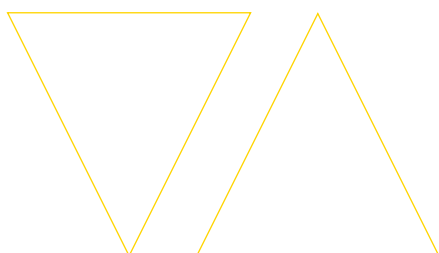
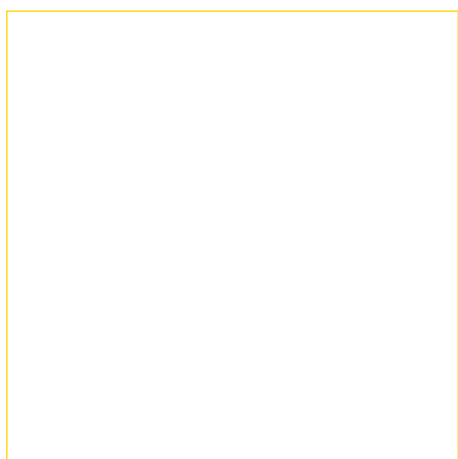


Assessment Report



Institutional Accreditation of the Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM), Mitrovica, Kosovo



Impressum

EVALAG

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I. Introduction

The assessment procedure was carried out with an informed peer review on the basis of a self-evaluation report provided by the University, a two-day online visit of international experts, an assessment report by the expert team and the accreditation decision taken by EVALAG's Accreditation Commission.

The procedure applies the fitness-for-purpose approach which assesses to what extent the institution is able to achieve its self-set objectives. The point of reference are EVALAG's criteria for international institutional accreditation that follow the **European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area dated 15 May 2015**.

These criteria focus first of all on the profile and the strategies of the institution which are in the centre of the procedure. The governance structures which are used to implement strategies, the fields of activities of the institution and cross-cutting issues which influence the implementation, and the success of the institutional strategies are also examined. By assessing compliance with the criteria, EVALAG checks whether the institution has objectives with regard to each criterion, whether it implements activities which serve to reach the defined objectives, and whether it uses mechanisms to assess the results of its activities. Additionally, EVALAG assesses if the institution meets academic standards that are accepted in Europe and internationally.

The following criteria are used: Institutional profile and strategy; Governance; Resources; Teaching and learning; Research; Institution and society; Quality assurance (See annexe 1 for a detailed description of the criteria).

The experts express the extent of compliance regarding the criteria. It refers to the following levels of assessments: passed, passed subject to conditions, suspension of the accreditation procedure or failed. Depending on the degree to which the institution meets the criteria, the institution will be accredited, accredited with conditions or not accredited.

No national regulations were taken into account in this assessment procedure. EVALAG sees this assessment procedure in the context of an international institutional accreditation. In case of a successful assessment, the institution is entitled to carry the EVALAG label for institutional accreditation. There is no intent to replace an assessment procedure that may be mandatory and that is based on national regulations.

II. HEI (profile)

The Public International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM) is a higher education institution in Kosovo. Since July 2023, IBCM is a public college. It provides higher education for free. Currently, it offers 4 Bachelor programmes and one Master programme. The target group of IBCM are students from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Diversity and inclusion are at the heart of its mission. Therefore, all programmes are taught in English. In 2024, there were 756 students at IBCM¹. Teaching takes place on a face-to-face basis in two facilities: one campus in South Mitrovica and one campus in North Mitrovica. There is a short walking distance between the two campuses of approximately ten minutes.

IBCM aims at providing higher education to students and supporting the economic development in the Mitrovica region and in other regions in Kosovo and beyond. In the past, more than 80% of IBCM graduates have found jobs within 6 months of graduation. As a result, a lot of graduates including graduates with non-majority backgrounds now hold senior positions in the Kosovo administration.

Historical evolution

IBCM was first registered in the Netherlands and Kosovo as an international nonprofit-foundation in 2010. The main purpose was to boost economic prospects and alleviate ethnic tensions in the region, there was clear commitment to European integration.

At the moment of its initiation, there were several financial supporters such as the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation from Kosovo, international development agencies, including the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Commission and the NGO SPARK Netherland. SPARK Netherland supported IBCM financially till 2018. Then, in March 2018 IBCM received the legal status of a local independent not for profit educational foundation in Kosovo, under the umbrella of the Law for free association, No. 03/L-134. In 2023, it became a public institution of higher education with the statute “college”. It represents Kosovo’s first public college.

Profile

IBCM has emphasized a modern educational approach in its study programmes and has focused on good contacts with the industry and a good employability of its graduates, focussing on labour market needs and flexible career paths. Core areas for IBCM are environment and agricultural management, sales and marketing, public administration and social work, and applied IT. In addition to traditional study programmes, IBCM offers short courses in the form of microcredentials depending on the labour market needs in the

¹ Page 18 in the SER. 225 new enrolments for 2024, see p. 18 SER.

region. When IBCM was transformed into a public college, it created three faculties and abandoned its former structure with administrative units for each study programme. The three faculties are the following: Faculty of Environment, Technology and IT, Faculty of International Business Management, Faculty of Social Sciences. Each faculty is headed by a dean.

There is a commitment to European values such as mobility for students. This is visible because of the high number of Erasmus + projects IBCM has participated in or is currently participating in. In particular, there is an emphasis on equal opportunity and improving access to education and employment to a broad group of students, making it inclusive and society-relevant regardless of gender, ethnicity (and language), age and physical ability. The commitment to diversity and inclusion is a very strong feature in IBCM's profile.

IBCM indicates several priorities for their work such as the Theory to Practice approach and fostering research of local, regional and wider significance. The priorities will be elaborated on in more detail in the chapter about its strategy.

III. Institutional Assessment

IBCM submitted a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) on November 27, 2024. In January, further documents were submitted.

The expert group was composed of:

- **Professor em. Marianne Assenmacher**, former president of the university of Vechta, Germany.
- **Professor Eloina Coll Aliaga**, Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain
- **Søren Vernegren Kirk**, Quality Assurance Officer, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
- **Giorgi Gvenetadze**, Student at Ilia State University in Tbilisi, Georgia

The site visit took place on February 10 and 11, 2025. IBCM employees and the EVALAG Project Manager were present on the South Campus of IBCM in Mitrovica during these two days. The international experts participated via zoom in the site visit.

During the online visit the expert group met with the Rector of the University, two Vice- Rectors, members of the Academic Council, members of the Study and Quality Committee, teaching staff, students, with employees from the Student and Career Office and the Quality Assurance Office.

The following assessment report is structured along the assessment criteria for institutional accreditation, they are laid out in annexe 1. After a short description of the criterion, each chapter starts with a presentation of the current status regarding the criterion which is based on the information in the SER report of the University and the information gathered during the site visit. On this basis, the expert team assesses the criterion. Finally, the experts list the conditions and/or recommendations for further improvement.

1. Institutional profile and strategy

Criterion

The institutional profile and strategy define the main activities of a higher education institution and therefore are at the centre of the institutional accreditation procedure. Applying the fitness-for-purpose approach, the experts mainly check whether an institution has a clearly defined strategy that fits the institutional profile. Furthermore, they check whether the strategies and the profile of the institution comply with internationally accepted standards. The experts also review the processes for the definition of strategies. Furthermore, they analyse whether the strategies are adequate to reach the institutional objectives.

Current Situation

According to the SER, IBCM is committed to the following values: academic excellence, international experience and mobility, scientific and professional integrity, cooperation with industry and innovation, students' career development; diversity, equality, inclusivity and accessibility. In addition to these values, the HEI indicates four goals: quality, community engagement, growth, financial stability. These four goals have been translated in different priorities and specific objectives. According to information that was given during the site visit, the definition of these priorities took place by involving all academic staff and student representation.

