students are of the view that communication from administrative staff could be improved with the use of electronicinformation systems. **[Student Survey]**

3.9   The University offers100 second-cycle study programmes,65MScs and 35 professional master's programmes.**[FE8]**A thesis of between 25 and 30 per cent of credits is obligatory, with students expected to undertake a research project.**[AE25; SER,p.29; M4]**. Students are also required to undertake an internship organised in co-operation with state institutions, public companies or private corporations.**[AE41-AE44; FE12; M5]**In 2015-16, full-timeacademic staff undertook 77 per cent of teaching, with part-time staff doing the rest. **[FE6]**Representatives from businessesmay be involved in teaching,including as supervisors of the diploma thesis.**[M5]**

3.10   Study programmes are organised in three successive cycles,in alignment with the Bologna Process.They have modulesthat are evaluated in creditsaccording to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).Credits earned at home and foreign institutions are recognised in theUniversity's regulations.**[FE19; FE5; FE20; FE8; AE75-AE93; FE18]** Second and third-cycle students are expected to be able to communicate in a foreign language, to an internationally recognisedlevel.**[SER p.27]** This overall approach is designed to promote Albanian student mobility in Europe.However, mobility of University students in Europe is comparatively lowat just over 5 per cent.**[Student Survey; M4]**It is evident that financial constraints restrict student mobility.However, the review team noted that, apart from English language provision, study programmes are taught in Albanian.Moreover, levels of English proficiency among some academic staff is not high. **[M1; M2; M3; M6; M7]** The team heard that the University has sought to address the issue of mobility by developing several agreementswith universitiesin other European countries.There is also a recognition of the need to introduce programmes taught in English.**[M1; FE30-40]**However, the team concludes that low studentmobility across European programmes is a **weakness**. It therefore **recommends** that the University should develop and implement a strategic approach to increasing studentmobility (by August 2018). **[Chapter I Standard I.10]**

3.11   The integration of practical application and theoretical knowledge within study programmes is achieved through various means including exercises, laboratory work, practical assignments and projects, professional practice and the final thesis.**[AE25; M4; SER p.31]**. As noted, second-cycle studentshave a mandatory professional internship worth 6 to 10 credits, and a research-based diploma thesis.**[AE25;http://www.feut.edu.al:3000/msc/finance-investment.html etc; M4;http://www.feut.edu.al:3000/prof-administrim-biznes.html etc;SER p.31]**Some bachelor's study programmes also require a diploma thesis, though this differs across faculties.**[M4; SER p.31]** Regulations, criteria and standards forthe thesis are clearly defined.**[AE25]**

3.12   The University states that first and second-cycle study programmes are designed to include employability skills.**[SER p.31; M5]** While the varying faculty websites do not necessarily indicate whether bachelor's programmes are oriented to employability, second-cycle programmes appear to include modulesdirectly relating to a field of professional specialisation.**[SER p.31;eg, http://www.feut.edu.al/mprof.html]** The University is intending to open further interdisciplinary and international second-cyclestudyprogrammes to help produce graduates meeting the needs of the Albanian labour market.**[SER p.31; M4; http://euro-ps.org/]**Each faculty has established a Careers Centre, designed to provide students with information and support on internships and employment. **[SER p.31; M4]**.While it was not clear that all programmes' aims are geared to preparing students for the world of work, students met by the review team felt that their programmes provide opportunities for employment.**[M4a; M4b]**

Findings

Good practice

The review team identified no features of good practice.

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weaknesses:

- the database of study programmes is outdated, contains duplications and lacks reference to legal documentation(paragraph 3.1; *Chapter I Standard I.1*)
- low student mobility across European programmes(paragraph 3.10; *Chapter I Standard I.10*).

Recommendations

The review team identified the following recommendations:

- the University should, by the start of the next academic year, review the database of study programmes to ensure that it is current, accurate and in line with legal requirements(paragraph 3.1;*Chapter I Standard I.1*)
- the University should develop and implement a strategic approach to increasing student mobility (by August 2018)(paragraph 3.10; *Chapter I Standard I.10*).

