

ASSESSMENT REPORT

Institutional and Programme Accreditation at the International Business College Mitrovica, Kosovo

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1. Preliminary note

The International Business College Mitrovica (IBC-M) in Kosovo was first institutionally and programme accredited by **evalag** in 2013. The accreditation was valid for five years until January 2018. In 2017, the college decided to renew the institutional and programme accreditation.

An international expert group from Denmark, Estonia, Germany and United Kingdom carried out the accreditation procedure and assessed the college according to **evalag**'s criteria for international institutional and programme accreditation dated 18th February 2016. These criteria refer to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) dated 15th May 2015.

The full compliance with the criteria is a requirement of awarding **evalag**'s international quality label for institutional and programme accreditation.

2. International Business College Mitrovica (IBC-M)

The International Business College Mitrovica (IBC-M) was founded by SPARK¹ in 2010. Since 1st November 2017, IBC-M "is a non-for-profit foundation, according to the definition given by article 5.3 and 6 of Law No. 04/L-57, on Freedom of Association in Non-Governmental Organisations in the Republic of Kosovo"².

According to the self-evaluation report, since 16th March 2018 IBC-M is registered as a non-profit educational foundation in Kosovo. On 27th July 2018, IBC-M and the European Union (EU) signed a follow-up grant contract for the next four years. With this, IBC-M has completely separated from the founding and managing organisation SPARK. When IBC-M was founded, it was already planned that it would later become an independent legal entity, after the phasing out of SPARK.

The independent IBC-M foundation in Mitrovica Kosovo is a higher education institution that offers practice-oriented post-secondary professional education at European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level 5, and higher education at EQF level 6, respectively bachelor degree.

The College offers for its currently 154 students three Academic Profession (AP) degrees and three connected top-up professional bachelor degrees. The academy profession programmes are Marketing and Management, Public Administration and Environmental and Agricultural Management. The professional bachelor programmes are International Sales and Marketing, Public Service Management and Environmental and Agricultural Management.

¹ <http://www.spark-online.org/>, accessed 13th June 2018

² Statute of International Business College Mitrovica (IBC-M) from 1st October 2017, Article 1, Page 1.

The following table shows an overview of IBC-M key data of May 2018:

International Business College Mitrovica (IBC-M)	
Founding year	2010
Academic departments	4
Number of programmes	6
Academy Profession Degree (AP)	3
Professional Bachelor Degree (Bachelor)	3
Number of students	154
Marketing and Management (AP)	44
International Sales and Marketing (Bachelor)	41
Public Administration (AP)	6
Public Service Management (Bachelor)	17
Environmental and Agricultural Management (AP)	21
Environmental and Agricultural Management (Bachelor)	25
First Semester	Not applicable (no intake in academic year 2017/2018)
Full-time academic staff	11
Part-time academic staff	5
Administrative and technical staff	17
Annual tuition fee	995 EUR ³

7. Table 1 – IBC-M in numbers

3. The accreditation procedure

The assessment procedure was carried out with an informed peer review on the basis of a self-evaluation report provided by the college, a three-day site visit of an international expert group, an assessment report by the experts 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 as well as a programme complies with the criteria for programme accreditation. The point of reference is **evalag's** criteria for international institutional and programme accreditation. The accreditation criteria used by **evalag's** international institutional and programme 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.

These criteria focus on the profile and strategies of the institution as well as on the profile of the programmes and their curricula. The governance structures, which are used to implement strategies, the fields of activities of the institution and crosscutting issues,

³ For Kosovo residents

which influence the implementation and the success of the institutional strategies, are also examined. Further, the criteria cover all aspects of the implementation of a study programme, its quality assurance and resources. By assessing compliance with the criteria, the experts check 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, the experts assess if the institution and programmes meet academic standards that are internationally accepted.

The following criteria are used:

- Institutional profile and strategy
- Governance
- Resources
- Research
- Institution and society
- Quality assurance
- Programme profile
- Curriculum
- Student assessment
- Organisation of the study programme

The experts express the extent of compliance of the criteria with the following assessments: passed, passed subject to conditions, suspension of the accreditation procedure or failed. Depending on the degree to which the institution/programme meets the criteria, the institution/programme will be accredited, accredited with conditions or not accredited. As IBC-M is an institution of higher professional education without the set objective to carry out research, the criterion research is not part of the assessment.

As a first step of the procedure and as preparation for the site visit, IBC-M produced a self-evaluation report based on guidelines provided by **evalag**. In parallel, **evalag** formed an expert group consisting of three experts for quality assurance, three professorial experts from higher education institutions, one professional practice expert and one student expert:

Prof. em. Dr. Marianne Assenmacher ⁴	Former President of the University of Vechta, Germany and Chairwoman of the University Council at the University of Applied Sciences Bielefeld, Germany
Beate Baldwin	Co-Director of Executive Education and Head of Open Programmes and Marketing at the Imperial College Business School, London, United Kingdom
Prof. em. Jürgen Bruns	Former Professor of International Marketing and Statistics at the Niederrhein University of Applied Sciences, Germany

⁴ Expert in the institutional accreditation procedure in 2012/2013.

Prof. Dr. sc. agr. Reiner Doluschitz	Professor of Computer Applications and Business Management in Agriculture at the University of Hohenheim, Germany
Poul K. Faarup ⁵	Head of Studies at Zealand Institute of Business and Technology (ZIBAT), Campus Roskilde, Denmark. Responsible for the Marketing and Management programme and the Bachelor in International Sales and Marketing at ZIBAT
Prof. em. Dr. iur. Hans Paul Prümm	Former Professor of Public Law with focus on Public Administration at the Berlin School of Economics and Law, Germany
Monika Skadborg	Student at the Technical University of Denmark, enrolled in the study programme Environmental Engineering and Executive Committee Member of the European Students' Union (ESU), Denmark
Maiki Udam, PhD	Director of Development and International Cooperation at Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA), Foundation Archimedes, Estonia

All experts had declared to be free of any conflict of interest.

The site visit took place from 26th to 28th March 2018 at IBC-M. During the site visit, the experts met with the director, head of departments, academic and administrative staff, students, graduates, SPARK representatives, employers, and visited the facilities of the college.

The expert group produced an assessment report that was submitted to the college for correction of potential factual errors.

From **evalag's** side, Sabine Berganski managed and carried out the project.

The following assessment report is structured along the assessment criteria, which are the basis of **evalag's** international institutional and programme accreditation. After a short description of the criterion each chapter starts with the current status regarding the criterion which is based on the information in the self-evaluation report of the college and gathered during the site visit as well as provided by IBC-M and the two Danish programme partners in writing after the site visit. On this basis, the experts group assess the criterion and finally list their recommendations for further improvement.

Since this is a reaccreditation procedure, the focus of the report is on the aspects of further development, quality assurance as well as on dealing with and if applicable implementing the recommendations formulated in the initial accreditations in 2013.

⁵ Expert in the programme accreditation procedure in 2012/2013.

4. Institutional and programme assessment

4.1. Institutional profile and strategy

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 and whether the strategies and profile of the institution comply with internationally accepted standards. The experts also review the processes for the definition of strategies. Furthermore, they check whether the strategies are adequate to reach the institutional objectives.

Current status

According to IBC-M's new statute dated 1st November 2017, the college "is committed to supporting and promoting the following principles:

- a. Academic freedom, as defined by the Magna Charta Universitatum, Bologna, September 1988;
- b. Freedom of association and expression within the structures provided by this Statute and policies promulgated by IBC-M;
- c. The right not to be discriminated against, directly or indirectly on any actual or presumed ground such as sex, race, sexual orientation, marital status, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, association with a national community, property, birth or other status;
- d. Equality under the law and respect for the law;
- e. Diversity and quality in IBC-M's programmes of study and in support for learning;
- f. Creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship as key objectives of all of IBC-M's programmes, research, support and commercial operations;
- g. Equality of opportunity in employment and equal access to academic and scientific study and research without discrimination;
- h. A European and international focus in all areas of IBC-M's curriculum, providing for student and staff mobility and comparability of standards in its awards and qualifications;
- i. A commitment to training and scholarship to support teaching and learning and to extend the boundaries of knowledge and understanding within the region and the wider world;
- j. Active engagement of students, both individually and collectively, in the life of IBC-M and in their own learning. [...]

In order to accomplish its purposes, the organization will undertake, but will not be restricted to, the following activities:

1. Offering degrees, diplomas, and certificate awards for the purpose of professional and personal development.
 - a. Provide high-quality practice-oriented international education at an affordable rate, following from its non-profit orientation;
 - b. Apply the motto "From Theory to Practice" in all education and applied research activities;

- c. Support economic development by offering study programmes that develop professional skills relevant to the labor market;
- d. Add value to the professional world of work by undertaking applied research and consulting work
- e. Promote socio-ethnic inclusion of ethnic groups and communities;
- f. Enhance employment opportunities of students within Kosovo and internationally”.⁶

With this purpose and activities, the newly independent IBC-M still has a distinct and unique profile that differentiates the college from other higher education institutions in Kosovo. The college offers in total six programmes in the three fields marketing management, public administration and environmental and agricultural management. IBC-M operates completely in English and all its education is English-taught only.

With regard to the consolidation and acceptance of the offered programmes, IBC-M is considering increasing the number of new and innovative programmes in response to the demand driven growing labour market needs of the region. The college aspires to establish one new, innovative, undergraduate programme in Information Technology and Computing and two graduate programmes in Environmental and Agricultural Management Studies and Business Administration (MBA) by 2020.

The private college operates as a tuition funded non-profit higher education institution with a tuition fee level that is lower than the country average. With its scholarships programme, IBC-M offers education for disadvantaged socio-economic groups. The college promotes socio-ethnic inclusion of all ethnic groups and communities and supports economic and social development of the divided city of Mitrovica by offering programmes that develop professional skills and are relevant to the labour market. Therefore, it maintains two campuses, one each in the northern and southern part of the city. At the northern campus, the college provides the marketing programmes and in the south the environmental management and public administration programmes. The “mission and mandate”⁷ of IBC-M is published on its website and are known to its staff and students.

Due to the separation from the founding and managing organisation SPARK, the college's institutional profile, strategy, governance etc. are currently in a transformation phase, meaning that everything e.g. structure, processes, responsibilities etc. are currently undergoing a transitional process. According to the IBC-M self-evaluation report and the information gathered during and after the site visit, it is expected that the strategic objectives set by the SPARK board of directors, which have remained unchanged since the college's opening, will persist even after independence.

The strategic development of the independent IBC-M foundation is defined and determined in the new supervisory board “board of directors” and carried out by the director and academic staff of IBC-M. According to the self-evaluation report, the strategy of the college includes short, middle and long-term objectives.

There are the following five main strategic goals of IBC-M:

1. Support the education and advancement of all ethnic groups in Kosovo, enabling high quality vocational education to socio-economically deprived groups

⁶ Statute of International Business College Mitrovica (IBC-M) from 1st October 2017, Article 3, Page 2.

⁷ <http://ibcmmitrovica.eu/about-ibcm/mission-and-vision-2/>, accessed 13th June 2018

2. Enhance academic excellence through continuously improving upon the quality of learning, teaching and services offered at IBC-M in order to equip students with skills and knowledge needed for the modern labour market
3. Collaborate to promote excellence in research that supports undergraduate education and innovation with results connected to Kosovo, the region and the global community
4. Maximize and increase the use of human, technological and financial resources in order to reach financial sustainability
5. Support and increase a diverse, multi-ethnic and integrated student body from recruitment to graduation and employment

Assessment

Based on the new statute of IBC-M, the experts find that the original profile and purpose of the institution have not fundamentally changed. The mission of the college still is to provide high-quality international vocational education, to promote socio-ethnic inclusion of ethnic groups and communities and to support the economic and social development by offering affordable programmes and services that develop professional skills, which are relevant to the regional labour market.

According to the experts, the purpose and profile of IBC-M is exceptional, differentiates the college from other higher education institutions in the region and offers a unique educational concept delivered on two modern fit for purpose campuses. The international education solely in English and with up to date teaching and learning methods sets IBC-M apart from the public higher education institutions in the region, which offer traditional education in the local languages.