1. In Teaching and Learning, IBCM is committed to the Theory to Practice approach. This approach implies an interdisciplinary perspective with an emphasis on Bachelor study programmes and work-based learning. An important element of the Theory to Practice approach is a focus on problem-based learning and research-based learning. The curricula of study programmes include elements of these learning models. Furthermore, there is a commitment to academic quality and integrity, creating joint programmes and offering Continuous Professional Development courses. The latter emphasizes the culture of lifelong learning. 2. A second priority is fostering research of local, regional and wider significance, expanding the research funding and infrastructure, creating a knowledge transfer experience as well as engaging in research outreach and cooperation with industry and students. 3. Another priority is in promoting diversity, enhancing inclusivity, engagement in the community and promoting public outreach. Furthermore, the HEI values a close contact with economic actors in particular regarding curriculum development and projects in cooperation with firms as well as internships. It organizes Business Clubs and career fairs. 4. A fourth area of priorities is to closely observe the needs in the labour market and respond to the knowledge and skills gap, adapting in case of national higher education reforms and enhance research activities. Furthermore, there is a strong commitment to internationalization and a focus on English language skills to more mobility activity on student and staff level and to increase partnerships with other HEIs in the context of joint programmes. 5. A fifth area of priorities is financial stability in terms of growth and diversification of income, an efficient and effective administration, strategic investment and risk management. IBCM aims to increase the number of students on the long run and wants to develop sustainable buildings. 6. The sixth area of priorities contains objectives like improving student-centred processes and a management information system as well as increasing knowledge sharing and support.

The priorities were defined by the Strategic Planning Team that is composed of the IBCM Management, a student representative and the three deans. They work together on the strategic framework. In addition to the strategic plan, each faculty defines an annual work plan that takes into account the above-mentioned priorities.

According to the Strategic Plan 2025-29, IBCM aims to maintain the six priority areas and to underline the values of collaboration, diversity and inclusion, innovation and more internationalization. It indicates different steps for each of the four years to implement these goals. For example for 2025, the creation of a student recruitment strategy is indicated and improving IBCM land, infrastructure and building sustainability. KPIs are indicated in the Quality Assurance Manual.² In its statement, the university has highlighted that it just adopted a list of KPIs (April 2025).

KPIs (source: Quality Assurance Manual)	
Education Excellence	to continue to offer and develop relevant education opportunities to maintain and enhance the quality of teaching and learning
Reconciliation	to increase the number of students representing all communities of Kosovo
Engagement and leadership	to maintain and improve the institute's international relations
Innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship	to increase the number of internationally funded projects and initiatives
Staff development and structure	to continuously monitor the performance process against objectives set in the annual staff evaluation exercise
Financial cost effectiveness	follow the portfolio of incomes with a focus on diversification

In addition to the above-mentioned priorities, IBCM staff has informed the experts that there will be KPIs coming from the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation in Kosovo in the near future. It is expected that these KPIs will be integrated into the university's overall strategy.

IBCM has recently undergone different growth phases. In 2020, there were 135 students enrolled. In 2024, there were 225. Recently, demand for IBCM study programmes has increased significantly due to the higher level of financial stability because of the new status as a public college. The documentation IBCM provided to the experts shows that there has been a steep increase in Master students in particular in 2023.³ The university has informed the experts that this increase is due to a number of factors. One factor is that the original intake was restricted to 40 students, but due to a high demand, IBCM was authorized by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and

² Page 6 of the Quality Assurance Manual.

³ Number of Master students in 2022: 38, number of Master students in 2023: 81 (see self-evaluation report).

Innovation in Kosovo to increase the intake number. While the growth objective is an important part of the IBCM strategy, the university has highlighted it is a strive for moderate growth. The university aims to have, on the long run, a student population of around 450 to 500 for new enrolments (information received during the site visit).

For the last four years, the drop-out rate was at around 18%. The university highlights that most of the students have to work alongside their studies. Furthermore, some dropouts may be related to accommodation problems in the region. IBCM employees highlighted during the site visit that the accommodation situation for students has slightly improved in the past two years. IBCM commits to closely observe the dropout rate and the explanatory factors behind it.

Assessment

The experts have seen that IBCM has undergone an important transformation in the past two years. Nevertheless, the priorities are still the same: to provide high-quality international education with a focus on employability. The experts see that it has kept its unique approach to teaching and learning, targeting all ethnic groups in the region by teaching in English and using modern learning methods. In light of this, the experts conclude that the university has succeeded in maintaining its key features which make them unique and appealing.

The experts appreciate that IBCM has recently defined a strategy with specific priorities. With a strong focus on diversity, inclusion and employability, these are in line with the institution's profile.

The experts conclude that there is a well-defined process for the decision-making regarding the strategy and appreciates that student representatives and one dean from each faculty is taking part in it.

Overall, the experts estimate that the aim of expanding is well thought-through because it is a plan for a moderate expansion and it sticks to previous commitments such as for example a focus on employability. The experts conclude that the priorities indicated in the strategy are adequate to reach the institutional objectives.

The expert group considers that the criterion is fulfilled.

The experts value that quality assurance, along with community engagement, financial sustainability and growth, figures among the four overall main goals of the institution. Nonetheless to make the approach more coherent, the goal of quality assurance could become more visible via KPIs that IBCM defines for itself. Consequently, the topic of quality assurance could receive a more prominent position among the priorities. Therefore, the experts recommend IBCM to define KPIs for itself. This would go a long way for the quality assurance of the institution, too, because it implies regular checks and reflections

on numbers. Furthermore, this would enable IBCM to introduce a balance within the priorities and to underpin them with more measurable elements.

Recommendation 1:

IBCM defines KPIs to monitor its progress in line with the priorities indicated in the strategy. It ensures that there is a reflection regarding the juxtaposition of KPIs and actual data.

The experts have seen and acknowledged that the university is currently working on these KPIs. For example, a document was submitted that indicated measures for KPIs in 2025, but precise numbers or percentages were missing. The university highlighted this was work in progress.

2. Governance

Criterion

The criterion focuses on the internal governance and decision-making processes of the institution. The experts check the clarity and transparency of the organisational provisions and governance structure. They examine whether governance structures are adequate to support the institutional strategies and how decision-making processes are organised. Furthermore, the experts check how stakeholder groups are involved in governance, whether the institution provides relevant information about its activities for the internal and external public and whether academic freedom is assured.

Current Situation

The organizational structure of IBCM is laid out in its statute which dates from 2023. There are three governing bodies of IBCM: the rector, the Academic Council and the Steering Council.

The Steering Council is the main governing authority of the college. It approves the annual budget plan and the strategic development plan. It is equally responsible for overseeing the implementation of both plans. It approves the annual work report which is written by the rector. Furthermore, it elects and dismisses the rector and appoints temporary management structures. Furthermore, the Steering Council has the last say on the internal sections of the college such as the academic units, it also decides on key issues of financial management of the college.

The Steering Council represents the college in communication with the ministry. It ensures that the national regulations are being respected. It publishes a report about its annual work including the achievement of its goals and objectives and statistical data. It is composed of seven members. Three of its members are elected by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI). These external members of the Steering Council do not have any work relationship with the college or any other higher education institution in Kosovo. The remaining four members of the Steering Council are

elected by the Academic Council. Among these four members, there is one representative from the international community.

The Academic Council votes for the members of the Steering Council. The rector and the general secretary are ex-officio members of the Steering Council. Most budget decisions have to get the approval of the Steering Council. For example, the Student Council proposes an activity plan each year, the Steering Council approves the budget for the activities.

The Academic Council is the highest academic body of the College and it is responsible for setting up general strategic issues related to research, studies and teaching. The Statute of the College prescribes the following members for the Academic Council:

Members of the Academic Council	
Position	Voting right
Rector	Yes
vice-rectors	Yes
Deans	Yes
one member from the academic staff	Yes
the quality assurance coordinator	Yes
the president of the student representative council	Yes
the general secretary	no voting right

The rector is responsible for the smooth running of the day-to-day business of the college. The rector's office is composed of the rector, the vice-rector for Teaching, Academic and Student Affairs and Quality; the vice-rector for International Cooperation, Projects, Innovation and Scientific Research and vice-rector for Finance, Infrastructure and Administration, one assistant, one head of public relations.