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   Descriptions of study programmes, in Albanian andtaking a variety of formats,are published on the faculty websites.**[eg,http://fshs-ut.edu.al/programet-ba-3/; http://www.fhf.edu.al/msh-ne-arkeologji/]**The University supplied the team with programme descriptions from the Faculty of Economics and these include a course overview, learning outcomes, teaching methods, course content, delivery details, assessment and module content.**[AE75-93; 7; 18; M2; 25]** It was unclear as to whether other faculties adopt the same practice, although students state that teaching schedules are appropriate and academic staff are very supportive of students. **[M4; M8]**Faculties are responsible for planning staff teaching hours and the exact work plan for the year. **[039]**Assessment tends to be 50 per cent by final examination and 50 per cent by practicals and course work.**[M2; M4a; M4b]** Staff recognised students' criticism of Wi-Fi accessibility and library facilities, as discussed at paragraphs 2.6, 2.7 and 5.5.**[M4; M6; M8; Student Survey]**

4.2   At the start of each academic year, following students' registration, student codes and passwords are generated by the Administrator of the Information System,a Rectorate post,and these are used to access the portal for individual student information.**[SER p.33; Campus tour]**Each of the faculties has its own rules, approved by Faculty Councils, for assessment processes. Students can consult faculty websites for a calendar of exams, graduation requirements, guidance for assessment procedures and any other assessment-related information. **[SER p.34; 14; 16;http://www.unitir.edu.al/]**The student record system enables academic staff to enter student grades which, according to the self-evaluation,must then be signed off by at least twotutors, appointed by the Head of Department.**[SER, p.35]** The review team noted that assessment procedures vary across faculties.**[M2; M3; M6; 14; 16]**In this context, it was provided with no clear,documentary evidence of a moderation system that would assure stakeholders that assessment processes are valid, accurate and fair.The team judges this to be a **weakness**.Accordingly, the team **recommends** that the University should ensure that there is a clear, documented policy and procedure which outlines the institutional approach to assessment(by August 2018).**[Chapter I Standard II.2]**

4.3   The review team noted concerns in the Student Survey regarding academic misconduct and particularly copying in examinations.While they were provided with some documents relating to assessment regulations and evidence of an Ethics Council decision about plagiarism **[014; 16; 4]**, they were not provided with clear, documentary evidence of a formal policy on plagiarism and other academic misconduct and judged this to be a **weakness**.The team therefore **recommends** that the University develop and implement a formal policy on plagiarism and other academic misconduct(by August 2018). Students receive a Diploma and a Diploma Supplement upon successful completion of their study programme.**[FE14]**Students met by the review team were not aware of either the student complaints oracademic appeals procedures, though the University Regulations have sections on appeals and complaints. **[M4; Student Survey; UoT Regulations, Article 51, SER p.47; AE37][Chapter I Standard II.2]**

4.4   The self-evaluation report states that at department level, academic staff review and revise the curriculum for eachstudy programme, with changes being approved by the department and the faculty.Students' views are garnered from student surveys and assessment questionnaires.Staff told the review team that Programme Committees meet twice a year and contribute to review.All improvements are received by Academic Senate which, if there are amendments to up to 20 per cent of the study programme, needs to approve the changes.**[SER p.26, 35-36; FE10; FE9; M2; M3;M4; M5;M6; M7; 17;**

AE38]While staff and students were aware of, and evidently engaged in, review processes, it was apparent that there was significant variation in practice between faculties.**[M2; M3; M6]** The respective roles of the Internal Quality Assurance Unit, which works with faculties, and the central Department of Curricula and Standards, was not provided to the team. **[M2; M3; M4; M5; M6; M7]** Generally, it was not evident that there is a clear, documented University policy on the quality assurance of study programmes and the review team deems this to be a **weakness**.It is therefore **recommended** that the University clarifies and publishesits approach to the quality assurance of study programmes(by August 2018).**[Chapter I Standard II.3]**