The partnership and collaboration with the Danish cooperation partners, regular trainings and consultations ensure that teaching and learning methods are up to date and the content of the programmes is regularly adjusted to changing needs in respect of the environment. This close cooperation enables the college to award double degrees, which gives graduates an additional advantage through international education in the national and international labour market.

However, due to the recent separation from the founding and managing organisation and independence the experts point out that the college faces significant changes in all areas and on all levels including its institutional profile, strategy, governance, structure, processes, responsibilities, finance to name a few.

Therefore, after the transformation phase, the experts expect IBC-M to describe in detail its mission statement, institutional profile and objectives. Further, they must explain how the process of strategic planning and assessment is carried out in order to ensure that strategies are in line with the college's objectives and the institutional profile as well as to assure the implementation of all objectives within the institution on all levels.

In addition to that, they should describe what strategies they pursue in order to achieve the institutional objectives and how they derive these strategies from the mission and link it to the profile of the institution. In this context, the experts recommend that IBC-M should in particular pay attention in the future to the alignment and realisation of the objectives, so that the college proclaim its mission and objectives and acts in accordance with them.

The experts acknowledge that the practise-oriented education with two cycles – four semester for the AP degree and three semester for the top-up bachelor – is successfully established, meets the needs and requirements of the regional labour market and supports the social and economic development in Kosovo and the region.

IBC-M considers to establish one new undergraduate and two graduate programmes in response to the growing labour market needs. With regard to the development of IBC-M over the years, consolidation and acceptance of its current programmes, social and economic development in the region and the college's size, the experts see great potential for IBC-M to engage in further education, in particular to offer new undergraduate programmes, but also great challenges in implementing this. Especially with regard to the development of the regional economy, developing customised offers for companies could expand the college's educational offering and help IBC-M find additional funding sources that are indispensable for its independence.

The purpose of IBC-M to contribute to the regional social and economic development fits well in the development strategy of the European Union for the entire region. Thus, on the one hand, the college contributes to the development and stability of the region and on the other hand, IBC-M's strategy will be successful if the overall EU strategy succeeds.

IBC-M provides with its specific vocational and practise-oriented approach a unique offer, which supplements the higher education market and other higher education institutions in the region. This and the focus on entrepreneurship definitely serve the needs of the local labour market. The social mission of IBC-M to be socially inclusive, to support less fortunate students and to contribute to the social and economic development of the Kosovo are all goals addressed by the institution.

Recommendations

With independence and after the transformation phase, the experts expect IBC-M to visualise its mission statement, institutional profile and objectives.

Further, the college must describe how the process of strategic planning and assessment is carried out to ensure that strategies are in line with the college's objectives and the institutional profile as well as to assure the implementation of all objectives within the institution.

In addition, IBC-M should specify the precise strategies they are pursuing to achieve the institutional objectives and how they derive these strategies from the mission and link to the profile of the institution.

In this context, the experts recommend that IBC-M should pay particular attention in the future to the alignment and realisation of the objectives, so that the college's proclaimed mission, objectives and acts are in accordance with each other.

The experts recommend also that IBC-M should develop its original strategy further, carefully develop and enhance their offers of education and research activities in applied science in order to cater to regional businesses and to open up new substantial funding streams for the college. With regard to the implementation of new programmes in the future, in particular graduate programmes, the experts point out that they should be supplementary to already existing offers at other higher education institutions in Kosovo and should meet the needs of the labour market.

4.2. Governance

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 status

IBC-M is a private non-profit higher education institution organised in the professional and applied sciences. It is established and organised as a foundation and as of 16th March 2018 registered in Kosovo. After being managed by the founding organisation SPARK since the beginning in 2010, the institution has become an independent, legal entity and separated from SPARK, which was already foreseen at its foundation. The new statute of the college was approved by the board of directors of IBC-M on 1st October 2017 in Mitrovica.

The new IBC-M foundation has one statutory body, the board of directors. The board of directors is the principal governing authority of IBC-M and has overall responsibility for the conduct of IBC-M and the appointment of the director, who carries out IBC-M's functions. The board of directors, as described in the statute, includes at least five members (three general members and two academic staff members), the director (ex-officio) and according to the self-evaluation report non-voting representation from administrative staff and the president of the student representative council (SRC).

The IBC-M director is the principal academic officer of IBC-M, reports to the board of directors and prepares the annual planning of the college. The director is responsible for the administration and management of the college and in charge of the day-to-day running of the institution and performing all activities in accordance with statute. Due to the resignation of the director in March 2018, an interim director currently holds the position.

The academic council consists of the heads of all academic departments, the quality assurance department and is chaired by the director. According to the self-evaluation report, student members can be invited to join the academic council where appropriate. It is responsible for the organisation of the study process and academic affairs: issues degree certificates, approves study, internship and examination regulations, decides about the opening or closing of programmes, semester planning, plans examinations, develops programmes, overseas quality assurance for teaching and learning and decides on examination appeals. The academic council ensures that the staff and students have the freedom and security to question and challenge existing practices and principles within the college without risk or restriction.

The student representative council allows students to cooperate with lecturers, management and administration of the college in order to promote the best interests of the student body. It is democratically elected annually and the presidency alternates between students from the north and south campus. SRC is responsible for organising and promoting the student life and social activities within the college and mediating the communication process between students and management.

Academic activities are organised in departments: Marketing and Management, Public Administration, Environmental and Agricultural Management and English. Each of the

first three departments carries out one AP and one top-up bachelor programme. The English department provides the English classes and leads the English Academy.

Apart from finance, human resources, business development and facility management and transportation, the college's administration strongly focuses on providing student services and guides the students through their studies. The IBC-M's finance officer and director manage the finance unit. Due to the new EU grant contract, the European Union Office in Kosovo will financially monitor the college and report the results to the European Union in Brussels. The human resources, quality assurance and business development units report directly to the director.

The IBC-M assistant director for administration supervises student service, career centre, IT, facility management and transportation units as well as the library.

The following organisation chart shows the new structure of the IBC-M foundation.

International Business College Mitrovica IBC-M Organisational Chart May 2018

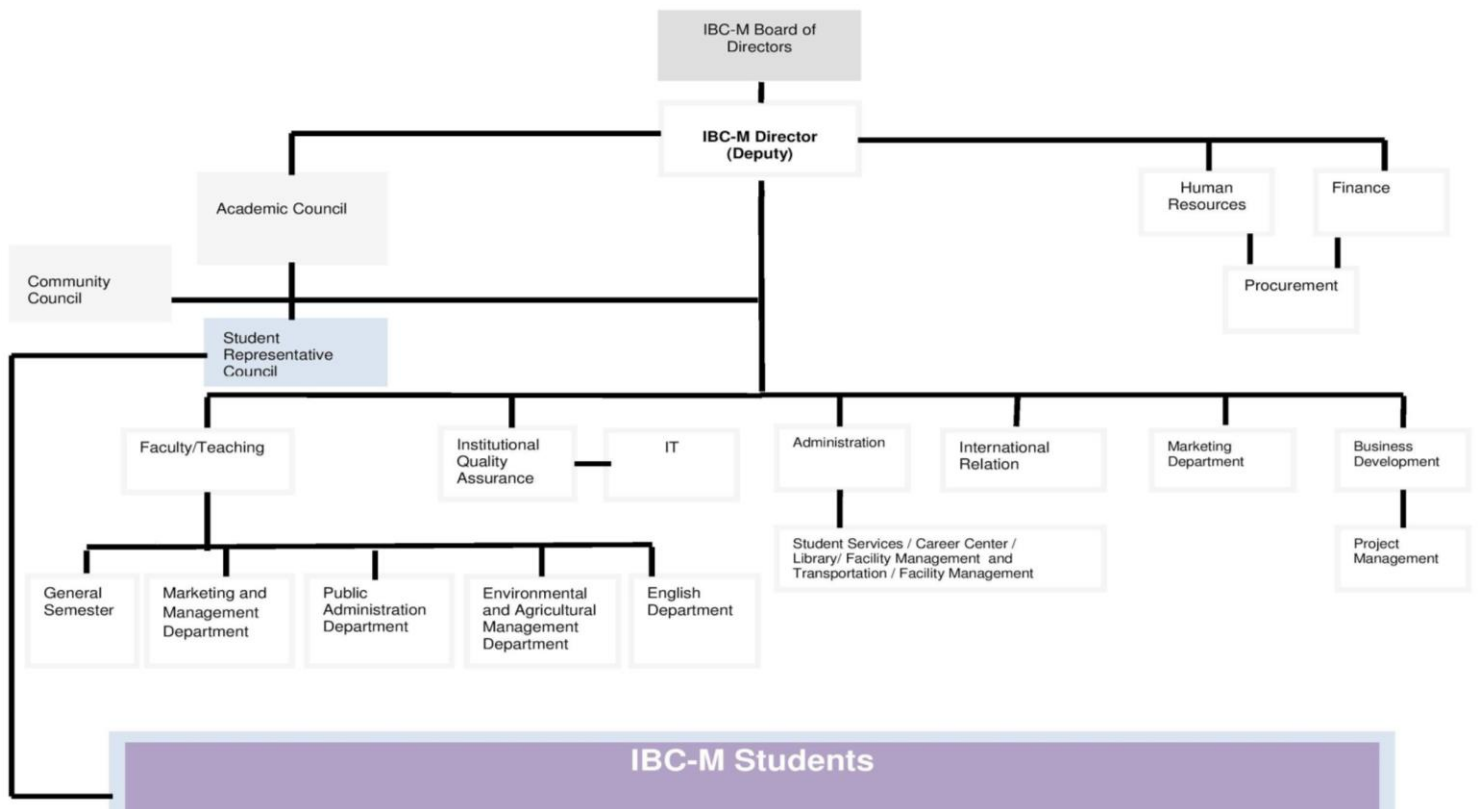


Table 2 – IBC-M organisation chart

Assessment

With the separation from the founding organisation, the governance structure of IBC-M has changed as well. The main government structure with the highest governing body of the college, the board of directors, is regulated and documented in the statute of the new IBC-M foundation.

The organisational structure and responsibilities of the college are described in the self-evaluation report. According to the experts, the IBC-M organisational structure and responsibilities are largely adequate to manage the college and to perform all duties as described in the new statute.

According to the experts, it is noticeable that the new organisational structure has been simplified, which makes sense to the experts, since the college now has sufficient managerial and organisational capacities and employees have appropriate knowledge in their fields. However, to the experts it is not clear who appoints or elects the members of the academic council. They also question the foreseen practice to invite student members to join the academic council, if appropriate.

For the experts, the overall organisation structure seems to be adequate for a college of this size. During the site visit, it became obvious that the college disposes of good organisational, administrative and human resources, which should continue and in the field of teaching staff should be even enlarged to enable the college to take on more educational tasks in the future. However, according to the experts the administrative side is overstaffed in the actual situation and far outweighs the teaching staff. Since no new students were enrolled in the academic year 2017/2018, the 17 administrative staff members seem to be unbalanced compared to the current 154 students.

Further, the experts welcome the fact that SPARK has offered to be a partner of IBC-M and to support the college as needed as well as that IBC-M is further financially monitored by the European Union Office in Kosovo.

According to the experts, the current structure with one director who is recruited from abroad proves to work well and assures a neutral management of the college that can be accepted by all ethnic groups of both campuses. With regard to the current vacancy of the director's position the experts suggest to consider establishing prorektor positions e.g. prorektor for education as well as for research and internationalisation, which are elected representatives of the academic staff.

Currently the experts see a lack of active involvement of all stakeholders in the governance structure and stress the importance to involve them formally, especially the student representatives, which should be permanent members of the academic council and have voting rights, as it was before (see "Rules and Regulations of the International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM)"⁸, Article 11).

The IBC-M statute states that one of the purpose of the foundation is to support and promote academic freedom. It includes adequate participation of academics in academic decisions of the institution, main responsibility for research and teaching lies with academics, adequate relations between academics and the funding body, transparent and science-based search, hiring and tenure procedures for academics which are documented. According to the new organisation structure, the academic council is responsible to assure the academic freedom. Due to the double degree agreement with the Danish cooperation partners, the teaching staff must follow the Danish curriculum and ensure the learning outcomes. In agreement with the cooperation partners,

⁸ <http://ibcmmitrovica.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/IBCM-Rules-and-Regulations.pdf?x35258>, accessed 15th June 2018

adaptations are possible. According to the experts, within the given framework the teaching staff has academic freedom.