Student participation in the governance of IBCM is provided by the student member in the Academic Council. The Student Representative Council (Student Council) is given a budget for its activities each year. The Student Council disposes of a constitution which regulates its election, voting procedures, decision-making and activities. The Student Council is composed of class representatives, a president, a vice-president, a secretary and a treasurer. Any student who is enrolled full-time at IBCM can candidate for a position in the Student Council.

Academic leadership is ensured by the deans of the three faculties. They are supported by the vice-deans. The general secretary is the head of the administration. He/she is responsible for the legal affairs of the institution, the infrastructure and facilities of the college and for human resources.

IBCM cooperates closely with industrial representatives due to its focus on employability. There is an industrial board with representatives from industry. Its members are elected by the Academic Council. The industrial board advises IBCM, their members do not have any voting rights in IBCM bodies.

Assessment

The experts have seen that there is a transparent governance structure, the provisions for it can be found in the statute. They have observed that many interviewees during the site visit were familiar with the governance structure and the corresponding provisions in the statute. The provisions of the new statute from 2023 are clear and transparent.

The experts particularly embrace the new structure of IBCM with three faculties and deans. Staff members have said during the site visit that they welcome this development because it represents a less centralized approach and it facilitates the cooperation among faculties. This corroborates the experts' bottom line that the new structure is highly beneficial because it boosted internal cooperation and teamwork significantly. Therefore, they see this as an important milestone for its organizational development.

Besides, the experts have seen that the consideration of student concerns in the day-to-day- business of the college is guaranteed via the student representative in the Academic Council. They consider this to be a great advantage. Furthermore, the Student Council disposes of a budget of its own. Its work and its internal organisation is laid out in its constitution. The experts see this as a sign for progress, in particular regarding the last institutional assessment procedure. Throughout the last assessment procedure in 2018/19, the previous expert group concluded a need for improvement. At that point in time, according to the previous expert group, the independence of the student representation was not provided.

In juxtaposition to the situation in 2018/19, the expert group sees that there has been considerable progress regarding student representation. The expert group praises this progress – in particular with regards to the independence of the student representative. This is the reason why they see the criterion as fulfilled. Nevertheless, the experts highlight that the expert group from the previous assessment procedure had recommended two student representatives. Having two student representatives is a common standard in most HEIs in the EHEA.

The expert group considers that the criterion is fulfilled.

Recommendation 2:

IBCM provides two slots for student representatives in the Academic Council.

3. Resources

Criterion

This criterion focuses on adequate resource endowment and deployment to sustain the core activities. The experts check the existence and sustainability of a professional funding and financial management. They also check whether the qualification and number of the (academic) staff (full-time and part-time) are adequate to support the institutional strategy as well as to ensure the intended learning outcomes. Further, they review staff recruiting and staff development and whether the search, hiring and tenure procedures are in line with international academic practices. The resources, facilities and equipment are also part of the criterion. Therefore, the experts examine if the amount and quality of facilities and equipment allow a smooth running of the programmes (library, laboratories, teaching rooms, IT equipment).

Current Situation

Up until 2023, students paid fees for the studies because of IBCM's status as private higher education institution in Kosovo. Since IBCM is a public higher education institution, it has ensured longterm financial public funds.⁴ The total available budget for IBCM for the fiscal year 2024 amounts to €2,130,223. It is divided into different categories: Salaries and allowances, goods and services, utility costs, subventions and transfers, capital investments. For the time period 2025-28, IBCM has submitted a financial budgetary plan to the ministry that contains an increase of academic and administrative staff. The increase is from 55 full time staff to 89 full time staff by the end of 2028. The growth of the institution is expected to take place in the form of an increase in student numbers and a slight increase in the offer of study programmes, with one additional study programme on the Bachelor level and the introduction of further specialization tracks in other study programmes as well as a planned increase of English preparatory courses. IBCM management has underlined that it aims to grow and diversify income and to closely monitor the labour market and its needs. Furthermore, it aims to report and communicate the College's performance internally and externally.

At present, IBCM has 34 academic staff, of which 31 are full-time, and 3 are part-time for the academic year 2024/25⁵. There are currently 34 academic staff for four Bachelor programmes (each Bachelor programme comprises

⁴ Kosovo Law on Budget Appropriations Law No. 08/L- 332 for public higher institutions in Kosovo. The total available budget for IBCM is in line with Law on the Budget of the Republic of Kosovo Law nr. 08/L-260.

⁵ According to the SER from November 2024, page 14.

180 ECTS) and one Master programme.⁶ There was no written information about the teacher-student ratio, but academic staff indicated that it was around 1:22 during the site-visit. An overall calculation (34 academic staff and 756 students) results in an average teacher-student ratio of 1:7. But this calculation does not take into account that there are differences in the study programmes, the ratio is different depending on the programme.

National regulations in Kosovo require that there is a minimum of one full time teaching staff for each 60 ECTS of a study programme. Furthermore, academic staff must have at least one publication in a journal indexed in Scopus or Web of Science for Bachelor level programmes and at least two for Master level programmes. Furthermore, academic staff are obliged to have a PhD in the field of the study programme where they are teaching.

Regarding the academic titles, IBCM presently has 3 Full Professors, 2 Associate Professors, 17 Assistant Professors, and 10 lecturers. 20 members of the academic staff teach 10 hours per week. The position of a teaching assistant is reserved for teaching staff below 35 years of age. The university has defined rules for the promotion of academic staff. Each academic staff is described with the requirements. The position of a full professor, an associate and an assistant professor all require a PhD as well as teaching and research academic experience, but the requirements differ regarding the exact scope of research experience, publications and years of teaching experience.

The Academic Council decides whether an academic staff shall be promoted. Its decision is based on a report written by the evaluation commission. The evaluation is based on the educational activity; research, scientific and professional activity, service activity⁷ and quantitative evaluation of candidate activities.⁸

IBCM has guidelines for the hiring process which is competitive and merit-based. There are criteria regarding academic excellence, professional experience and commitment to the institution's values. Academic staff is evaluated on performance in teaching and research.

During the site visit, it was said that the university offers training for its academic staff. Several of them took place in 2024, there was one course about the university's overall teaching and learning strategy from Theory to Practice. The university also offered a course on research-based learning and problem-based learning. Another training that was mentioned was a training about data analysis.

There are support measures for non-academic staff and their development, too. For example, there is a training from the government for public employees in the field of Human Resources or IT. Furthermore, IBCM management

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ This refers to, for example, the initiation of an institutional corporation on a voluntary basis.

⁸ This category of evaluation comprises a table, the evaluation commission gives points for different activities, such as for example, teaching activities, mentorship or CPD training the candidate has recently undergone.

said that they are going to provide more tailor-made in house trainings for their non-academic staff in the future.

One important opportunity for further training is staff mobility via different Erasmus+ mobility projects. Once confirmed with the receiving institution, exchange opportunities are presented to IBCM staff in the form of open calls with the aim of making the whole process transparent and public.

Facilities and equipment

The Riverview campus has six rooms in total, these are one auditorium, four normal classrooms, one IT lab. At the Riverside Campus, there are nine rooms, these nine rooms comprise normal classrooms, a consultation room, an auditorium, different laboratories (electronics lab, chemistry lab, psychology/tech lab, a computer lab, a computer/think lab). Classes take place on both campuses. On each campus, there are quiet reading areas in the libraries. The libraries comprise over 2000 print media (18000 copies in total), they are equipped with computers with access to a range of online academic databases, journals and research resources. Materials of the library are systematically catalogued and tracked via tracking cards. At the start of each academic year, the library collection is updated with new academic and general reading materials in response to faculty requests. The latter are coordinated by deans and the rector. IBCM is using the JSTOR digital library of academic journals and books. It is currently buying another online digital library licence in order to offer students access to a higher variety of online resources. The library is open from 8:00 to 20:00 on workdays.