4.5   The University states that it employs various means to improve teaching quality. Senior managers explained that it is a legal obligation for teaching staff to keep up to date and to develop their professional standing.The review team was also told that staff engagement on training programmes at the University and abroad helps to improve teaching, though it also heard that funding for European mobility is limited.**[M3; SER p.37; M6]** There is some peer observation of teaching but this tends to be dependent on individual commitment and varying faculty practice.There is no University policy on peer observation.**[M2; M3; M6]**The self-evaluation report states that academic staff are subject to periodic evaluation through various means.However, as noted in weaknesses and recommendations at sections 2.4 and 4.4, it is not apparent that the University has a comprehensive and consistent approach to the quality assurance of programmes and the evaluation of teaching. **[SER pp.16-17; M2; M3; M5; M6; 2.6; 17]** Notwithstanding this, students were generally positive about the organisation of their studies, the methodology used by teachers and the advice and support given by teaching staff. **[M4; M8; Student Survey]**

4.6   Individual departments are perceived as the key units in terms of research, with each one independently developing a research strategy.Faculties propose an annual research budget for approval by Rectorate, which is then distributed to departments.Departments and faculties then produce annual reports on research performance and output.**[SER p.37-38; M2; M3; M6; M7; AE33]** The quantity of research work published by academic staff across the departments shows an increasing trend but is still lower in some faculties.**[AE49]**

4.7   Staff mobility in Europe for research and other academic activities, including teaching,is supported.The University also organises and participates in scientific conferences in Albania and other countries.**[AE49]**There is a programme to enable staff from academic institutions in other countries to have temporary teaching and research posts at the University, and to collaborate on research projects.The University has also signed a series of exchange agreements with universities throughout Europe.**[AE50; AE66; FE30-40]**Generally, however, mobility is limited by financial restrictions and take-up of opportunities is lower than the University and its staff would prefer.**[M3; M6; Professors' Survey]** The review team reached the view that the website's over-reliance on Albanian and limited proficiency in foreign languages maycontribute to lower levels of staff mobility.**[http://www.unitir.edu.al/; M1; M2; M3; M6; M7]**

4.8   As noted, the departments guide research priorities.The University states that departmental research goals take account of its development strategy and strategic objectives.**[SER p.39]** However, it was not clear how this alignment is achieved and the review team concludes that the absence of a formal research strategy to guide priorities is a **weakness**.It therefore **recommends** that the University develops and implements a formal research strategy to guide institutional research priorities(by August 2018).**[Chapter I Standard I.4; Chapter I Standard I.5]**

Findings

Good practice

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

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weaknesses:

- the absence of clear, documentary evidence of a moderation system which would assure stakeholders that assessment processes are valid, accurate and fair(paragraph 4.2; *Chapter I Standard II.2*)
- the absence of a formal policy on plagiarism and other academic misconduct(paragraph 4.3; *Chapter I Standard II.2*)
- the lackof a clear, documented University policy on the quality assurance of study programmes (paragraph 4.4; *Chapter I Standard II.3*)
- the absence of a formal research strategy to guide priorities (paragraph 4.8; *Chapter I Standard I.4; Chapter I Standard I.5*).

Recommendations

The review team made the following recommendations:

- the University should ensure that there is a clear, documented policy and procedure which outlines the institutional approach to assessment (by August 2018)(paragraph 4.2; *Chapter I Standard II.2*)
- the University develops and implements a formal policy on plagiarism and other academic misconduct (by August 2018) (paragraph 4.3;*Chapter I Standard II.2*)
- the University should clarify and publish its approach to the quality assurance of study programmes (by August 2018) (paragraph 4.4;*Chapter I Standard II.3*)
- the University should develop and implement a formal research strategy to guide institutional research priorities(by August 2018) (paragraph 4.8; *Chapter I Standard I.4; Chapter I Standard I.5*).

Affirmation of action being taken

The review team did not make any affirmations.