Recommendations

With regard to the changing government structure, the experts expect IBC-M to continue and adapt the former Rules and Regulations of IBC-M. To the experts it is important that the involvement of the students in the college is regulated and transparent. Therefore, the experts expect the composition of the academic council to continue to include two elected student representatives from the student representative council with voting rights to ensure that all stakeholders are involved in the governance structure and that the composition of the academic council and student's involvement are formally regulated.

In this regard, they also recommend further strengthening the role of the students in the institution and their engagement by making the student representative council independent and giving it its own budget⁹.

4.3. Resources

The 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 which strategies and processes for the staff recruiting and staff development are used and if the search, hiring and tenure procedure 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 the provision of the programme (library, laboratories, teaching rooms, IT equipment) and if the resources are adequate to reach the objectives of the programme and are in accordance with the institutional strategy.

Current status

Previously IBC-M was financed by international developmental aid, mainly from Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands, raised by SPARK as well as contributions from various donor agencies such as Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Danish Foreign Ministry, Department for International Development of the United Kingdom (DFID), Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NLMFA), European Commission (EC), Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) of the Government of Kosovo, German Embassy etc.

The contributions from international donors to IBC-M had been depleted by the end of 2016. From 1st January 2017, the Government of Kosovo should have started funding IBC-M, due to the approved international agreement between the Ministry of Education (MEST) and SPARK and the reserved budget of the government. The Minister of Education and SPARK signed this agreement on 12th April 2017. The agreement stated that SPARK transfers its responsibilities to IBC-M, making it an independent non-profit institution. The agreement was awaiting ratification by the Assembly of the Republic of

⁹ Three experts have a contrary opinion regarding the recommendation that the student representative council should be independent and have its own budget.

Kosovo, which was dissolved due to a non-confidence vote and therefore made ratification impossible.

In order to keep IBC-M functioning, while awaiting government funds, SPARK stepped in and kept the college functional until the end of June 2017. Following this, the European Union office in Kosovo has decided to support IBC-M operations financially for the academic year 2017-2018 with a one-year contract, which ended in June 2018. As the EU stepped in and provided funding so that the enrolled students can finish their studies, IBC-M did not recruit nor enrol students for the academic year 2017-2018 due to the uncertain financial situation.

During the site visit, the director informed the experts about the vote of the parliament, which decided not to ratify the signed agreement to support the college financially. Assuming that the government may not vote to support IBC-M, in parallel the college sought and negotiated with external donors to finance the college for the upcoming years. On 27th July 2018, IBC-M and the EU signed the grant contract for four years.

Currently, IBC-M has an academic staff of 16 persons (13.5 full-time equivalent); 11 are employed full-time, five part-time. All academic staff members, except one lecturer for communication subjects, hold a master's degree; six lecturers hold a PhD degree and three lecturers are enrolled as PhD candidates. The workload of a full-time position is 40 hours per week, which translates to a teaching load of 13.5 hours per week. In addition, IBC-M employs 17 administrative employees.

Academic staff recruitment and selection follows a three-step procedure. Criteria for employment at IBC-M are a relevant master degree, relevant work experience in the private and/or public sector and fluency in English. Once the staff need is confirmed, the position is publically advertised. The responsible head of department screens and preselect the applications according to a matrix with predefined criteria. Based on the rating score, the applicants are invited for a trial lecture with a succeeding question round, which is attended by the relevant head of department, teaching staff and students. The trial lecture is scored according to a predefined matrix. Based on the score candidates are invited for a second interview. Newly employed lecturers receive a peer class visit by another IBC-M lecturer.

With regard to staff development, all staff members have each one annual evaluation meeting and assessment meeting with the respective supervisor. Additionally, IBC-M provides administrative and faculty staff training with its international partners in Denmark, Finland and Portugal.

IBC-M owns two state-of-the-art and fully equipped campuses one in the North and one in the South of Mitrovica. The two buildings are in walking distance to each other, located on both sides of the river Ibar and shared facilities such as the library and cafeterias. IBC-M has a large auditorium, spacious and technical fully equipped classrooms (whiteboards, beamers and computers), modern offices, a library, two IT labs, two canteens, study and recreational space and SRC office. Both campuses have Wi-Fi throughout and the classrooms are fully air-conditioned. The college rents the facilities to the local and international community for various events e.g. conferences, trainings, office space etc.

Assessment

Although the EU ensures the follow-up funding until the end of 2022, IBC-M will still be in a difficult and tense financial situation for the next years. The EU funds cover most of the main operation cost of the college and allows the college to provide scholarships for less fortunate students.

With the follow-up funding from the EU, the college may be able to maintain its operation to some extent, but the real challenge for IBC-M is to become financially independent within the next four years without donor contributions. The fact that the non-governmental organisation status of the college was approved means that it is per se eligible for public funding by the Government of Kosovo, but not that it necessarily will receive it in the near future. Therefore, IBC-M has to self-generate its income, which currently is from tuition fees, facility rentals and service training for external organisations. That the college is able to achieve financial independence after the end of follow-up funding is an extremely critical point in the view of the experts, because until now IBC-M does not generate enough income from tuition fees and its other services in order to cover its running costs. Moreover, it is not certain that IBC-M will find enough full-paying students in the next four years. According to an estimation, the college needs approximately 400 paying students to be cost-covering, which is the full capacity of the institution.

In this context, the experts point out that the college's strategy and plan to generate sufficient revenue from tuition and other services to be financially independent from its former founding organisation was planned much earlier and they did not meet the previous business plan due to various internal and especially external circumstances.

The experts are well aware of the tremendous challenges and pressure the college is facing and has been exposed over the last years, but with regard to sustainable and professional funding, they explicitly point out that the strategy and budgeting are not well aligned with each other. In addition, the experts are concerned and assess the business plan as extremely ambitious, e.g. number of student intake 400 by 2020, tuition fee revenue particularly for master programme, and therefore assume a very low probability of success. Further, they emphasise that it is not the main objective of the foundation to become financially independent.

In terms of financial management and reporting, it is indispensable for the experts that the financial aspects of IBC-M continue to be monitored by external partners such as the EU and external financial advisors. In parallel to the close monitoring of financial management, the professional dealing with financial management and reporting must be adjusted to respective circumstances and continuously improved to be even more efficient.

For the experts it is indispensable that IBC-M uses the next four years to open up additional profitable funding sources. In order to generate sufficient income, the college could extend its offers in further training/education for companies or in summer schools, offer services in applied research or advisory services for regional stakeholders and expand the current practice of renting its facilities outside of college teaching hours. In addition, the college should search for external donors, e.g. companies in Kosovo, and seek financial support from the Government of Kosovo, to continue to support the Kosovo society and to offer its services to the community.

IBC-M could also reconsider the way it finances its scholarship system. Alternatives would be to set up a loan-based scholarship system for the students, which would significantly increase the college's income and enable even more economically less fortunate students to study. Another possibility could be that companies in Kosovo engage in the training of their future employees, for example in form of scholarships.

Overall, the experts consider the human resources of IBC-M currently as appropriate. However, given the expected increase in student numbers and the implementation of new programmes, especially graduate programmes, the experts expect the number of teaching staff to be significantly increased and adjusted to the actual number of students.

Noticeable in the self-evaluation report was the high number of administrative staff at IBC-M, especially in relation to the small number of teaching staff, which is a result of the fact that no new students were admitted in 2017 and the number of students is currently low. Further, the business plan shows that the personnel costs for the administration will always be higher than for the teaching staff. Therefore, the experts encourage the college to monitor closely the ratio between academic and administrative personnel and to ensure that the balance is adequate.

The academic education of the teaching staff is appropriate for the current undergraduate programmes carried out at the college and the qualification level of the teaching staff has improved over the years. The international background of the staff and the training provided by IBC-M ensures that the academic staff is able to teach according to the pedagogical concept "From Theory to Practice". The experts were very impressed by the dynamic and motivated teaching and administration staff they met during the site visit. The administrative staff is competent and extremely service oriented.

In respect of the planned undergraduate and graduate programmes, the experts emphasise, that the college must ensure that the person responsible for the graduate programme has at least a doctoral degree in the relevant field.

According to the experts, staff development is very well developed at IBC-M. They also appreciate the extensive support provided to the staff to improve the human resource in areas such as pedagogic practice, higher qualifications and general capabilities. The experts gained the impression that the staff is highly motivated and actively participate in the staff development measures offered such as workshops, international exchange etc.

The experts assess the recruiting procedures of IBC-M as appropriate and in line with international academic practice. The current staff/student ratio allows the college to maintain relatively small groups and a close contact between teachers and students.

The two modern campuses of IBC-M are outstanding and provide enough space and excellent equipment to carry out the programmes and even accommodate the planned numbers of students. The college has modern equipment and a library that provides access to relevant literature and journals. The technical equipment and IT infrastructure of the college are also up to date and allows high quality of teaching. Both facilities are well equipped to provide services, such as company training, summer schools or renting premises to external institutions.

Recommendations

The experts strongly recommend that IBC-M should carefully plan its financial independence in order to ensure the operability of the institution. Therefore, the college should open up additional sustainable funding sources, e.g. support from the Government of Kosovo and other donors, to complement revenues from tuition fees and service trainings.

In order to ensure sufficient income from tuition fees as a base for the main operation of the college, in the long run IBC-M cannot afford to forecast a certain amount of tuition fee per year per student, and then ultimately receive far less on average. It is suggested that a solution should be found in a system of student loans, such a system would have to be developed in close cooperation with financial institutions. Therefore, the experts recommend that the college should develop a student loans system in cooperation with one or several of the important financial institutions in Kosovo.

In respect of long-term and sustainable financial situation of the college, the experts recommend that IBC-M should increase its revenues through tuition fees (full-paying

students), facility rentals, extension of service/education offers for external organisations. In addition, the college should find out where saving potential exist (reducing administrative staff, travel expenses etc.) and execute them immediately. The experts recommend also to align the strategy and budgeting well with each other.

With regard to financial management and reporting, the experts recommend that the financial aspects of the college continue to be monitored by external partners such as the EU and external independent financial auditors. The experts also recommend that the IBC-M business plan and budget planning should be adapted to the respective circumstances and continuously improved.

The experts recommend that IBC-M should reconsider the way it finances its scholarship programme and contemplate alternative funding options such as a loan-based scholarship system for students and scholarships financed from the industry.

Regarding the increasing number of students, the experts recommend and assume that the number of teaching staff will be adjusted and balanced to the actual number of enrolled students. In this context, they recommend that IBC-M should review the number of required academic and administrative staff and ensure that there is an adequate balance.

With respect to the planned graduate programmes, the experts expect the person responsible for the graduate programme to have at least a doctoral degree in the relevant field.

4.4. Research

The criterion focuses on the research profile and academic goals of the institution 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.

As IBC-M is not a research institution, the criterion research will not be part of the accreditation assessment.

Current status

In 2010, when IBC-M was founded, research was not part of the college's mission. Therefore, at the beginning the college did not engage actively in research activities. In the interviews with all stakeholders during the site visit it turned out that over the last years applied research activities have continuously evolved at IBC-M.

In 2013, the range of tasks of the lectures at IBC-M did not include any research activities. Today, the current job descriptions of IBC-M academic staff cover research up to 30 % of their workload and there is a specific part for research activities in the budget. Typically, the academic staff at IBC-M engage actively in applied research activities, e.g. national and international research projects (in collaboration with different institutions or HEI), (joint) research publications, organising/attending scientific conferences etc.

Further, applied research projects were integrated in the curricula of the programmes, to enhance the learning experience of the students, and fit very well into IBC-M "From Theory to Practice" approach. The students' projects for AP or bachelor theses are oriented towards applied research topics. These projects as well as the internships are

conducted in cooperation with companies, institutions and administrations in the region, which directly benefit to the economic development of the area and enhanced the visibility of the college among local businesses.