The university uses Google Classroom and moodle as its central learning platform. Students access their learning material via this platform, they also communicate with their lecturers via these platforms and they upload homework or assignments. IBCM uses “plagiarismcheck.org” to check for plagiarism in student papers. All work submitted by students is checked.

IBCM employs a variety of platforms, including Google Meet, Zoom, and Big Blue Button, to facilitate communication between lecturers and students as well as internal communication at IBCM. These tools enable seamless interaction and engagement among students and faculty, ensuring effective collaboration and learning experiences in a digital environment.

IBCM offers four categories of scholarships to its students. This offer started recently as it is related to its new status as a public university. There are merit-based scholarships, scholarships for student accommodation, affirmative scholarships for students with a low-income background. In the year 2024/25, IBCM provided 42 scholarships to students. Furthermore, there were around 40 government scholarships for IBCM students. Scholarship holders have to comply with a specific attendance rate if they want to keep their scholarship.

Assessment

The expert team is convinced that there is comprehensive financial planning. The sustainability of the study offers and therefore, the overall sustainability of the institution have improved since its transformation into a public higher education institution. From the perspective of the experts, the financial targets for the next four years with moderate growth rates regarding the study programme offer and an ensuing increase in staff are an adequate and realistic path. The expert team acknowledges the difficulties of financial planning. The institution is obliged to do a split between the need to hire academic staff on the one hand and regulations that enable it to recruit more staff once a successful accreditation procedure has taken place on the other hand.

The expert teams concludes that financial planning and institutional strategy match. The strongest match can be seen in the institution's efforts to offer training for academic staff in priority issues such as teaching methodology. The experts see another match in its monitoring of needs of the labour market by relying on close contacts with the industry so that they can create new study programmes with a high level of employability for graduates. The high level of students getting a job after graduating from IBCM or even before displays that they are successful with this strategy (see chapter 2).

The experts estimate the number of academic staff to be sufficient, in particular with regard to the academic staff- student ratio. Nevertheless, on the background of the envisaged increase in student numbers, the experts recommend the university to monitor the ratio of academic staff-student for each study programme on a continuous basis.

The experts praise the university's internal regulations regarding the promotion of staff and the definition of the necessary qualifications for each lecturer category. They think that these are good means to ensure highly qualified teaching staff. This is good progress compared to the previous institutional accreditation where there was a lack of transparent and clearly defined rules regarding the qualifications for lecturers. For example, one condition of the previous report for institutional accreditation was that the academic staff responsible for the study programme should have a PhD in the relevant field.⁹

The experts have seen that IBCM offered a variety of training programmes for academic staff as well as for administrative staff. Furthermore, IBCM staff has benefitted from staff exchanges in the context of numerous Erasmus+ projects.

During the site visit talks, staff confirmed that IBCM management has a proactive attitude on the issue of staff training. Therefore, the experts conclude that IBCM scores well in terms of staff development.

Facilities and equipment at IBCM have a high standard. Both campuses of IBCM are well equipped with modern technology, the laboratories are in a

⁹ See EVALAG report on institutional accreditation from 2019, page 46 EVALAG database.

good condition. Students have access to a high variety of academic literature and the online platforms that are used as a learning environment are suitable for students' and teachers' needs. There is a walking distance of around ten minutes between the two campuses which means that students do not spend too much time commuting from one classroom to the other.

The expert group sees the scholarships in a positive light because they enable the university to strengthen its profile as a university with a high degree of diversity in its community.

The expert group considers that the criterion is fulfilled.

Recommendation 3:

With regard to future developments such as a possible increase in student numbers, the experts recommend the university to monitor the ratio of academic staff-student for each study programme on a continuous and systematic basis.

4. Teaching and Learning

Criterion

Teaching and learning are one of the main missions of higher education institutions. In the accreditation procedure the experts check whether the study programmes comply with the institutional strategy and national regulations. They also review the academic standards of the study programmes and how research and teaching are linked. The experts review whether there are student centred teaching and learning processes and whether the diversity of students and their needs are taken into account. Moreover, they assess how the assessment of intended learning outcomes is organised and how the student life cycle is organised.

Current Situation

At IBCM, the learning model is called from Theory to Practice. It includes four steps within the learning process – conceptualization, experimentation, experience and reflection. These four steps are based on problem-based learning (PBL), project-based learning (PrBL), and research-based learning (RBL).

Conceptualization as a form of in-class learning means students acquire theoretical knowledge by reading or listening. Theoretical knowledge may include knowledge on a more abstract level such as theories, definitions, concepts, models, rules etc. At IBCM, theoretical knowledge is dealt with in different formats such as lectures, students teaching other students, exercises in every class, guest speakers and field trips.

Experimentation and simulation learning involves working with real-life problems in a controlled environment without communicating with the outside world. Experimentation at IBCM is lived in the following different formats: use

of real-life cases, roleplaying, games and simulations, focus groups, debates, experiments, multimedia tools, group work and individual oral presentations.

Experience means in-field learning, it is working with theoretical knowledge in the real-world environment. These are the different forms of in-field learning: lecturers and guest speakers incorporate real-life examples and problems from the field; coursework exposing students to practical tools from the real world; fieldwork and research; semester projects; Internships. In-field learning is directly linked to research activities as part of classroom activities. One professor highlighted that one should take the specific local context into account in order to understand this strong link: There is a lack of local data regarding pollution (environmental pollution and noise pollution), therefore, in-field learning necessarily includes tasks such as data collection.

Research is integrated into the teaching activities in several ways. IBCM offers grants for small research projects, particularly those involving student participation. Research activities are part of the curriculum in the study programmes, too. For example, in the course Natural Resource Management (Bachelor in Environmental Management and Technology), students will collect data, learn to work in the Environmental Management laboratory and learn to analyse gathered data. Furthermore, for a case study on Resources management students participate in a field trip to the selected industry. Students will be asked to analyse sustainable resource management in a specific sector (see handbook of the Bachelor in Environmental Management and Technology). During the site visit, students have told the experts about a research project regarding mini hydro power plants, the responsible professor supported students to publish papers on their research results.

Finally, there is reflection in the sense of competence gaining. It means linking recent knowledge and experiences to earlier ones to promote a more complex and interrelated learning process. It takes into consideration all the learning achieved through conceptualization, experimentation, and experience and interrelates them. Reflection is the learning aspect where a student independently can solve real-world problems related to the profession. This means that a student can understand and discuss why specific tools are relevant to solve a specific problem. Reflection takes place for example during in-class reflection exercises, pre-exam tutorials, reporting on the internship experience, Bachelor thesis.

Similarly, the university distinguishes between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge. Thereby explicit knowledge is understood as knowledge, which is transferred and gained by articulation, can be explained in words and can be learned by listening and/or reading. On the contrary, tacit knowledge can be gained only through applying and practical involvement. The pedagogical concept relies on a combination of these two categories of knowledge. Students should acquire both tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge. This approach matches with the Theory to Practice learning model that was described previously. Lecturers integrate PB and RBL by introducing course work in the form of projects, work in laboratories, field work, excursions and

dealing with specific problems in the local environment or industry. New academic staff undergo training so that they are familiar with the institution's learning model.

The Theory to Practice approach is a learning model with a focus on the student and the skills the student should acquire by participating in different courses. The focus on skills is visible in some course descriptions. For example, students attending the course Climate change and Air Quality in the study programme Environmental Management and Technology collect data in the field regarding the local air quality. The data are used throughout the course to reflect on the origins as well as on the impact of the air quality so that students learn more about air protection measures.

At the core of the course descriptions for each study programme, there are intended learning goals. The learning goals are described in line with Bloom's revised learning taxonomy.

Assessing Student Learning

The university applies a seven-point grading scheme that is similar to the Danish grading system. Usually, students are assessed on the basis of several works, projects, or tests, presentations and oral participation. There are hardly any single-point exams for a course. Students are encouraged to work on a continuous basis and receive feedback several times during the semester. This approach enables lecturers and professors to observe progress in their learning process.