Judgement

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

Evaluation Area 5: Students and their Support

5.1   The University Statutes set out the role of the Senate in proposing to the Minister of Education and Science the criteria and quotas for admissions, and set specific criteria for the selection of first-cycle students.**[FE2]** The Regulations specify that the University must publicly announce the accredited study programmes offered before the start of the admission cycle.**[AE37]** Admission quotas and tuition fees for second-cycle programmes are determined by the Council of Ministers.**[AE37]**The University is active in promoting its programmes through open days organised by the Careers Offices and the distribution of information leaflets.**[SER p.42-43; GID; M1]** Students whom the review team met reported general satisfaction with the information they received about their programme when they first applied, and confirmed that the programmes met their expectations.**[M4]**However, according to the Student Survey only 44 per cent of students received general information about the University and under 2 per cent were told about refund policies before they started.**[Student Survey]**Students also identified concerns with the quality and accessibility of programme information on the University website.**[http://www.unitir.edu.al/; M4]** This contributes to the weakness and recommendation identified in section 2.6.The University welcomes foreign students, but other than exchange students, numbers of foreign nationals studying at the University are very low.**[GID; M6]**The full-time academic staff to student ratio at the university level is 1 to 23.**[SED p.43; GID]**The staff to student ratio in the Faculty of Foreign Languages for practice activities is 1 to 11. **[FE12]**

5.2   Each faculty maintains students' personal files, containing contact information and high school grade reports, in its academic secretarial offices. **[SER p.44; AE 56; FE 19; M6]**The Information Office provides guidanceon student orientation; the Academic Secretariat provides information on study programmes; and the Office of Services and Information Technology and the Careers Offices all offer student-facing services.**[SER p.44; AE54; Campus tour]** The Learning Management computer programme supports staff and student communications.**[SER p.44; O14]**

5.3   On commencing their programme, students receive an orientation.**[M4; M6]** Faculty libraries support the induction of students with the development of information management skills.**[SER p.43; AE63]**In the Student Survey over 90 per cent of students report good relationships between staff and students, with high levels of staff commitment noted. Students spoke warmly of the support they receive and doctoral students described close relationships between students and supervisors.Over 80 per cent of students report that advice from staff is at least sufficient.**[Student Survey; M4; M6; M7]**The University offers students the opportunity to transfer their studies to same-cycle study programmes in the intermediate years, within the University or at other higher education institutions.**[AE58; AE59]**Admission decisions for proposed transfers are taken by the Rector, taking into consideration the opinion of the host dean and the capacity of the programme, and the outcome of programme recognition.**[SER p.45; AE37]**On completion of a first-cycle study programme, many students apply for a second-cycle study programme.**[SER p.45; M4; M8]**

5.4   In accordance with the Regulations set by the MES, the University pays special attention to prospective students from Albanian-speaking territories - the Republic of Kosovo, and students of Albanian origin from Macedonia, Montenegro, Presevo, Medvedja and Bujanovac - and to students with special needs.The University has supported a number of such students with either fee exemption or half fees.**[SER p.45;GID;AE59; M1; M3; M6; M7]** During the past three years, approximately 285 students from these groups have been admitted on first and second-cycle programmes.First-cycle students are fully exempt from tuition fees, whilesecond-cycle students pay half of the tuition fee.**[AE1]**In accordance with the MES regulations a scholarship scheme is available.**[SER p.45; AE20; AE21; AE60;**

AE61]Admission quotas and special tuition fees for part-time programmes are defined in the by-laws of Council of Ministers and MES but, as noted, changes in the law mean that part-time provision is currently being phased out.**[SER p.45AE37; M7]**

5.5 The University has sixfaculty-based libraries with books in Albanian and other languages.**[SER p.46; GID; M3; Campus tour]**Library opening times are published and 90 per cent of students are satisfied with the support provided by the library.**[AE54; Student Survey]**Work is ongoing to digitise the library in the Faculty of History and Philology.**[Campus tour]** Additional literature is provided through online libraries with which the University has agreements. **[SER p.34; Campus tour; M7]**The review team was told that all requests for library funding are met in full, although in the Student Survey, approximately 30 per cent of students report dissatisfaction with access to textbooks and 40 per cent dissatisfaction with access to electronic resources.Students and staff met during the visit reported dissatisfaction with provision of, and access to, both textbooks and online materials, and whileit is acknowledged that there are early plans for library development, the review team considers this to be a **weakness**.**[M3; M4; M7]**It **recommends** that the University takessystematic action to improve access to library books and online resources.**[Chapter I Standard III.5]**