Assessment

Since 2013, IBC-M has made efforts to strengthen the field of research and to link it with teaching and learning. The experts acknowledge the engagement of the staff in applied research activities and its integration in the curricula. Nevertheless, the experts still see considerable potential for improvement regarding applied research and particular in its institutionalisation, which could support the college in several ways.

According to the experts, applied research could be even more integrated in the curricula of the programmes in order to further develop the link between teaching and research and to strengthen the learning experience of the students. Therefore, the college should carry out more applied research projects in cooperation with companies, institutions and administrations especially outside of Mitrovica. Such tailored projects could enhance the visibility of IBC-M in Kosovo and be used as an additional source of income for the college. Therefore, the college needs to actively approach such businesses, institutions and administrations outside of Mitrovica and raise awareness for the benefits of joint applied research projects.

At IBC-M research is not the main priority, which correspond to the college's mission as a vocational and educational institution. The experts observed that research activities of the academic staff are encouraged, but only to a limited extent. The environment and necessary infrastructure to conduct research are almost non-existent and the budget for research activities is very limited.

The IBC-M applied research strategy of 2017 is a start in the direction to institutionalise research activities. The experts observed that for most of the staff the research profile of the college is unclear. If they do research themselves, there seems to be a clear direction and focus, but only at an individual level.

According to the experts, IBC-M lacks a clear research profile, which is based on the academic goals and fields of the institution and fits to the institutional strategy. In this context to the experts it is not clear how the research process is organised and supported by IBC-M: how research is evaluated within the institution, how the training of young researchers is organised, how the college assures the academic standards of the training of young researchers as well as their rights and whether the academic standards are fulfilled.

However, according to the experts, the college gives its researchers the freedom to pursue their projects and within the budget supports them to carry out individual applied research as well as encourages its students to participate in research projects. The recruitment and selection procedures for all employees are in line with internationally recognised standards and are described in the IBC-M Human Resources Handbook.

Recommendations

If IBC-M wants to expand and institutionalise its applied research activities, the experts see it as prerequisite to provide more funds for research and to raise additional research and development funding.

In this context, the experts point out and recommend that IBC-M first needs a clear research profile that corresponds to the academic goals of the institution and fits the institutional strategy. Additionally, the college should develop an institutional policy for applied research and knowledge transfer along with clear institutional objectives and realistic targets. The experts also recommend that the college should seek advice from international applied research experts in the academic fields on how to systematically develop and institutionalise such activities.

Further, IBC-M should explain how the research process is organised and supported by the college, how research is evaluated within the institution as well as how the training of young researchers is organised. In addition, they should ensure that academic standards are fulfilled and that academic standards for the training of young researchers and their rights are assured.

Additionally, IBC-M should outline a strategy and procedures for financing research especially seen in the light of the challenging economic situation, provide more funds for research and raise additional research and development funding.

The experts also recommend forming strategic partnerships with higher education institutions abroad in order to be able to offer young scientists perspectives and opportunities for further development.

Additionally, the experts recommend that IBC-M should even more engage in joint applied research projects with companies, institutions and administrations especially outside of Mitrovica in order to provide service to businesses and thus support the economic development of the country. These projects could enhance the learning experience and employability of their students, the visibility of IBC-M in Kosovo and be used as an additional source of income.

4.5. Institution and society

The experts check whether the strategy of the institution takes the needs of the society into account. They also examine the activities with which the institution connects to the society among others with cooperation, internationalisation, entrepreneurship, diversity. In addition, the experts review whether the activities fit the strategy.

Current status

To serve the society in Kosovo and especially in the Mitrovica region is an important aspect of IBC-M's mission. Its mission is to contribute to the economic development of the region and to support the social community of the divided city of Mitrovica. Furthermore, the college promotes socio-ethnic inclusion of all ethnic groups and communities and embraces the idea of diversity.

With its practise-oriented programmes in the sector of higher vocational education, IBC-M provides labour force for the administrations and businesses and adds value to the professional world of work through applied research and consulting work. With the integration of mandatory internships in the AP and the bachelor programmes, the students already come early in contact with potential employers. Furthermore, IBC-M supports entrepreneurship of its students and therefore has specific courses in the curricula.

The college adjusts its programmes regularly in cooperation with its Danish partners and external stakeholders to assure that the programmes match the need of the regional labour market. Therefore, IBC-M conducts each year innovation conferences and workshops with representatives of higher education institutions in Kosovo, regional

private sector companies, public institutions and non-governmental organisations. Outcomes of these exchanges include implementation proposals, such as the execution of assignments directly related to regional companies, or the orientation of the programme to project planning and management. Further, IBC-M plans to increase the number of new and innovative programmes in new academic fields, which are based on the needs of the growing local and regional labour market.

IBC-M maintains two campuses in Mitrovica, one in the northern and one in the southern part in order to provide its education to all ethnic groups in the region. Due to the difficult political situation in the Mitrovica region, the two campuses and programmes have been practically separated from each other in the past. However, the continued effort of the college to promote integration in the divided city through joint events and projects had the impressive result that students of all ethnic groups are now studying together. With its policy to provide affordable vocational education, IBC-M contributes even to the political development and stability of the region.

As another service to the Mitrovica public IBC-M offers its preparatory English courses free of charge to all interested people. Thus, the English courses serve both as recruiting instrument and as community service. In 2017, the college launched the IBC-M English Academy. In the eight-week English language programme, led by a native English speaker, top-performing high schools students from across Mitrovica and the surrounding region are able to practise and use their English.

In the context of its principle to support and promote equal access to academic and scientific study and research without discrimination, IBC-M is socially and ethnically inclusive and open to all ethnic groups and communities. With the college's commitment to continue providing scholarships and other incentives for students with socio-economic and minority backgrounds, IBC-M actively recruits students from minority groups.

The annual tuition fee for the academic year 2018-2019 is 995 Euro¹⁰, which is about the average for private universities in Kosovo. Well-known private universities in Kosovo, such as American University, University for Business Technology and Riinvest College, charge considerably more for their undergraduate programmes. On the other hand, the public University of Mitrovica in the Northern part of the city charges fees of up to 1,000 Euro, but may also be completely free for some students.

As the college has a clear socio-economic development mandate and strives to be an inclusive institution, it provides financial aid in order to allow students from less fortunate families to study at IBC-M. Enrolled students that come from minority groups are eligible for receiving discounted tuition scholarship (Minority Scholarships) as long as they are Kosovo citizens. All enrolled IBC-M students can apply for the Excellence Scholarships, which are awarded based on the students' academic achievements. Further, IBC-M provides for student from outside of the Mitrovica region free dormitory accommodation to ensure that they are able to attend the courses and graduate successfully. IBC-M provides free dormitory accommodation. Eligibility depends on entrance exam score, location/distance from the college, motivation letter, academic performance and 75 % attendance threshold.

¹⁰ For Kosovo residents

The ERASMUS+ funded project “Creating Theory to Practice Centres for Innovation and Employment”¹¹¹² aims to improve the relevance of higher education for the labour market and society in Kosovo through creating sustainable models of interaction between universities and enterprises. IBC-M already established the Theory to Practice Centre (T2P) that will promote the participation of faculty, students and external stakeholders in joined research teams.

Furthermore, the college intends to launch two start-up companies by 2022 as part of the College’s Business Planning Module for all students. IBC-M plans to expand its network with public and private sector through other means, such as conferences, business clubs and career fairs and wants to strengthen its international partnerships with higher education institution in the region and EU.

Assessment

Currently, IBC-M is the only higher education institution in Kosovo that provides vocational and international education on a tertiary level. Furthermore, it is the only higher educational institution in Kosovo providing integrated education to students from all communities in Mitrovica and the region and helps to improve the dire economic prospects and alleviate ethnic tensions.

According to the experts, the strategy of the college takes the needs of the society into account and fits the institution very well. With its focus on the needs of the local economy and the labour market, the college fills a niche that still is neglected in the national higher education sector. The practise-oriented education and the focus on entrepreneurship fits very well the needs of the local economy, which is also confirmed by local stakeholders who appreciate the quality of the interns and graduates from IBC-M.

On the other hand, it turned out that the college and its various offers are still not well known to business and society (potential students) outside of Mitrovica. According to the experts, the potential for IBC-M that close cooperation with national companies could offer has not yet been fully exploited. Therefore, the college should increase its visibility efforts and proactively market its services for national companies and administrations such as graduates, courses in further education (in-house trainings) or applied research projects.

The experts are very impressed and highly appreciate the outstanding progress and accomplishments that IBC-M has achieved in the socio-ethnic inclusion of all ethnic groups and communities.

With respect to such important values as inclusion and education, the experts encourage and support the dedication of IBC-M to consistently pursue these goals in order to contribute to the continual improvement of the economic situation in Kosovo as well as to bring ethnic groups closer together.

The experts assess the activities and cooperation with external local stakeholders and the provided services to community, administrations and businesses such as English language courses and in-house trainings to be very good.

¹¹ <http://ibcmetrovica.eu/2018/02/launching-creating-theory-practice-centres-innovation-employment/>, accessed 17th June 2018

¹² <https://www.gartenbauwissenschaft.uni-bonn.de/Pressemitteilungen-en/auftaktveranstaltung-erasmusplus-projekt>, accessed 17th June 2018

Recommendations

Although the college is very well known in Mitrovica, the experts recommend that IBC-M should proactively communicate and market the benefits and offers of the college to the industry throughout Kosovo.

In order to achieve the indicated student numbers in the business plan, the experts recommend that IBC-M should make greater efforts to attract new students, for example by highlighting the unique characteristics of the college (English vocational college in Kosovo) in a marketing campaign.

4.6. Quality assurance

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 persons 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.

With regard to the study programmes the experts examine how they are designed, implemented and how their improvement is organised. Furthermore, they check if a quality assurance concept of the programme is available and how it is connected to the quality assurance system of the institution and what kind of quality assurance processes and instruments for programmes are implemented. The experts also review, how stakeholders (students, teachers, administration, employers etc.) are involved in the quality assurance process as well as whether the relevant programme information for students and prospective students is provided.

Current status

Quality assurance at IBC-M is designed according to the PDCA cycle. To assure and enhance its quality IBC-M uses internal and external quality assurance instruments which are coordinated by the quality assurance officer, but are in the responsibility of all members as well as internal and external stakeholders of IBC-M. The quality assurance instruments and processes are implemented and described in the IBC-M Quality Manual.

In order to implement its strategy, IBC-M defines annual goals for the college and departments, which are discussed in the academic council and on the next level in the departments. After internal agreement, the director compiles the goals and discusses them with the board of directors before they come into force.

IBC-M has a bi-annual staff assessment between the staff members and her/his supervisor following a formalised process. One of the meetings focuses on evaluating the performance of the employee, the other focuses on the assessment and the definition of targets and training needs. Additionally, IBC-M implemented a complaint procedure

for students and staff, which is laid out in the IBC-M Internal Policy-Complaint Procedure¹³ and accessible via the website and the IBC-M learning platform Google Classroom.

In order to achieve high quality in the core activity of teaching and learning, IBC-M regularly carries out student evaluations with standardised questionnaires on satisfaction with individual courses, teachers, studies in general as well as the facilities and services of IBC-M. In addition to that they carry out separate evaluation questionnaires on internships and dropout rates and also conduct freshman and graduates' surveys. The evaluations are summarised and analysed in reports including recommendations for actions. A variety of reports are published anonymously online on the IBC-M website¹⁴. The reports are internally discussed with the appropriate stakeholders (e.g. director, administration, departments, management, academic staff and board of directors).

Externally, IBC-M is seeking advice on a regular basis. Before establishing the programmes external expertise was conducted for each programme in order to explore the market relevance. The programmes themselves were developed and adapted in close collaboration with its Danish cooperation partners, which also support IBC-M with double grading of exams and teaching staff training. This adds external international feedback on the teaching activities of the college.

The college regularly discusses the results of internal and external quality assurance instruments in order to reflect its activities and develop improvements where necessary. Due to the recent independences and transformation phase of IBC-M, the college will review its whole quality assurance system and will update and adapt it according to the new IBC-M governance structure.

Assessment

The experts observe a well-developed quality assurance system based on formal and informal processes. The academic and administrative staff, especially the assistant director/administration, quality assurance officer and head of student services, are very dedicated, act professionally and ambitiously and demonstrated that they have internalised the PDCA cycle.