Students are provided with the study regulations. They are available on the IBCM website, too. Students can appeal exam results based on the study regulations. The Academic Council reviews study regulations annually. Any attempt to influence examination results will be met with a fail in the exam. Permitted tools are specified on the exam paper of each individual exam.

Cases of plagiarism are referred to the Academic Council. There are teaching units regarding the topic of plagiarism. For example, there is a course for academic English in the Bachelor study programme Environment Management and Technology, two sessions are dedicated to the topic of plagiarism and how to avoid it, and ethics in scientific writing. The university submitted a document with Draft Regulations on Plagiarism, it adopted it after the site visit.¹⁰ According to this policy, written works or papers with more than 15% of plagiarized text, are marked with the grade -3 (this means a Fail according to IBCM Grading Scheme).

The draft regulation plans to allow up to 15% of similarity for Bachelor students and 15% for Master students. There is zero tolerance within the section of results if the results are not students' original work. In case of an exceed

¹⁰ The university informed the experts that this document was approved by the Academic Council in April 2025.

of these limits, there are further steps to be decided by the Academic Council.

Learning via internationalization

IBCM students are offered mobility on the basis of different Erasmus+ projects. Currently, there are 14 cooperation treaties with the following ERASMUS+ partner universities: Hochschule Geisenheim Germany, University of National and World Economy in Sofia, Bulgaria; Sapienza University of Rome; University for Foreigners of Perugia; University of Split; Alanya Alaaddin Keykubat University, Alanya, Turkey; Cukurova University in Adana, Turkey; University College Denmark; ISCAP (Business School of Accounting and Administration), Porto, Portugal; University of the Peloponnese in Kalamata, Greece; Pamukkale University in Turkey; Istanbul Technical University in Istanbul Turkey; South East European University in North Macedonia; Vilnius University of Applied Sciences in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Assessment

The experts have detected that a modern, problem-based and Research-based learning approach is deeply rooted not only in the institutional strategy of the university, but it is also serving as a red thread in its study programmes. There is empirical evidence that these learning approaches are prioritized. The experts have seen that there are many positive aspects coming from these learning approaches such as a higher level of identification with topics or research outcomes. Furthermore, the experts see the information students provided about a research project with hydro plants as an example for the university's endeavour to take students on a critical and reflective path. Furthermore, experts take note of the high level of student satisfaction which is in their eyes a result of the university's learning model.

When students are asked to compare IBCM with other higher education institutions in the region, its unique learning model is indicated as a unique feature. The experts conclude that with its learning model in the foreground, IBCM consequently is a university that offers good student-centred teaching and learning. This conclusion is confirmed by different statements throughout the site visit about the good communication between teachers and learners and the impression of students that the university is attentive towards their needs.

Furthermore, the experts have seen that students are given opportunities to do small research projects on their own. They are encouraged to take an active role in their learning process which implies own research activities. Therefore, they see the university's integration of research into teaching in a positive light.

The expert group considers that the criterion is fulfilled.

5. Research

Criterion

The criterion focuses on the research profile and academic goals of the HEI and whether the profile fits the institutional strategy. Moreover, the experts check whether the academic standards are fulfilled, how the research process is organised and supported by the institution and how research is evaluated within the institution. They also check how the training of young researchers is organised, how the institution assures the academic standards of the training of young researchers and their rights.

Current Situation

IBCM promotes and supports research activities of its staff and its students. Referring to its institutional strategy, IBCM describes the following priority areas for their research activities: sustainable development, technological advancement and community impact.

IBCM recently created a Publication Council which is a permanent committee that is responsible for overseeing scientific research and publication activities at IBCM. The Academic Council elects the members of the Publication Council for a four year-term. It meets four times minimum a year. Its composition is as follows: One full-time faculty representative from each faculty, one representative from the Quality Assurance Department, one representative from the Business Development department, the vice-rector for International Cooperation, Projects, Innovation and Scientific Research (chair). The Publications Council is responsible for

- Overseeing publications by the full-time academic staff
- Overseeing research works produced by the full-time academic staff in collaboration with students
- providing advice to full-time faculty and students on matters related to scientific research and publications
- proposing budget allocations for scientific research und publications produced by full-time staff and full-time staff in collaboration with students

There is financial support for the publication of scientific papers in Journals indexed in Web of Science and Scopus. The regulation of the Publication Council from May 2025 defines the conditions, cap on the amounts, criteria to respect for the application procedure. Eligible for financial support are the full-time academic staff of IBCM who are the first author or the corresponding author of the published paper. Furthermore, only papers indexed in the Web of Science or Scopus are eligible. This is a new policy that started in January 2024. Furthermore, the regulation of the Publication Council comprises rules to apply for funding for international conference participation. There is also the possibility to apply for funding for small research projects based on a twelve-months-time period. Applications should contain information regard-

ing the project's impact, dissemination, visibility, and a research plan elaborating on the methodology and the research design. The grant covers costs related to materials, administrative expenses, personnel, and other relevant expenses. Applications for financial support undergo a review process. Subsequently, the applications are submitted to the Steering Council¹¹ including a recommendation from the Publication Council.

For an overview of publications, see annexe 3.

In the past, staff from the environmental management and technology field reached the highest number of publications and research projects. Three new young researchers were hired recently. A number of 20 students are currently (end of 2024) engaged in research projects in integrated water management, noise pollution, modelling air quality and waste management.

IBCM has a Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Center (KTIC). It comprises four laboratories (for more information regarding the laboratories, see chapter 3.3). It promotes research, innovation and entrepreneurship and aims at networking with relevant stakeholders in society and industry.

The university did not provide detailed data or information regarding the training of young researchers. Nevertheless, IBCM pointed out that it is currently updating its Research Strategy which includes the creation of research groups of key study and research areas of the college.

Assessment

The experts are convinced that IBCM supports research activities that are inline with the institution's strategic. The focus on sustainable development, community impact and technology is clearly visible in the research activities of its staff. Furthermore, the experts conclude that IBCM has recently designed a clear and well-defined process - with the Publication Council playing a central role - for ensuring support for high-quality research according to international academic standards.

The experts welcome the funding for small scale research projects because these projects imply the participation of students and they matches with the university's theory to practice approach.

So far, there is no concept for the training of young researchers. In the eyes of the researchers, the university could do more for the training of young researchers. Therefore, they have a recommendation for IBCM.

Recommendation 4:

IBCM should develop and implement a structured training program for young researchers that integrates methodological, ethical, and communication

¹¹ For more information on the Steering Council, see chapter 3.2.

skills, promotes interdisciplinary collaboration, and provides opportunities for active involvement in real research projects. This programme should complement the existing research initiatives and ensure the sustainable development of future academic talent.

6. Institution and Society

Criterion

The experts check whether the strategy of the institution takes the needs of the society into account. They also examine how the HEI interacts and connects with society via different forms of cooperation, internationalisation, entrepreneurship, diversity. In addition, the experts review whether the activities fit the strategy.

Current Situation

In light of the focus on employability and the Theory to Practice approach, IBCM pursues close contact with the local labour market and employers. This contact is based on a mutual cooperation to facilitate internships for its students and on contacts with alumni. There is a regular and intensive exchange with employers in the local labour market. In 2024, IBCM's Business Development (BD) department successfully established 47 Cooperation and Internship Agreements with stakeholders across various sectors, including private businesses, public institutions, and civil society organizations such as NGOs. These agreements are strategically designed to support IBCM students and the Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Center (KTIC) in business research and development projects.

In addition to its contacts with industry on the grounds of internships and employability, IBCM has played an active role in society. This engagement is mainly shaped by its commitment to diversity, inclusion and environmental sustainability. The following projects are briefly described as examples for its pro-active engagements.

The college is committed to safeguarding Kosovo's natural environment. Therefore, in 2023, IBCM contributed to the Horizon Project EMERITUS – in cooperation with the Kosovo Government Task Force in environmental crimes and EULEX. This project focused on the detection of and prevention of environmental crimes. IBCM developed a training programme designed to enhance intelligence and investigation capabilities of the Kosovo Police units in charge of environmental crimes. IBCM's participation in this project aimed at contributing to a more efficient system for detecting and combatting environmental crimes.