5.6 Faculties make their own arrangements to provide first-cycle students with the support they need, and during the review, students spoke positively about the support provided by academic and faculty staff.**[SER p.47; M4; M5; M6; M8]**The Regulations make provision for failing students to have repeated opportunities to re-sit.**[SER p.47; AE37]**Within the Regulations, the Boards of Ethics at University and faculty level are responsible for the management of complaints (see paragraph 4.3). **[SER p.47; AE37**]

5.7 University Statutes and Regulations set out the rights and obligations of students, together with arrangements and funding for Student Councils at University and faculty level.**[SER p.48; AE37; FE 2]**Student Councils are elected every two years and students are represented on the Faculty Councils and the Senate.**[M3]**The University provides financial resources to support the work of the Council, and students confirmed that they can access these resources **[M3; M4]**. The first and second-cycle students whom the review team met spoke positively about the work of the Council in organising activities and in getting concerns addressed, though third-cycle students were less aware of its work. There is clear evidence of the University responding to issues raised by students. **[SER p.48; M3; M4; AE65]** However, in the Student Survey, only 31 per cent of students regard decision making as transparent and 63 per cent of students are unaware of student membership of Senate or Faculty Council meetings.**[Student Survey]**The review team would encourage the University to consider ways in which it could promote the work of the Student Council and improve the transparency of University decision making.

5.8 University Regulations set out arrangements for extracurricular activities.**[AE37]**The University actively promotes cultural and social opportunities and there are a variety of programmes and events organised at faculty level that encourage participation in institutional life.Students met during the review were satisfied with the opportunities they had for involvement in cultural and sporting activities. **[SER p.48-49; M1; M4]**The Careers Centres organise a programme of lectures and extracurricular activities.**[AE18; AE19]**A health centre functions in the student residences but the University has no data on its use, and in the Student Survey 65 per cent of students regard medical assistance as poor or very poor.**[SER p,49; AE67; Student Survey]**

5.9 The University has recently established Careers Centres in faculties, to serve as a bridge between students and the labour market, establishing contacts with potential employers in order to promote students'employment prospects.**[AE57; M1; M2; M5; M7]** These offices identify internship and employment opportunities, and provide weekly

workshops and information about mobility and study abroad scholarships.They organise activities such as summer and winter schools, open meetings, open lectures, a debate championship, career fairs, business trips and business speed dating.**[SER p.45; AE17; M7]**During the review, students spoke positively about internship opportunities and the team heard about employer engagement in supporting internships and in employing graduates.**[M2; M4; M5]**However, in the Student Survey 40 per cent of students report that information about employment is poor or very poor, and 60 per cent report that assistance in finding a job is poor or very poor.This view was confirmed during the meeting with students.**[Student Survey; M4]**The review team **affirms** the actions taken by the University to improve support for employment through the creation of the Careers Centres.There is evidence from the Faculty of Law of oversight of the employment destinations of graduates,**[FE15; SER Doc 16]** but the University does not currently meet the requirement to hold statistical data on the employment of all its graduates,**[M7; SER Doc 16; AE68; AE69]** and the review team considers this to be a **weakness**.The review teamtherefore**recommends** that the University establishes a structure and procedures for the collection and storage of data concerning the employment of its graduates(by August 2018).**[Chapter I Standard III.9]**

Findings

Good practice

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

Weaknesses

The review team identified the following weaknesses:

- insufficient provision of, and access to, both text books and online materials(paragraph 5.5; *Chapter I Standard III.5*)
- statistical data on the employment of all its graduates are not kept(paragraph 5.9; *Chapter I Standard III.9*).

Recommendations

The review team made the following recommendations:

- the University should take systematic action to improve provision of, and access to, library books and online resources (paragraph 5.5; *Chapter I Standard III.5*)
- the University should establish a structure and procedures for the collection and storage of data concerning the employment of its graduates(by August 2018)(paragraph 5.9; *Chapter I Standard III.9*).

Affirmation of action being taken

The review team affirms the following action already in progress:

- steps taken by the University to improve support for employment through the creation of Careers Centres(paragraph 5.9;*Chapter I Standard III.9*).

Judgement

The Standards for Students and their Support are substantially met.