The experts assess the instruments employed as well adapted for a small institution as IBC-M, professionally designed and coordinated by its quality assurance officer.

The college uses internal and external instruments in a professional way in order to assess their activities from different point of views and to get external feedback and expertise where necessary. They use the external support systematically to improve the internal capacities of the college, further to manage its quality independently.

The quality assurance activities focus mostly on teaching and learning, which is the primary focus of IBC-M, and administrative processes related to the well-being of students. Consequently, the students confirmed during the site visit that they are very satisfied with the education and student services at IBC-M.

The quality assurance concept used by IBC-M seems to be appropriate to assure and improve the quality of teaching and learning at the college and of all six programmes. Moreover, the quality assurance instruments, which are currently in place, seem to be

¹³ http://ibcmirovica.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2016-11-29_IBCM_Int.Policy-Complaint-Procedure.pdf?x35258, accessed 22nd June 2018

¹⁴ <http://ibcmirovica.eu/quality-assurance/>, accessed 22nd June 2018

accepted and implemented throughout the institution and are used for further improvement.

However, in the interviews with the students during the site visit the experts noted, that the students do not receive a (formal) feedback on the views they express in the student evaluation surveys. In addition, not all students were aware of concrete measures the college has taken based on the analysis of evaluation results.

Recommendations

To improve the quality assurance system further and to foster the existing quality culture at IBC-M the experts recommend to involve the students in the follow-up process. The college should seek ways to discuss the results of the student evaluations with the students preferably in person in the respective class in order to give the students a clear signal that their opinions are seriously taken into consideration. Therefore, the feedback loop after the course evaluations have to be closed so that all students know that their feedback is valued and leads to significant change.

With regard to the recent independence and transformation phase of IBC-M, the experts recommend that the college should review its quality assurance system, update and adapt it according to the new governance structure.

4.7. Programme profile

Teaching and learning is part of the core in higher education institutions. Therefore, the experts check whether the study programmes comply with the institutional strategy and national regulations. Further, they check if the intended learning outcomes of the programme are well defined, publicly accessible and whether they correspond to the type and level of qualification provided by the programme. They also consider whether the intended learning outcomes are based on academic or professional requirements (standards), public needs and the demands of the labour market and contribute to the employability of the graduates. The experts also check the academic standards of the study programmes and how research and teaching are linked. Moreover, they consider the international dimension of the programme and verify whether the qualification of the academic staff is adequate with regard to profile and objectives of the programme.

Current status

The college offers in total six programmes in three fields, each with a professionally oriented four-semester Academy Profession (AP) degree with 120 ECTS (ISCED 5) and a three-semester top-up professional bachelor with in total 210 ECTS (ISCED 6). The programmes were developed in close cooperation with Danish partner institutions (Tietgen Business College, Lillebaelt Academy and University College Lillebaelt) and SPACE network¹⁵, a European network of higher education institutions for business studies and languages with over 70 members in 25 European countries.

The programmes are adopted from Danish AP and professional bachelor programmes and the contents are adapted to fit the local context while maintaining the Danish learning outcomes. The implementation and adaptation of the programmes were carried out in close cooperation with key teachers from the Danish programme consor-

¹⁵ <https://www.space-network.org/> accessed 20th June 2018

tium. Therefore, IBC-M can offer double degrees in cooperation with its Danish cooperation partners the Lillebaelt Academy of Professional Higher Education (EAL) and the University College Lillebaelt (UCL).

The Academy Profession programme is a Danish professional higher education qualification^{16,17} which is taught at university colleges¹⁸ and business academies¹⁹ that are part of the binary Danish higher education system²⁰, that distinguishes between research-based programmes and professionally-oriented programmes.

Danish Academy Profession programmes (90-150 ECTS) combine theoretical studies with a practically-oriented approach in form of mandatory work placements and are suited for employment in business and industry. Danish university colleges and business academies also offer top-up professional bachelor programmes (180-240 ECTS). They are development-based, combine theoretical studies with a practically-orientated approach in form of mandatory work placements, which are always included in the programmes, and prepare students to enter specific professions. In Denmark, these six programmes are standard programmes and taught at several colleges and academies with the same curricula. The Danish based programmes are already accredited in Denmark by the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA)²¹.

In addition to the programmes and their adaption, the cooperation agreements with the Danish partners of IBC-M also includes training of teachers in among others teaching and learning methodologies, double grading of projects and theses as well as ongoing support of the college's staff.

The programmes are modularised and based on the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). The regular workload of a semester is 30 credits, each credit being an equivalent of 30 working hours. The courses are carried out in small groups with a maximum of 30 students. All programmes include a mandatory internship. A main difference to the Danish programmes is that all programmes of the college have a common first semester, so that the students can orient themselves before they choose a specific programme.

IBC-M uses the Danish teaching and learning approach "From Theory to Practice", which is a practise-oriented, problem-based teaching and learning methodology. The pedagogical concept is based on four different aspects of learning: conceptualisation, experimentation, experience and reflection. The students learn theoretical concepts, which they apply in classroom situations as well as in practical real world environments, e.g. internships, and which they reflect with regard of the gained theoretical knowledge.

In the conceptualisation phase (mainly in class learning) the students acquire a theoretical knowledge through teacher structured lessons, in class exercises, real life examples provided by students, guest speakers or field trips. The experimentation phase (in lab learning) is working with real life problems in a controlled environment, which is conducted by real life cases in teaching or group work and individual presentations. The experience phase (in field learning) works with the theoretical knowledge in a real

¹⁶ <https://ufm.dk/en/education/higher-education/degrees-and-qualifications>, accessed 13th June 2018

¹⁷ <http://studyindenmark.dk/study-options/study-options#Degree%20Programmes>, accessed 13th June 2018

¹⁸ <https://ufm.dk/en/education/higher-education/university-colleges>, accessed 13th June 2018

¹⁹ <https://ufm.dk/en/education/higher-education/business-academies-1>, accessed 13th June 2018

²⁰ <https://ufm.dk/en/education/higher-education/the-danish-higher-education-system>, accessed 13th June 2018

²¹ <https://www.eva.dk/>, accessed 18th June 2018

life environment by guest speakers presenting real life cases, fieldwork and research, semester projects and trial exams. The reflection phase (competence gaining) links recent knowledge and experience and interrelates it to earlier ones, which allows students to solve problems independently related to their profession. This happens through in class reflection exercises, pre-examination tutorials and the final thesis.

All AP programmes start with a common first semester laying the foundation for all three programmes. After the first semester, the students have to choose the programme they want to continue. The fourth semester ends with a mandatory internship and the AP thesis. The top-up bachelor programme with three semesters comprises two semesters of coursework and one semester of mandatory internship and the bachelor thesis. Students of the Public Administration programme who want to continue with a top-up bachelor will have coursework in the fourth semester and a longer mandatory internship in the sixth semester.

The teaching and learning forms, qualification goals of the programmes, pedagogical and double degree concept, admission requirements, selection procedures, internships, study and examination requirements, recognition of achievements at other higher education institutions, regulations for student absence, illness and other mitigating conditions etc. are described in detail in the self-evaluation report, study regulations, General Semester Handbook, Academic English & Study Skills Handbook and module handbooks of the programmes. The rules and regulations as well as the handbooks are available on the IBC-M website²², are updated annually and adapted to changed requirements.

Assessment

The experts consider the AP and top-up bachelor system as appropriate as it gives the students a practise-oriented education preparing them well for the labour market and the two shorter cycles ensure the needed flexibility. The objectives of the programme comply with the profile and the strategic goals of the institution and national regulations. All programmes of the college are based on already accredited Danish programmes. Therefore, the intended learning outcomes are well defined, publicly accessible and correspond to the type and level of qualification provided by the programme.

The adopted innovative teaching and learning approach "From Theory to Practice" is unique in the region, appreciated by the students and academic staff and differentiates IBC-M from other higher education institutions.

The decision of IBC-M to adopt Danish programmes and adapt them to the local context is appreciated by the experts as it assures the academic quality of the programmes as they have been successfully rolled out in Denmark. The modularisation and the use of ECTS are adequate and the programmes are documented clearly and transparently.

During the site visit, the external stakeholders confirmed that the IBC-M graduates correspond well to the public needs and demands of the Kosovo labour market. Especially the higher vocational approach of IBC-M with its practise-oriented education solely in English is unique in Kosovo and provides competencies that are sought after. Therefore, the intended learning outcomes are based on academic and professional requirements (standards), public needs and demands of the labour market and contribute to the employability of the graduates.

²² <http://ibcmetrovica.eu/quality-assurance/academic-policies/>, accessed 18th June 2018

The stakeholders also expressed the wish that IBC-M should implement new programmes, especially master programmes, in areas that comply with the needs of the growing labour market for specialised professionals in the field of technology innovation, engineering and digital technology. In this regard, the experts point out that IBC-M should carefully consider in which academic fields it could introduce new innovative programmes that not only meet the needs of the labour market but are also demanded long-term. In addition, they explicitly allude that these additional programmes should complement already existing programmes of other higher education institutions in Kosovo. With regard to the current number of undergraduate students (International Sales and Marketing (Bachelor): 41, Public Service Management (Bachelor): 17, Environmental and Agricultural Management (Bachelor): 25) the experts point out that IBC-M should reconsider whether Environmental and Agricultural Management Studies and/or Human Resource Management are the right fields for the beginning of a master's programme.

In the beginning, the six undergraduate programmes focused on teaching and learning, while research was clearly a lower priority. Therefore, the provision of teaching and learning is still at the centre of the college's activities. With regard to the college's research activities, the experts learned in the interviews with the academic staff and external stakeholders that research cooperation and especially applied research oriented teaching takes place. Furthermore, the college encourages its teachers and students to pursue applied research activities such as case studies, field trips, (joint) research projects and publications (with partner institutions and companies), participation in scientific conferences at IBC-M, in Kosovo or abroad in order to expand their knowledge and gain experiences. With regard to the planned graduate programmes, the experts point out that the link between research and teaching should be continuously expanded and further strengthened, in particular in the EAM bachelor programme, where applied research activities should be improved and implemented further.

The academic level of the programmes is consistent with the nature of the programmes and complies with internationally accepted standards. The learning outcomes of the AP programmes comply with the International Standard Classification of Education²³ (ISCED) 5 and the learning outcomes of the bachelor programmes comply with ISCED 6.

Independently, IBC-M and the Danish cooperation partners reported good cooperation between them in adapting and tailoring the programmes, staff training, double grading, exchange etc. The close cooperation with the Danish cooperation partners includes programme development, staff training and exchange, double grading etc. The fact that the adapted programmes of IBC-M are already accredited in Denmark also ensures that they conform to internationally recognised standards.

Due to the international programme profile, English language, double degree agreements and international mobility the programmes have an international dimension. In this regard, the experts encourage IBC-M to further enhance the student and staff exchange, for example with summer schools.

According to the experts, the qualification of the teaching staff is adequate with regard to profile and objectives of the programmes. They were impressed by the competent and motivated teaching staff of the college, which regularly revises and adapts the programmes and its content as well as the study process to the local needs based on lessons learned from previous semesters and feedback from the students. The experts

²³ <http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/international-standard-classification-education-isced>, accessed 19th June 2018

suggest that the college finds ways to attract more international teachers, with e.g. incentives, summer schools, and thus further enhances the international dimension of the programmes and the recognition of the college in the international community.

Recommendations

Regarding the link between teaching and research, the experts recommend that IBC-M should further support and enhance the college's applied research activities and its affiliation in all programmes as well as strengthening internationalisation.

With regard to the current number of bachelor students, the experts recommend that IBC-M should reconsider whether Environmental and Agricultural Management Studies and/or Human Resource Management are the right fields to start a master's programme.

4.8. Curriculum

This criterion comprises the curriculum as well as the teaching and learning methods. The experts check if the curriculum of the programme is adequately structured to achieve the intended learning outcomes and if it provides the necessary knowledge and methodological expertise of the relevant discipline(s). In addition, the experts review whether the institution employs appropriate student centred teaching and learning processes and methods, which pay respect to the diversity of students and their needs and encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process.