In the context of the Erasmus+ project WB-Edu4Migration, IBCM participates in a project that deals with the endeavour to improve the training for social workers in the Western Balkan region. Currently, the training does not comprise training regarding the unique challenges faced by migrant populations

in the WB. Therefore, the project aims to enhance students' competencies in this area. There is a multi-phased approach that includes educational reform, the development of digital micro-credential courses and ongoing capacity-building initiatives.¹² By addressing training needs, the projects seeks to empower future and current social workers with the knowledge, skills and resources necessary to serve migrant communities and address their needs.

Recently, IBCM invited representatives from the OSCE to their campus in Mitrovica. Different discussion formats took place which dealt with ideas for more inclusive educational opportunities and strengthening support for students from different backgrounds. Both institutions committed to enhance educational experiences and strengthening community engagement through joint projects and programmes.

Lately, IBCM welcomed a group of representatives from "Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians", an NGO located in Prishtina. During the visit, IBCM provided information regarding the possibilities to become a student at IBCM and how IBCM may support them to integrate and develop their academic and professional profile. Furthermore, in 2024, IBCM carried out a multi-ethnic, small-scale project with an NGO from Serbia called Voices Uniting Borders: Youth-Led Initiatives for Cross-Border Understanding and Cohesion.

In collaboration with EULEX, IBCM provided English, Albanian and Serbian language training to Kosovo police officers. This contribution aimed at strengthening community policing efforts and improving communication in Northern Kosovo. A certificate award ceremony was held at IBCM in December 2024.

Currently (February 2025), IBCM is active in 13 different ERASMUS+ projects, one project with the Danish refugee Council, on project with EULEX, one project with YIHRKS, one project with the National ministries research programme. Furthermore, there is a wide range of 14 previous projects supported by different donors such as the US Embassy, SPARK or the Swiss Development Agency. The activities in these projects either relate to enhance the mobility of IBCM staff and students or they refer to long-term objectives related to the local community such as the above-mentioned language training for police officers or, for example, raising awareness for air pollution by establishing air quality sensors in the region and offering training and workshops for the Roma community in Mitrovica.

Assessment

The experts have seen that IBCM is very active and eager to engage with residents of Mitrovica and addresses issues that concern the society. Several projects were carried out to raise awareness on the local level, for example

¹² The university highlighted that the project started a couple of months ago and these courses/offers are planned, not yet implemented.

when it comes to environmental protection or training needs for social workers. The experts see this engagement in a very positive light and appreciate in particular IBCM's multi-ethnic approach. The experts have witnessed that this approach is not only important for the teaching, it is clearly visible in the institution's profile and its approach to society.

The variety of IBCM's activities in society shows that it has well incorporated its strategies in this area, too. Its focus on employability also implies a high level of awareness regarding society's needs as it is the case with the training for social workers.

The expert group considers that the standard is fulfilled.

7. Quality Assurance

Criterion

The criterion focuses on the internal and external mechanisms used by the institution to monitor and improve its quality. The experts check the existing quality assurance concept of the institution, which indicators are used for monitoring the achievement of objectives and how the institution and the people responsible for the programme systematically collect, analyse and use relevant information about their activities. Moreover, the experts examine whether quality assurance is used regularly, systematically and effectively for quality enhancement, if quality feedback loops are closed and how the institution fosters the development of a quality culture in general.

Current Situation

The Quality Assurance approach of IBCM is marked by the idea of student-centred programmes where student feedback is taken seriously. A focus is on good communication between students and staff. Thanks to the low teacher-student ratio, students communicate directly with their teachers. During the site visit, several students have highlighted that teachers and lecturers are easily approachable, responsible and committed to a constructive learning environment. Furthermore, several students have often had interactions with non-academic staff with a very service-oriented and helpful attitude, attentive to students' needs.

In addition to the informal level where problems are often solved through direct contact, more formal processes can be found in the university's Quality Assurance Regulation. In May 2024, IBCM adopted the Quality Assurance Regulation. This chapter is based on information provided by the Quality Assurance Regulation and the Quality Assurance Manual.

The Quality Assurance System is based on two pillars: Firstly, a commitment to comply with the ESG and the national standards systems for higher education institutions in Kosovo. Secondly, there is a commitment to improve the

quality of its study programmes by considering feedback from students and other stakeholders. Data are collected in the form of surveys with the aim of

- a) improving study programmes (either on the content level or on the organizational level)
- b) reflections on the level of annual and strategic planning of the college
- c) identifying further measures that contribute to an improvement of the overall learning environment.

There are different forms of data collection:

- a) course and lecturer evaluations that are carried out every semester. The evaluations assess various aspects such as the lecturer's knowledge, teaching methods and course materials. The results are reviewed by the Heads of Departments and the quality assurance coordinator, leading to actionable improvements based on the feedback.
- b) Focus groups are organized at the end of every semester to gather in-depth feedback on the effectiveness of teaching methods, curriculum relevance, and student support services. These discussions provide valuable insights into students' needs and expectations.
- c) Alumni Surveys are conducted one year after graduation and then regularly once a year, the alumni survey evaluates graduates' employment status, the relevance of their studies and their overall satisfaction with IBCM.
- d) Survey with stakeholders: These are conducted in cooperation with the Business Development Office once a year and usually address industrial partners.

According to the Quality Assurance Manual, results from course evaluations are compiled into short reports for each course. IBCM has fixed a threshold for actions. In case the overall average feedback from one course is between 3.5 and 4.49, the Head of Department reviews reports and evaluations with the lecturer to identify issues. In case the result is below 3.49, the Academic Council discusses the case. There are questionnaires for the focus groups. All questions are open questions, none of these is quantified. The alumni survey questionnaire deals with students' current job situation. It asks former students whether they work in the area of their studies and whether they are planning to continue with their studies. IBCM indicated that the average response rate regarding alumni surveys is 70%.

IBCM submitted a report with aggregate data, it is the student satisfaction report 2023/24. There were 130 respondents, 55% female respondents and 45% male respondents. On a general level, 45% of students were very satisfied, 38% were satisfied, 10% slightly satisfied, 5% slightly unsatisfied and 2% unsatisfied or very unsatisfied. Facility management and IBCM management received the highest satisfaction ratings, indicating that students appreciate the organization and physical conditions of the campus. However, the library

services, IT services, and semester scripts (books) received lower satisfaction ratings, with 20% of students expressing dissatisfaction in these areas. Students highlighted the importance of access to updated books and library materials, as well as improvements in IT infrastructure, particularly in terms of Wi-Fi availability and access to computers for academic work. IBCM has identified these areas for measures to enhance student experience. Furthermore, students often suggested expanding the range of elective courses and extracurricular activities to provide more diverse learning opportunities. The university has indicated that it put this issue on its action plan for the upcoming semesters.

IBCM submitted a report about course evaluations from 2023/2024. The overall course rating by faculty scored between 5.2 and 5.7 out of 6 in average instructor rating, with 6 being the best mark. The range for average course rating was between 5.12 and 5.65. Obvious strengths from the course evaluations were: highly qualified lecturers, engaging and practical teaching methods, student support. Students frequently highlighted timely feedback and the accessibility of instructors as significant strengths. The following areas for improvement were identified: workload for students with a mismatch between course expectations and time available to students; technology (Applied IT faculty); concerns about assessment fairness. According to some lecturers, there is now a better coordination of homework/workload in the different courses. Lecturers coordinate this in a better way so that a heavy workload in peak weeks shall be avoided in the future. When asked during the site visit, students said that at some points, improvements were very obvious, while with other points, these measures were less visible for them. One example for a very transparent and quick change comes from a course in the Study Programme International Sales and Marketing. Students complained about the content of this course and asked for more digital marketing. This course was changed accordingly. Another example that came from the Study and Quality Committee was that students complained about lecturers' response rate. Subsequently, the university introduced a 24 hour-response policy (applicable to lecturers, administrative staff and management).