Current status

The following six undergraduate programmes of the college are subject to the reaccreditation process:

1. Marketing and Management (Academy Profession)
2. International Sales and Marketing (Bachelor)
3. Public Administration (Academy Profession)
4. Public Service Management (Bachelor)
5. Environmental and Agricultural Management (Academy Profession)
6. Environmental and Agricultural Management (Bachelor)

The programmes impart specialised and interdisciplinary knowledge as well as methodological and generic competencies. Since it is a reaccreditation procedure, a detailed description of the curricula and their learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competencies) does not seem to be necessary. The subject specific programme handbooks are linked in the appropriate place.

Since the initial accreditation in 2013, the college has further developed or adjusted the programme concepts as follows:

Marketing and Management (MM) and International Sales and Marketing (ISM)²⁴

In 2013, the primary recommendation for the MM/ISM programmes suggested that IBC-M should include accounting in the Marketing and Management programme.²⁵

Due to the recommendation, IBC-M's academic staff met with their Danish partners to discuss ways to suitably integrate accounting into the programmes. The basics of accounting are fundamental to the MM/ISM programmes and a prerequisite for topics like financial statement analysis, which students take in the first semester. A review of the curriculum determined that principles of accounting were included in the course learning outcomes for the course Company Analysis in the first semester, but that the actual course syllabus did not adequately reflect those outcomes. Thus, the course was modified and renamed Principles of Accounting and Financial Statement Analysis. The adjusted course starts with foundations in accounting and then turns to financial statement analysis, which builds on the accounting foundation.

Public Administration (PA) and Public Service Management (PSM)²⁶

For the PA/PSM programmes the recommendation suggested that IBC-M should include a module on comparative civil and public law.²⁷

In response to this, IBC-M law teachers drafted a concept on the relevance and applicability of civil law as foundational education in national legal concepts allowing students to better understand international legal matters in the European context.

Instead of introducing a new course that covers all aspects of this branch of legislation, the civil law elements have been integrated into four different courses which include:

- Integration of Civil Law elements emphasising the relations between citizens, customers and public administration
- The application of the Civil Code according to which the self-governing organs can issue certain preliminary decisions in civil law cases and how this is being done in the European Union.

These topics are integrated in the courses as follows:

Course & Semester	Topic
Introduction to EU Studies 1 st Semester (previously European Studies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to the process of harmonisation of EU legislation• European Civil Code (ECC) and its application in practise

²⁴ http://ibcmirovica.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2016-10-31-IBCM_Programme-Handbook-MM-ISM-Spur.pdf?x35258, accessed 18th June 2018

²⁵ "IBCM shall include accounting in the Marketing and Management programme." In: Assessment Report, Programme Accreditation International Business College Mitrovica, page 32, dated 31st January 2013.

²⁶ http://ibcmirovica.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2016-10-31-IBCM_Programme-Handbook-PA-PSM-Spur.pdf?x35258, accessed 18th June 2018

²⁷ IBCM shall include a module on comparative civil and public law to the Public Administration/Public Service Management programme." In: Assessment Report, Programme Accreditation International Business College Mitrovica, page 32, dated 31st January 2013.

Course & Semester	Topic
State Organisation 2 nd Semester (previously Organisation and Legal Framework)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction between organs of the state and individuals (in the process of offering public services at the local and central level) • Legal safeguards deriving from the civil law legal framework
Administrative and Public-Sector Legislation 3 rd Semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rules and legal safeguards deriving from the civil law legal frameworks • Legal norms in the representation of civil law proceedings (including legal relationships of property, forms of ownership, family relationships) • Responses to legal situations related to civil matters • Rights and obligations in the civil sphere • Items as object Civil-Legal Relationship types and forms of ownership (state, public, private and personal property)
Legal Systems 5 th Semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil Law as a legal system • Knowledge of law and main separations, concept of rights, right of public and private law • Knowledge of Law in the premises, time and to persons

Table 3 – Programme changes PA and PSM²⁸

Environmental and Agricultural Management (EAM)²⁹

With regard to EAM, it was recommended that the name of the programmes should be better aligned to the content of those programmes or vice versa either in renaming the programmes in Environmental Management or in adding content in agricultural management to the curriculum and employ appropriate teaching staff.³⁰

In this recommendation, the college has also consulted with local experts and representatives of the Danish partnership. It was concluded that the agricultural component is a vital aspect of the programme and a focus on agriculture is regarded as a need in the local context as well as unique selling proposition (USP) for the programmes.

²⁸ Self report for the institutional and programme accreditation of the International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM), Appendix 17, Changes to study programmes, page 3-4, dated 27th November 2017.

²⁹ http://ibcmmitrovica.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2016-10-31-IBCM_Programme-Handbook-EAM-Spur.pdf?x35258, accessed 18th June 2018

³⁰ "IBCM shall align the name of the "Environmental and Agricultural Management" programme (AP and Bachelor) to its content. Therefore it could change the name of the programme to "Environmental Management" or add contents in agricultural management to the curriculum and employ appropriate teaching staff." In: Assessment Report, Programme Accreditation International Business College Mitrovica, page 32, dated 31st January 2013.

The following changes have been proposed:

- Adding new agricultural related content to ensure representation in both programmes
- Rearranging and renaming some existing courses to better reflect their content and reaffirm the role of agriculture in the programmes
- Adjusting the ECTS of some courses to reflect these changes.

The following key courses are related to agriculture:

Course & Semester	Topic
Introduction to Agricultural Sciences 2 nd Semester (previously Advanced Biology and Biochemistry)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to foundations of soil science, plant physiology and animal physiology and welfare
Basics of Food Production 3 rd Semester (previously Recreation, Specialized Production, and Food Safety, recreation topic was removed from previous course and placed elsewhere to focus more on agricultural topics.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant production and post harvest utilisation • Livestock production, care, and use • Specialised agricultural production and small-scale markets
Sustainable Agriculture 6 th Semester (new course)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture as agent of overall economic, ecological and social opportunity • Determination of key indicators for sustainable agricultural production • Determination of chances for economic growth as a result of technical progress in agriculture

Table 4 – Programme changes EAM³¹

Concerning the recommendation to employ appropriate teaching staff for agricultural management, according to the self-evaluation report, IBC-M reviewed the qualification of the programmes staff and determined that their local expert on agriculture, who holds a doctorate in agriculture as a subfield of biotechnology, has sufficient knowledge and expertise in agricultural sciences for this stage of the programme. With the growth of programmes in the future, the college will build on that by hiring additional teaching staff with an agricultural focus.

The overall recommendation that IBC-M should avoid using the same names for modules in different semesters in order to ensure transparency has been taken into account by reviewing and renaming courses through the departments and ratification by the academic council.

³¹ Self report for the institutional and programme accreditation of the International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM), Appendix 17, Changes to study programmes, page 1-3, dated 27th November 2017.

Assessment

With regard to the curricula, the experts state that they are in general reasonably and appropriately structured, but they do not provide the necessary knowledge and methodological expertise of the relevant disciplines in order to achieve the intended learning outcomes and objectives of each programme.

According to the experts, the MM/ISM programmes are missing e.g. social media, e-commerce, search engine marketing and optimisation and the fields of digitalisation in marketing. In the meeting with the academic leadership, the leaders confirmed that e-commerce and social media subjects are missing in the curricula and that they have not yet developed special courses but plan to implement them in the future. In addition, the students and graduates reported in the interview that the mathematics and statistics knowledge should be separated and need to be deepened in order to have sufficient ECTS at the end of their bachelor degree to be able to enter a master programme. Further, the students and graduates state that in all programmes the academic writing methodology course in the 5th semester should be earlier, because they need the knowledge for the AP thesis, which is written in the 4th semester.

The experts state that the PA/PSM programmes require additional knowledge of the principles of private law so that graduates are able to work with public-private partnerships and qualified to independently carry out work, to analyse, plan and implement solutions that broadly relate to the management of private companies and the management and administration of public institutions.

With regard to the EAM programmes, the experts point out that the programmes do not provide all the necessary knowledge of the discipline and important contents are missing. The curricula lack topics such as agro-environmental and rural development policy, investment/finance/controlling, agricultural markets and marketing, quality assurance and supply chain management, social aspects/extension work, digital agricultural development, robotics and automation, data management, big data and cloud computing. IBC-M should incorporate these topics in the curricula in order to ensure that the graduates have the necessary knowledge and methodological expertise and the profile and objectives of the programmes comply with internationally accepted standards.

The experts discussed very intensively whether the learning experience is organised in a way that takes the diversity of students and their needs into account and whether the institution employs appropriate student-centred teaching and learning methods and encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process. The experts ascertain that the college has integrated appropriate student centred teaching and learning methods. With regard to student centred teaching and learning processes, which take the diversity of students and their needs into account, the experts assess the following positively: the small class size, which allows time for more contact and flexibility for the individual student needs, the availability of teachers by open-door policy, follow-up outside of the class and their not too formal relationship with the students. Also positive is the minimisation of classical lectures, use of discussions and emphasis on real-life examples as well as field trips. In addition, IBC-M teaches the teachers how to use student centred learning (SCL) in their teaching, employs external teachers with practical experience and fosters a diverse student group.

However, the experts state that the students should play a more active role in creating the learning process and note a lack of formal involvement of the students in governance, curriculum design and quality assurance. The involvement and inclusion of students in all these processes are essential and must be ensured. Furthermore, the experts point out that grading should be based solely on the assessment of the learning

outcomes and not include presence, which currently represent 10 % of the grade. This current procedure does not match SCL³².

Recommendation

As the MM/ISM programmes do not include sufficient subjects e.g. on social media, e-commerce, search engine marketing and optimisation and fields of digitalisation in marketing, the experts recommend that IBC-M should include these topics in the curricula.

For the PA/PSM programmes the experts recommend that IBC-M should implement the principles of private law in the curricula, so that the graduates are able to work with public-private partnerships and implement solutions to private companies.

The Environmental and Agricultural Management programmes do not provide all necessary knowledge of the discipline and important contents are missing, e.g. agro-environmental and rural development policy, investment/finance/controlling, agricultural markets and marketing, quality assurance and supply chain management, social aspects/extension work, digital agricultural development, robotics and automation, data management, big data and cloud computing. In order to ensure that the profile and objectives of the programmes comply with internationally accepted standards the experts recommend that IBC-M should consult with the Danish cooperation partner about the missing content and together find a solution to include the subjects in the curricula.

In addition, the experts recommend that IBC-M should offer elective courses in mathematics and statistics to give students the opportunity to earn additional ECTS so that they have enough ECTS at the end of the bachelor programme to enter a subsequent master programme.

Further, they recommend placing the academic writing methodology course earlier in all programmes, preferably in the 3rd semester, so that the students have the necessary knowledge before they start their AP thesis.

Students should play a more active role in creating the learning process, so the experts recommend that the college should discuss with elected student representatives how this can be realised. In addition, the experts expect IBC-M to ensure the formal involvement of the students in governance, curriculum design and quality assurance.

With regard to SCL and that grading should be based solely on the assessment of the learning outcomes the experts recommend that IBC-M should consult the SCL toolkit.³³

4.9. Student assessment

The focus of the criterion lies on the organisation of student assessments. The experts check how the assessment of intended learning outcomes is organised and whether the amount and requirements of assessments are adequate with regard to the intended learning outcomes. They review if the requirements of the thesis reflect the level of the degree and if the assessment criteria are transparent and used in a consistent way. Moreover, they will examine whether the staff undertaking assessments are adequately qualified, which examination regulations exist and if they provide clear and fair regulations for student absence, illness and other mitigating conditions.

³² <https://www.esu-online.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/100814-SCL.pdf>, accessed 20th June 2018

³³ One expert has a contrary opinion regarding that grading should be based solely on the assessment of the learning outcomes and not include presence.

Current status

As the programmes are adopted from Denmark, IBC-M also adopted the Danish examination system. All programmes use a cumulative examination system where each course and module grade contributes to the final grade. Course grades usually consist of course assignments and the course exam. The course assignments comprise 40 % of the final grade of the course. Module grades are calculated out of different course grades. All exams are written during an exam week at the end of the semester. Interdisciplinary projects consist of a written part (group and individual work) and an oral part (group presentation but graded by individual), each worth 50 % of the final project result. The mandatory internships are examined through an internship report, which is assessed as passed/failed. Since the summer semester 2012 the written exams at IBC-M have been anonymised, so that the student is not identifiable to the grading lecturer.