The Study and Quality Committee plays a central role for IBCM's quality assurance. It was established at the beginning of 2024. It is responsible for overseeing the compliance with ESG and national standards because it is in charge of writing an action plan to improve compliance. Furthermore, it is also in charge of main tasks regarding the improvement of study quality. Here is an overview of its tasks.

	Study and Quality Committee Tasks (summary)
1	drafting of policies, procedures and instruments for quality assurance

	Study and Quality Committee Tasks (summary)
2	drafting of the annual plan of activities for quality assurance
3	drafting of an action plan regarding compliance (see above)
4	review of self-assessment reports for accreditation, preparing the reports for their submission to an agency (external evaluation)
5	offering quality assurance training for academic and administrative staff and students
6	recommendations for improvement measures

While most of its task concern internal quality assurance, the Study and Quality Committee also plays an important role when it comes to external evaluation (see task 4).

Members of the Study and Quality Committee
Vice-rector for Quality Assurance
an administration official
Coordinator or head of the QA office
a student representative, with an average grade above nine and good knowledge of the English language
one representative from each academic unit (no dean, rector or vice-rector)

The Academic Council (for the composition of the Academic Council, see chapter 3.2) plays an important role once a new study programme is created. It reviews the curriculum for the new study programme. It adds comments and suggestions to the programme. Furthermore, problematic results from surveys are discussed in the academic council (see above).

The Quality Assurance coordinator assists IBCM staff on questions and documents related to quality assurance. He/she collects and files the necessary documents according to the KAA¹³ regulations and is responsible for communication with KAA. He/she provides operational assistance to the Study and Quality Committee and informs staff about accreditation standards. He/she reports to the rector and vice-rector every three months on the progress of

¹³ The Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) is the main body in Kosovo for the accreditation of higher education institutions. It approves higher education institutions on the basis of national regulations.

the implementation of accreditation standards. Furthermore, the coordinator actively participates in the general evaluations of activities at the college.

IBCM has a Complaint and Appeals Policy. A complaint refers to an expression of disapproval or discontent and shows that something incorrect occurred concerning an activity within the IBCM involving IBCM staff. The management of the situation where a complaint is filed is described in a document the university handed in.¹⁴ General concerns and common themes are presented in the regular reports to the Study and Quality Committee and further to the Academic Council. If possible, feedback is communicated to students and staff through college-wide announcements or meetings. All complaints remain anonymous.

There is an IBCM Staff Manual which describes procedures in case there is a situation of conflict between staff members. The responsibility for the manual and its implementation lies with the Personnel Office and the IBCM Rector. On campus, there are boxes for anonymous complaints. The Quality Assurance Coordinator empties the boxes on a regular basis.

Assessment

The experts are convinced that there is a quality assurance system at IBCM in place that functions well. There is a variety of formal feedback mechanisms on top of the informal channels for feedback (via direct communication). Results of feedback are documented and taken into consideration for further improvements, for example in the case of course evaluations, there is a talk between the head of the department and the lecturer. There are examples of changes in course content or on an organisation level. Therefore, the experts conclude that feedback loops are closed. In juxtaposition to the previous assessment procedure, they see here a good accomplishment of the university. Overall, students seem to be well-informed about measures taken as a reaction to their feedback. But the experts see that there is also room for improvement regarding the prerequisite for student representatives.

The experts appreciate the Study and Quality Committee's work. It seems that it contributes to more transparency regarding feedback and improvement measures. The experts have misgivings about the requirement for the student representative to have good grades. This is an unusual requirement in the eyes of the experts. Engagement in quality assurance should not be linked to the grade record of a student. Therefore, the experts recommend to drop it.

Recommendation 5:

Eligibility criteria for students wishing to become a student representative in the Study and Quality Committee shall be reviewed. Engagement in quality assurance should not be linked to the grade record of a student. Students

¹⁴ The document is called complaint Box Mechanism at IBCM.

volunteering to become a student representative are adequately informed about the workload linked to this position.

The experts can only evaluate one year of work of the Study and Quality Committee since it was established at the beginning of 2024. Therefore, they recommend that its role is reflected upon on a regular basis so that IBCM can optimize the functioning of its quality assurance system. The experts consider this to be an important point for future development but they refrain to define a specific recommendation regarding this.

Thanks of the IBCM Quality Assurance Regulation that dates from May 2024, the different bodies and responsibilities in the quality assurance system are laid out in a transparent manner. The experts also see the Quality Assurance Manual positively. However, since it is a new document, they see also room for more precise indications in the Manual. Taking into account that the Manual is a very recent document, the experts think it could be written in a more user-friendly way. Therefore, the experts encourage that IBCM revises this document carefully and takes into account the usability of this document (Who reads it for which purpose? Which information is essential for the understanding of the QMS and for the understanding of the different roles and processes?) For example, process descriptions with responsibilities for different actors and with visualization of different process steps could be included.

Recommendation 6:

IBCM reviews and updates the Quality Assurance Manual with the aim of rendering it more user-friendly.

On an overall level, the experts highlight that IBCM made good progress regarding an institutionalized quality assurance system. However, it is a very recent system. Therefore, the quality culture needs to be further developed. It requires a careful monitoring not only of the study programmes and their quality, but also of the system itself and its functionality.

The expert group considers that the criterion is fulfilled.

IV. Assessment

The experts are convinced that the university has made very good progress in the last years regarding improving the quality of its study programmes as well as regarding the institutionalization of quality assurance mechanisms. There are documents with clearly defined responsibilities, there is a transparency of internal procedures. The experts welcome this approach to work on the basis of clearly defined goals and roles. They praise the high level of activity in Erasmus+ projects because they see it as a sign for a commitment to international cooperation and to the European Higher Education Area.

From the perspective of the experts, the most outstanding uniqueness of IBCM is its commitment to inclusive education and student-centred learning. It is the only higher education institution in the region offering a university education in English and welcoming students from all ethnic and social backgrounds. The scholarship scheme has strengthened this profile significantly. Thanks to its devotion and perseverance, it has become a trailblazer in higher education in the region. The experts highlight the successful efforts regarding social inclusion particularly on the background of the difficult political and societal situation in Kosovo. Another important strength is the close contacts with industry and the focus on employability, taking into account changes in the labour market.

The experts see IBCM's quality management to be fully compliant of the ESG (category A, see table below). While there are no concerns or misgivings regarding the criteria, the experts have formulated some recommendations. Some of these recommendations relate to the recentness of some of the procedures and committees or councils. This implies a need for broadening the new approach and further developing a quality culture at the heart of the institution.

Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1:

IBCM defines KPIs to monitor its progress in line with the priorities indicated in the strategy. It ensures that there is a reflection regarding the juxtaposition of KPIs and actual data.

Recommendation 2:

IBCM provides two slots for student representatives in the Academic Council.

Recommendation 3:

With regard to future developments such as a possible increase in student numbers, the experts recommend the university to monitor the ratio of academic staff-student for each study programme on a continuous and systematic basis.

Recommendation 4:

IBCM should develop and implement a structured training program for young researchers that integrates methodological, ethical, and communication skills, promotes interdisciplinary collaboration, and provides opportunities for active involvement in real research projects. This programme should complement the existing research initiatives and ensure the sustainable development of future academic talent.

Recommendation 5:

Eligibility criteria for students wishing to become a student representative in the Study and Quality Committee shall be reviewed. Engagement in quality assurance should not be linked to the grade record of a student. Students volunteering to become a student representative are adequately informed about the workload linked to this position.

Recommendation 6:

IBCM reviews and updates the Quality Assurance Manual with the aim of rendering it more user-friendly.