The AP and bachelor programmes end with an AP/bachelor thesis project where the student completes an independent, interdisciplinary and practise-oriented project related to the level of the degree and writes a thesis on the project. The grade of the thesis project consists of the written thesis grade and the oral examination grade. The thesis grade counts $\frac{2}{3}$ and the oral examination grade $\frac{1}{3}$ towards the overall grade. Exam results can be appealed; the appeals procedure is described in the study regulations³⁴.

Since the double grading of semester exams considerably delayed the grade feedback to students, IBC-M decided to change the double grading system. From winter semester 2012/2013, only multidisciplinary semester projects, internship reports, AP and bachelor projects have been subject to double grading by Danish teachers. The current amount of submitted student work, which is submitted for double grading, is 10 % and is randomly selected by the Danish double grading partners.

The examination methods are described in the programme handbooks and in examination regulations. IBC-M uses a 7-point grading scale from plus 12 as the best result to minus 3 as the worst. The grades can be transferred to the ECTS grading scale.

The programmes have study, internship and examination regulations, which regulate the study process, internships, course and module examinations and the thesis project.

At the end of AP/bachelor programme, the graduates are awarded an AP/bachelor degree from IBC-M under the Kosovo education system and a double degree from Lillebaelt Academy of Higher Professional Education (EAL) and University College Lillebaelt (UCL).

Assessment

The experts assess the examination system of the programmes as appropriate. The different examination methodologies with written and oral exams, course assignments, internship reports and project work provide the opportunity to assess different competences.

The double grading system of multidisciplinary semester projects, internship reports, AP and bachelor projects of the cooperation partner's teachers is considered as a par-

³⁴ http://ibcmirovica.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2016-09-29-IBCM_Internal-Regulation_017-2016-IBCM-Study-Regulations.pdf?x35258, accessed 20th June 2018

ticularly strong point of IBC-M, which the experts encourage to maintain in order to ensure fair grading of exams and to receive constant international feedback on the overall academic level of the studies at the college.

According to the experts, the assessment of intended learning outcomes is well defined, regulated and organised. The amount and requirements of assessments are adequate with regard to the intended learning outcomes. Furthermore, the requirements of the thesis reflect the level of the degrees. The assessment criteria are transparent and used in a consistent way. In addition, the staff undertaking the assessments are adequately qualified. Transparent examination regulations exist and provide clear and fair regulations for student absence, illness and other mitigating conditions and appeal procedure and they work as the experts heard from the students and graduates during the visit.

4.10. Organisation of the study programme

With regard to the organisation of the study programme, the experts check the appropriateness of entry qualifications and the regulations for the recognition of qualifications (i.e. Lisbon Convention). They review whether the organisation of the study process allows the programme to be carried out in such a way that the intended learning outcomes will be achieved and whether the organisation of the study process takes the diversity of students and their needs into account. Other aspects are how the implementation of the programme is managed (roles and responsibilities) and whether the workload of the programme is adequate with respect to the necessity to reach the intended learning outcomes in the scheduled time frame. The organisation of the student life cycle (i.e. all (organisational) relationships between the student and the institution from enrolment to graduation) is also part of the criterion. Further, the experts check whether the student support and advisory services are suitable and in case of a cooperation with internal and external partner(s) how the cooperation is organised.

Current status

IBC-M enrolls students for the winter semester, which starts in the beginning of October. For admission, the students have to pass an one and a half hour entry exam and an interview, which tests English language and maths skills of the students. Based on the results of the exam and interview, applicants are shortlisted and invited to enrol.

IBC-M recognises educational achievements of students, who have been acquired at other higher education institutions. The recognition of qualifications (e.g. Lisbon Convention) is sufficiently regulated in the study regulations of the college.

The college uses Google Classroom as its e-learning platform. The virtual learning environment is used by staff and students to create classes, distribute assignments, communicate, access learning materials, document sharing and collaboration and exam submission.

The organisation of the study process allows the programmes to be carried out that the intended learning outcomes will be achieved and takes the diversity of students and their needs into account, among others through small class sizes, high flexibility in the timetable, online availability of materials and the problems of the students are handled well.

The programmes are managed systematically and the roles and responsibilities are clearly and transparently regulated. The academic council of IBC-M always consults with the Danish partners on changes in the curricula and introduction of new content.

IBC-M has an extensive counselling system for students, which support students in different situations. The student service and career coaching unit assists the students in arranging their mandatory internships, signal and assists students that are at risk of falling behind in their study progress, helps to determine what career path students are interested in and helps to increase study motivation and reduce dropout rate. Furthermore, the lecturers are also easily approachable for students. The college also supports students in finding internships and consults them after the end of their studies.

As of 2015/2016 IBC-M introduced a general semester coordinator, who supervises the needs and problems of the first semester students. This has helped the college to make better curricular adjustments for first-semester subjects and helped the freshman students with the start of their studies because there is a big difference between the college's system and the traditional local system in Kosovo to which the students are accustomed. In addition, the dropout rate after the first semester has significantly gone down since the appointment of the General Semester Coordinator.

The students and graduates report during the site visit that the workload of the programmes is appropriate, they state that many students work parallel to their studies, most even part-time. Further, they stated that the organisation of the programmes is very good. In addition, they emphasise that the support and advice provided by the student service and career counselling unit are very good and that they appreciate the communication culture at the college.

IBC-M maintains close cooperation with the Lillebaelt Academy of Professional Higher Education (EAL) and the University College Lillebaelt (UCL). The use of the Danish curricula and the fact that the IBC-M programmes use the same learning outcomes as the Danish programmes allows IBC-M and EAL/UCL to issue a double degree. The double degree agreement is not based on equal but on equivalent programmes. Therefore, the overall aims and learning outcomes are still the same, but taught in different semesters. The cooperation and organisation are regulated in cooperation agreements.

Through the Danish partner consortium, IBC-M gained access to the SPACE network. IBC-M takes an active part in Erasmus+ programmes for International Credit Mobility. All IBC-M staff, administrative and faculty, have access to international exchange opportunities. So far, IBC-M has inter-institutional agreements with four partner institutions in Denmark³⁵, Portugal³⁶ and Finland³⁷, another two partnerships with the University of Applied Sciences (VIKO) in Lithuania and the Pamukkale University in Turkey will be signed shortly. IBC-M also encourages its students to look for international internships. In addition, as a business college of professional education, IBC-M also maintains close relationships with local and regional companies and administrations. Enterprises are also involved as external stakeholders in the development of new programmes.

Assessment

According to the experts the entry qualification and regulations for the recognition of qualifications are appropriate. Further, they state that the organisation of the study process allows the programmes to be carried out in such a way that the intended learning outcomes will be achieved and takes the diversity of students and their needs into ac-

³⁵ Lillebaelt Academy in Denmark (EAL) and University College Lillebaelt also in Denmark (UCL)

³⁶ Porto Accounting and Business School (ISCAP)

³⁷ Häme University of Applied Sciences in Finland (HAMK)

count. In addition, the experts are convinced that the implementation of the programmes is systematically managed and the process, roles and responsibilities are clear and regulated.

With regard to the workload of the programmes, the experts had the impression that it is adequate with respect to the necessity to reach the intended learning outcomes in the scheduled time frame and the students are able to have a job parallel to their studies. Furthermore, the experts are convinced that the student life cycle, e.g. all (organisational) relationships between the students and the institution from enrolment to graduation, is well organised and that the college has successfully reduced the dropout rate.

According to the experts, student academic life at the college is well organised. Lecturers are easily accessible for students, which they confirmed during the site visit. The services of the student service and career counselling unit are very helpful and support students in all important stages of the student life cycle.

IBC-M academics and administration as well as the Danish cooperation partners reported good cooperation between each other in adapting the programmes, staff training and double grading. The close cooperation with the Danish partners and the fact that IBC-M uses programmes that are already accredited in Denmark assure that academic standards are met.

5. Assessment

Overall assessment

The experts are very impressed by the good progress IBC-M has made in developing the institution (modern facilities), its programmes and especially in regard of integrated education for all students regardless of ethnic groups and communities. Over the last years, the college was able to consolidate and further develop the six programmes and build up good organisational capacities to run the college. IBC-M has developed sufficient management capacity to run the college independently, of course, under the premise that funding is secured.

The college and programmes have, according to the experts, an appropriate strategy and a profile that matches the needs of the region and economic environment.

As the only higher vocational education institution in Kosovo, IBC-M offers higher professional education in English and a modern practise-oriented, problem-based teaching and learning approach, which is innovative and unique in the region and differentiates the college and its programmes from all other higher education institutions in Kosovo and their offered programmes.

In terms of governance, IBC-M is now independent and makes the strategic decisions of the college; the academic decisions are made by the academics of the college. The experts could easily convince themselves that IBC-M has built up considerable managerial capacities. However, as IBC-M has recently become an independent foundation it is currently in a transformation phase with the new statute, decision-making and organisational structure and processes, in which the students should be formally involved and represented.

The strong point of the college is its educational offer. The programmes are well implemented and meet the needs of the Kosovo economy. The quality of the programmes is ensured by the Danish cooperation partners who provide the programme foundation, which is adapted to the local needs, and train the staff of IBC-M. A large asset of the college is its highly motivated and dynamic academic and administrative staff, which

consolidates and further develops the programmes well and provides excellent services to its students.

The experts assess the double grading system of semester projects, internship reports, and theses as a strong point in the examination and quality assurance system of the programmes.

The implemented quality assurance system of the college is well developed and based on formal and informal processes. It is used for regular, systematic and effective quality enhancement and fosters the development of a quality culture in general.

According to the experts, the largest challenge of IBC-M is the financial sustainability of the college especially after the recent phasing out of SPARK and the end of their financial support. While IBC-M has sufficient management capacity, it is unclear whether the college is able to generate sufficient and sustainable revenue, among others from tuition fees. The college has to improve in this respect and open up new sources of income and as well as revise its internal cost structure to ensure its financial independence and sustainability after the end of the current financial support from the EU without lowering the academic and educational standards reached so far.

The experts themselves experienced first-hand the peculiarities of the divided city of Mitrovica and the specific political environment in the region in which the college is located and operates. They were impressed by the highly motivated employees, how they handle special situations and respond to unforeseen challenges.

The experts wish IBC-M a successful further development of the programmes and continued excellent supervision of the students. Moreover, they thank the college and its academic and administrative staff for their hospitality, the open and constructive discussions as well as the outstanding support during their site visit.

Overall, the experts see IBC-M on a good path and encourage the college to pursue its planned development path further.

Assessment levels

Level	Assessment	Description
A	Passed	The institution/programme fulfils or exceeds all criteria. All activities are in line with the profile and objectives of the programme and provided at a high academic level.
B	Passed subject to conditions	The institution/programme 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/programme does not fulfil relevant criteria, but it is likely, that the institution 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/programme does not fulfil relevant criteria, and the institution is not expected to be able to meet all assessment criteria within 18 months' time.

Assessment grades

No	Criteria	Assessment
1	Institutional profile and strategy	B
2	Governance	B
3	Resources	C ³⁸
4	Research	B
5	Institution and society	A
6	Quality assurance	B
7	Programme profile	
	Marketing and Management (MM) and International Sales and Marketing (ISM)	B
	Public Administration (PA) and Public Service Management (PSM)	B
	Environmental and Agricultural Management (EAM)	B
8	Curriculum	
	Marketing and Management (MM) and International Sales and Marketing (ISM)	B
	Public Administration (PA) and Public Service Management (PSM)	B
	Environmental and Agricultural Management (EAM)	B
9	Student assessment	A
10	Organisation of the study programme	A

6. Accreditation recommendation of the experts to the evalag accreditation commission

According to the experts, the International Business College (IBC-M) meets **evalag**'s criteria for international institutional and programme accreditation. Therefore, the experts recommend IBC-M for reaccreditation and awarding the **evalag** label for international institutional and programme accreditation.

The experts recommend IBC-M to consider and implement the following conditions (C) and recommendations (R) to improve the college further:

³⁸ Since the finances are only guaranteed for four years and not for the entire accreditation period of six years, the experts assess the resource criterion with C.

Institutional profile and strategy

- C1 IBC-M must describe its mission statement, institutional profile and objectives and how the process of strategic planning and assessment is carried out to ensure that strategies are in line with the college's objectives and the institutional profile as well as to assure the implementation of all objectives within the institution.
- R1 IBC-M should specify the precise strategies they are pursuing to achieve the institutional objectives and how they derive these strategies from the mission and link it to the profile of the institution.
- R2 IBC-M should pay particularly attention to the alignment and realisation of the objectives, so that the college's proclaimed mission, objectives and acts are in accordance with each other.
- R3 IBC-M should develop its original strategy further, carefully develop and enhance their offers of education and research activities in applied science in order to cater to regional businesses and to open up new substantial funding streams for the college.
- R4 New programmes of IBC-M, in particular graduate programmes, should be supplementary to already existing offers at other higher education institutions in Kosovo and should meet the needs of the labour market.

Governance

- C2 IBC-M must continue and adapt the former rules and regulations of IBC-M to its new governance structure.
- C3 The composition of the academic council must be formally regulated.
- C4 The academic council must include two elected student representatives from the student representative council with voting rights.
- R5 The student representative council should be independent and have its own budget.³⁹

Resources

- R6 IBC-M should carefully plan its financial independence and open up additional sustainable funding sources.
- R7 IBC-M should develop a student loans system in cooperation with one or several of the important financial institutions in Kosovo.
- R8 IBC-M should increase its revenues through tuition fees (full-paying students), facility rentals and extension of service/education offers for external organisations.⁴⁰
- R9 IBC-M should identify saving potentials and execute them.
- R10 The strategy and budgeting should be aligned well with each other.

³⁹ Three experts have a contrary opinion regarding the recommendation that the student representative council should be independent and have its own budget.

⁴⁰ One expert has a contrary opinion regarding the recommendation that IBC-M should increase its revenues through tuition fees (full-paying students).

- R11 The monitoring of the financial aspects of the college by external partners such as the EU and external financial advisors should continue.
- R12 IBC-M's business plan and budget planning should be adapted to respective circumstances and continuously improved.
- R13 IBC-M should consider alternative funding options for its scholarship programme.
- R14 The number of teaching staff should be adjusted and balanced to the number of enrolled students.
- R15 IBC-M should review the number of required academic and administrative staff and ensure an adequate balance.
- C5 The person responsible for the graduate programme must have at least a doctoral degree in the relevant field.

Research

- R16 IBC-M should develop a research profile that corresponds to the academic goals of the institution and fits the institutional strategy.
- R17 IBC-M should develop an institutional policy for applied research and knowledge transfer along with clear institutional objectives and realistic targets.
- R18 IBC-M should seek advice from international applied research experts in the academic fields on how to systematically develop and institutionalise such activities at the college.
- R19 IBC-M should explain how the research process is organised and supported by the college, how research is evaluated within the institution as well as how the training of young researchers is organised.
- R20 IBC-M should ensure that academic standards are fulfilled and that academic standards for the training of young researchers and their rights are ensured.
- R21 IBC-M should outline a strategy and procedures for financing research, provide more funds for research and raise additional research and development funding.
- R22 IBC-M should conclude strategic partnerships with higher education institutions abroad in order to be able to offer young scientists perspectives and opportunities for further development.
- R23 IBC-M should even more engage in joint applied research projects with companies, institutions and administrations especially outside of Mitrovica in order to provide service to businesses and thus support the economic development of the country.

Institution and society

- R24 IBC-M should proactively communicate and market the benefits and offers of the college to the industry throughout Kosovo.
- R25 IBC-M should make greater efforts to attract new students, for example by highlighting the unique characteristics of the college (English vocational college in Kosovo) in a marketing campaign.

Quality assurance

- R26 IBC-M should close the feedback loop after the course evaluations. It should seek ways to discuss the results of the student evaluations with the students in order to give them a clear signal that their opinions are seriously taken into consideration.
- R27 IBC-M should review its quality assurance system, update and adapt it according to the new governance structure.

Programme profile

- R28 IBC-M should further support and enhance the college's applied research activities and its affiliation in all programmes as well as strengthening internationalisation.
- R29 IBC-M should reconsider whether Environmental and Agricultural Management Studies and/or Human Resource Management are the right fields to start a master's programme.

Curriculum

- R30 IBC-M should include the missing subjects' e.g. social media, e-commerce, search engine marketing and optimisation and fields of digitalisation in marketing in the curricula of the Marketing and Management and International Sales and Marketing programmes.
- R31 IBC-M should implement the principles of private law in the curricula of the Public Administration and Public Service Management programmes.
- R32 IBC-M should include the missing contents e.g. agro-environmental and rural development policy, investment/finance/controlling, agricultural markets and marketing, quality assurance and supply chain management, social aspects/extension work, digital agricultural development, robotics and automation, data management, big data and cloud computing in the curricula of the Environmental and Agricultural Management programmes.
- R33 IBC-M should offer elective courses in mathematics and statistics to enable the students to earn additional ECTS so that they have enough ECTS at the end of the bachelor programme to enter a master programme.
- R34 IBC-M should place the academic writing methodology course earlier in all programmes, preferably in the 3rd semester, so that the students have the necessary knowledge before they begin their AP thesis.
- R35 IBC-M should discuss with elected student representatives how students can have a more active role in creating the learning processes in the future.
- C6 IBC-M must ensure the formal involvement of students in governance, curriculum design and quality assurance.

- R36 With regard to Student Centred Learning (SCL) and that grading should be based solely on the assessment of the learning outcomes IBC-M should consult the SCL toolkit.⁴¹

7. Accreditation decision of the evalag accreditation commission

Since the funding is only guaranteed for four years, the **evalag** accreditation commission decided, at its meeting on 28th September 2018, unanimously to accredit the International Business College Mitrovica (IBC-M) and the six study programmes Marketing and Management (Academy Profession Degree with 120 ECTS (ISCED 5)), International Sales and Marketing (Professional Bachelor Degree with 210 ECTS (ISCED 6)), Public Administration (Academy Profession Degree with 120 ECTS (ISCED 5)), Public Service Management (Professional Bachelor Degree with 210 ECTS (ISCED 6)), Environmental and Agricultural Management (Academy Profession Degree with 120 ECTS (ISCED 5)) and Environmental and Agricultural Management (Professional Bachelor Degree with 210 ECTS (ISCED 6)) in the first instance for four years until 31st December 2022 with the following conditions (C) and recommendations (R). The accreditation will be prolonged to 31st December 2024 if the college proves by 31st December 2022 that the finances are secured for the years 2023 and 2024.

Institutional profile and strategy

- C1 IBC-M must describe its mission statement, institutional profile and objectives and how the process of strategic planning and assessment is carried out to ensure that strategies are in line with the college's objectives and the institutional profile as well as to assure the implementation of all objectives within the institution.
- R1 IBC-M should specify the precise strategies they are pursuing to achieve the institutional objectives and how they derive these strategies from the mission and link it to the profile of the institution.
- R2 IBC-M should pay particular attention to the alignment and realisation of the objectives, so that the college's proclaimed mission, objectives and acts are in accordance with each other.
- R3 IBC-M should develop its original strategy further, carefully develop and enhance their offers of education and research activities in applied science in order to cater to regional businesses and to open up new substantial funding streams for the college.
- R4 New programmes of IBC-M, in particular graduate programmes, should be supplementary to already existing offers at other higher education institutions in Kosovo and should meet the needs of the labour market.

⁴¹ One expert has a contrary opinion regarding that grading should be based solely on the assessment of the learning outcomes and not include presence and the recommendation that IBC-M should consult the SCL toolkit.

Governance

- C2 IBC-M must continue and adapt the former rules and regulations of IBC-M to its new governance structure.
- C3 The composition of the academic council must be formally regulated.
- C4 The academic council must include at least two elected student representatives from the student representative council with voting rights.
- R5 The student representative council should be independent and have its own budget.

Resources

- R6 IBC-M should carefully plan its financial independence and open up additional sustainable funding sources.
- R7 IBC-M should develop a student loans system in cooperation with one or several of the important financial institutions in Kosovo.
- R8 IBC-M should increase its revenues through tuition fees (full-paying students), facility rentals and extension of service/education offers for external organisations.
- R9 IBC-M should identify saving potentials and execute them.
- R10 The strategy and budgeting should be aligned well with each other.
- R11 The monitoring of the financial aspects of the college by external partners such as the EU and external financial advisors should continue.
- R12 IBC-M's business plan and budget planning should be adapted to respective circumstances and continuously improved.
- R13 IBC-M should review the number of required academic and administrative staff and ensure an adequate balance.
- C5 The person responsible for the graduate programme must have at least a doctoral degree in the relevant field.

Research

- R14 IBC-M should develop a research profile that corresponds to the academic goals of the institution and fits the institutional strategy especially with regard to the training of young scientists.
- R15 IBC-M should develop an institutional policy for applied research and knowledge transfer along with clear institutional objectives and realistic targets.
- R16 IBC-M should seek advice from international applied research experts in the academic fields on how to systematically develop and institutionalise such activities at the college.
- R17 IBC-M should explain how the research process is organised and supported by the college, how research is evaluated within the institution as well as how the training of young researchers is organised.
- R18 IBC-M should ensure that academic standards are fulfilled and that academic standards for the training of young researchers and their rights are ensured.

- R19 IBC-M should outline a strategy and procedures for financing research, provide more funds for research and raise additional research and development funding.
- R20 IBC-M should conclude strategic partnerships with higher education institutions abroad in order to be able to offer young scientists perspectives and opportunities for further development.
- R21 IBC-M should even more engage in joint applied research projects with companies, institutions and administrations especially outside Mitrovica in order to provide service to businesses and thus support the economic development of the country.

Institution and society

- R22 IBC-M should proactively communicate and market the benefits and offers of the college to the industry and society throughout Kosovo.
- R23 IBC-M should make greater efforts to attract new students, for example by highlighting the unique characteristics of the college (i.e. English-speaking vocational college in Kosovo) in a marketing campaign.

Quality assurance

- R24 IBC-M should close the feedback loop after course evaluations. It should seek ways to discuss the results of the student evaluations with the students in order to give them a clear signal that their opinions are seriously taken into consideration.
- R25 IBC-M should review its quality assurance system, update and adapt it according to the new governance structure.

Programme profile

- R26 IBC-M should further support and enhance the college's applied research activities and its affiliation in all programmes as well as strengthening internationalisation.
- R27 IBC-M should reconsider – with regard to the needs of the labour market - whether Environmental and Agricultural Management Studies and/or Human Resource Management are the right fields to start a master's programme.

Curriculum

- R28 IBC-M should include the missing subjects e.g. social media, e-commerce, search engine marketing and optimisation and fields of digitalisation in marketing in the curricula of the Marketing and Management and International Sales and Marketing programmes.
- R29 IBC-M should implement the principles of private law in the curricula of the Public Administration and Public Service Management programmes.

- R30 IBC-M should – with regard to the need of the labour market - include the missing contents e.g. agro-environmental and rural development policy, investment/finance/controlling, agricultural markets and marketing, quality assurance and supply chain management, social aspects/extension work, digital agricultural development, robotics and automation, data management, big data and cloud computing in the curricula of the Environmental and Agricultural Management programmes.
- R31 IBC-M should offer elective courses in mathematics and statistics to enable the students to earn additional credit points, so that they have enough credit points at the end of the bachelor programme to enter a master programme.
- R32 IBC-M should place the academic writing methodology course earlier in all programmes, preferably in the 3rd semester, so that the students have the necessary knowledge before they begin their AP thesis.
- R33 IBC-M should discuss with elected student representatives how students can have a more active role in creating the learning processes in the future.
- C6 IBC-M must ensure the formal involvement of students in governance, curriculum design and quality assurance.
- R34 With regard to Student Centred Learning (SCL) and that grading should be based solely on the assessment of the learning outcomes IBC-M should consult the SCL toolkit.