Assessment levels		
Level	Assessment	Description
A	Passed.	The institution fulfils or exceeds all criteria. All activities are in line with the profile and objectives of the institution and provided at a high academic level.
B	Passed subject to conditions	The institution does not fulfil some relevant criteria. However, the institution should be able to remedy the shortcomings within nine months after the assessment.
C	Suspension of the accreditation procedure	The institution does not fulfil relevant criteria, but it is likely that it will be able to remedy the shortcomings within 18 months after the assessment. The HEI may apply for a resumption of the accreditation procedure.
D	Failed	The institution does not fulfil relevant criteria and is not expected to be able to meet all assessment criteria within 18 months' time.

No	Assessment criteria	Assessment
1	Institutional profile and strategy	A
2	Governance	A
3	Resources	A
4	Teaching and Learning	A
5	Research	A

No	Assessment criteria	Assessment
6	Institution and Society	A
7	Quality assurance	A

V. Statement of the university

The university handed in the following statement (April 18, 2025):

We would like to express our sincere appreciation for the cooperation between our organization and Evalag during the accreditation procedure. Throughout the preparatory process before receiving the evaluation reports, Evalag staff contributed their expertise and support, which helped improve not only the clarity of, as well as the effectiveness of, the overall evaluation. The communication was prompt, respectful, and goal-oriented, aimed at improving our programs and institutional processes.

The inspection process was considered diligent and fair, and the inspection reports revealed a deep understanding of our educational environment and structure. In responding to the items of inquiry and observation outlined within the reports, we have worked carefully through each element and have worked to provide concise, complete answers to our best ability within a separate document. The information contained here is of significance and will direct our future developments as well as our current improvements. We value the recommendations made forward and are committed to their actualization through collaborative planning for quality improvement.

VI. Accreditation Recommendation of the Expert Group to the Accreditation Commission

According to the expert team, IBCM meets the criteria for institutional accreditation. Therefore, the expert group recommends IBCM for accreditation and recommends awarding the EVALAG label for institutional accreditation for six years.

The expert group asks IBCM management to consider and implement the following recommendations (R) to further improve the University:

Recommendation 1:

IBCM defines KPIs to monitor its progress in line with the priorities indicated in the strategy. It ensures that there is a reflection regarding the juxtaposition of KPIs and actual data.

Recommendation 2:

IBCM provides two slots for student representatives in the Academic Council.

Recommendation 3:

With regard to future developments such as a possible increase in student numbers, the experts recommend the university to monitor the ratio of academic staff-student for each study programme on a continuous and systematic basis.

Recommendation 4:

IBCM develops and implement a structured training program for young researchers that integrates methodological, ethical, and communication skills, promotes interdisciplinary collaboration, and provides opportunities for active involvement in real research projects. This programme should complement the existing research initiatives and ensure the sustainable development of future academic talent.

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Recommendation 6:

IBCM reviews and updates the Quality Assurance Manual with the aim of rendering it more user-friendly.

VII. Decision

In its meeting on May 15, 2025, the EVALAG accreditation commission has decided unanimously to award international institutional accreditation to IBCM.

VIII. Annexe

Annexe 1: Assessment criteria¹⁵

The accreditation criteria used by the EVALAG institutional accreditation have been put into effect by the EVALAG Foundation Board. They refer to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and include an analysis of Part 1 of the ESG.

1. Institutional profile and strategy

The expert team checks

- 1.1. whether the strategies fit the profile of the institution (fitness for purpose)
- 1.2. whether the strategies and profile of the institution comply with internationally accepted standards (fitness of purpose)
- 1.3. the processes for the definition of strategies
- 1.4. whether strategies are adequate to reach the institutional objectives.

2. Governance

The expert team checks

- 2.1. the clarity and transparency of the organisational provisions and governance structure
- 2.2. whether governance structures are adequate to support the institutional strategies
- 2.3. how decision making processes are organised
- 2.4. how stakeholder groups are involved in governance
- 2.5. whether the institution provides relevant information about its activities for the internal and external public
- 2.6. whether academic freedom is assured. This includes:
 - 2.6.1. Adequate participation of academics in academic decisions of the institution
 - 2.6.2. The main responsibility for research and teaching lies with academics
 - 2.6.3. Adequate relations between academics and the funding body of the institution
 - 2.6.4. Transparent and science-based search, hiring and tenure procedures for academics which are documented in statutes.

¹⁵ Decision of the Foundation Board, February 18, 2016, updated December 1, 2017

3. Resources

The expert team checks

- 3.1. the existence of a professional funding and financial management
- 3.2. whether the staff is adequate in qualification and number to support the institutional strategy
- 3.3. whether the search, hiring and tenure procedure are in line with international academic practices
- 3.4. whether resources, facilities and equipment are in accordance with the institutional strategy.

4. Teaching and learning

The expert team checks

- 4.1. whether the study programmes comply with the institutional strategy and national regulations
- 4.2. the academic standards of the study programmes
- 4.3. how research and teaching are linked
- 4.4. whether the institution employs student centred teaching and learning processes which pay respect to the diversity of students and their needs
- 4.5. how the assessment of intended learning outcomes is organised
- 4.6. how the student life cycle is organised.

5. Research

The expert team checks

- 5.1. the research profile and academic goals of the institution
- 5.2. whether the research profile fits the institutional strategy
- 5.3. whether the academic standards are fulfilled
- 5.4. how the research process is organised and supported by the institution
- 5.5. how research is evaluated within the institution.
- 5.6. how the training of young researchers is organised
- 5.7. how the institution assures the academic standards of the training of young researchers
- 5.8. how the institution assures the rights of young researchers.

6. Institution and society

The expert team checks

- 6.1. whether the strategy of the institution takes the needs of society into account
- 6.2. the activities with which the institution connects to society (e.g., co-operations, internationalisation, entrepreneurship, diversity)
- 6.3. whether the activities fit the strategy.

7. Quality Assurance

The expert team checks

- 7.1. the quality assurance concept of the institution
- 7.2. the indicators for monitoring the achievement of objectives
- 7.3. how the institution systematically collects, analyses and uses relevant information about its activities
- 7.4. whether quality assurance is used regularly and systematically for quality enhancement
- 7.5. whether quality feedback loops are closed
- 7.6. how the institution fosters the development of a quality culture.

Annexe 2: Site visit schedule

February 10, 2025		
Time slot		Participants
8:30 – 9:15		Management of IBCM; EVALAG expert group and EVALAG PM
9:15 – 9:30		Break
9:30 – 10:30		Members of the Academic Council at IBCM; EVALAG expert group and EVALAG PM
10:30 – 10:45		Break
10:45 – 11:30		Meeting experts only
11:30– 12:15		Meeting with Members of the Study and Quality Committee, the QA office EVALAG expert group and EVALAG PM
12:15 – 12:30		Break
12:30 – 13:30		Teaching Staff, EVALAG expert group and EVALAG PM
13:30 – 15:00		Break
15:00– 15:30		Meeting about the resources at IBCM with three IBCM employees; EVALAG PM and experts

February 11, 2025		
Time slot		Participants
8:30 – 9:45		Meeting with students (including alumni), EVALAG expert group and EVALAG PM
9:45 – 10:00		Meeting experts only
10:00 – 10:30		Meeting with employees from the Student and Career Office, EVALAG PM and experts
10:30 – 10:45		Break
10:45 – 11:15		Meeting with employees from the Quality Assurance Office, EVALAG PM and experts

February 11, 2025		
11:15 – 12:30	–	Meeting experts only
12:30 – 13:00	–	Briefing with IBCM Management; EVALAG PM and experts
13:00		Lunch break

Annexe 3: Overview of Publications

Overview of Publications ¹⁶ for the year 2024				
Research Output	Faculty of International Business Management	Faculty of Social Sciences	Faculty of Environment, Technology, and IT	Total number
Publications (scientific articles)	15	8	13	36
Books and Monographs	1	0	1	2
Research projects	0	0	2	2
Conferences	4	1	3	8
Other publications	1	4	0	5

¹⁶ See page 25 of the Annual Report and Financial Statements 2024, Public International Business College Mitrovica, access at <https://www.ibcmetrovica.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/ANNUAL-REPORT-AND-FINANCIAL-STATEMENTS-2024-ENG-VERSION.pdf>