

FACULTY OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT, BAR, MONTENEGRO

FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION REPORT

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Team:

Professor Sokratis Katsikas, Chair

Professor Thierry Chevallier

Ms Arus Harutyryan

Dr Raymond Smith, Team Coordinator

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1. Introduction

This report is the result of a follow-up evaluation of the Faculty of Business Management. European University Association's (EUA) Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) originally evaluated the Faculty of Business Management in 2014 with the report submitted to the Faculty in July 2014.

This follow-up evaluation took place in the framework of the project "Higher Education and Research for Innovation and Competitiveness" (HERIC), implemented by the government of Montenegro with the overall objective to strengthen the quality and relevance of higher education and research in Montenegro.

While the institutional evaluations are taking place in the context of the project, each university is assessed by an independent IEP team, using the IEP methodology described below.

1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme and follow-up evaluation process

IEP is an independent membership service of the EUA that offers evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture. IEP is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

In line with the IEP philosophy as a whole, the follow-up process is a supportive one. There is no prescribed procedure, and it is for the institution itself to set the agenda in the light of its experiences since the original evaluation. The institution is expected to submit its own self-evaluation report, which will describe the progress made, possibly indicating barriers to change.

The rationale is that the follow-up evaluation can assist the institution in evaluating the changes that have been made since the original evaluation: What was the impact of the original evaluation? What use has the institution made of the original evaluation report? How far has it been able to address the issues raised in the report? The follow-up evaluation is also an opportunity for the institution to take stock of its strategies for managing change in the context of internal and external constraints and opportunities.

As for the original evaluation, all aspects of the follow-up process are also guided by four key questions, which are based on a "fitness for (and of) purpose" approach:

- What is the institution trying to do?
- How is the institution trying to do it?
- How does the institution know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

1.2 Faculty of Business Management's profile

The Faculty of Business Management (FPM) is a small, private independent faculty located in Bar. It is one of five privately owned faculty level higher education institutions (HEIs) in Montenegro. There are also four universities (one public and three private) that together with the independent faculties represent the list of accredited HEIs in Montenegro. The recently established (2017) private Adriatic University has two faculties in Bar, specialising in business economy and maritime studies respectively, and offers direct competition to FPM in some programmes. At the time of this follow-up visit, the Faculty had 481 students¹ studying on four undergraduate programmes, three of which also offer an additional year of specialist postgraduate studies. The Faculty does not offer research degree programmes. The undergraduate programmes represent 180 ECTS while the specialist year is calibrated at 60 ECTS. This 3+1 model is common to many HEIs in Montenegro but has suffered from a lack of employer recognition and will be phased out following the government's decision to move to the more widely recognised European structure of 3+2².

The team found that the Faculty's general profile had remained largely unchanged since the initial IEP evaluation in 2014 with a further decline in student numbers following the trend of recent years. The Faculty continues to face a very challenging external environment with the impact of government higher education planning being felt most keenly in the transitioning of the core educational model and the highlighting of other central objectives ranging from harmonising education with labour market needs to the internationalisation of higher education.

1.3 The evaluation process

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by a small team chaired by the Vice-Dean and including the Secretary to the Faculty. The Self Evaluation Report (SER) was considered by the Faculty Council before final sign-off by the Dean. The SER indicates that the Dean took an active interest throughout the process; however, the team did not find any evidence of the wider involvement of academic staff or students in the self-evaluation process.

The Faculty's approach to the SER was to concentrate on the specific recommendations established as a result of the IEP visit in 2014. A brief narrative of progress was set alongside each of the original recommendations, although in the case of two recommendations no commentary was provided. Some contextual details

¹ Current enrolled student numbers in the various independent faculties in Montenegro are relatively small ranging from around 150 to 500.

² See the Government's *Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in Montenegro (2106-2020)*, July 2016, Objective 1.1.

relating to the Faculty, including organisation, student and academic staff numbers, student achievement and financing, were placed towards the end of the report.

The self-evaluation report of the Faculty of Business Management was sent to the evaluation team in March 2018. The visit of the evaluation team to the Faculty of Business Management took place from 23 to 25 April.

The evaluation team (hereinafter named the team) consisted of:

- Professor Sokratis Katsikas, Rector, Open University of Cyprus, Cyprus, team chair
- Professor Thierry Chevallier, former Vice-President for Resources, University of Burgundy, France
- Ms Arus Harutyunyan, student, Armenian State University of Economics, Armenia
- Dr Raymond Smith, former Academic Registrar, London Metropolitan University, UK, team coordinator

The team thanks the Dean, Professor Milenko Radoman, for his hospitality during the team's visit and our institutional liaison, Associate Professor Dijana Medenica Mitrovic, for her support in organising the various meetings and the general arrangements while the team visited the Faculty.

2. Governance and institutional decision-making

- 2.1 The Faculty did not provide current statements on mission and vision in the SER. In the Dean's statement on the institutional website he comments that students joining the Faculty's programmes are choosing to build a future "on a secure foundation" enabling them to become "reliable professionals ready to engage in modern business flows not only in the country, but throughout the region"; the ultimate aim is to develop students into "top managers". The team was told by the senior leadership that the Faculty had a deliberate focus on study programmes that offered practical applications and that these supported the labour needs of the local and regional economy. In these terms the team felt that the Faculty had a clear understanding of its mission, albeit one that lacked articulation in a wider strategic context; one of the consequences of this was the Faculty's over-dependence on brand awareness for its position in the country's higher education landscape.
- 2.2 The team found it more difficult to establish a sense of future vision for the Faculty. There is no question that the Faculty has a sound appreciation of the external factors that weigh on the higher education sector in Montenegro; and a relatively positive attitude to change was evident during the meetings that the team held with the small group of representatives of the Faculty. It seems to the team, however, that the fluidity of the external environment has engendered an overly pragmatic approach to the Faculty's longer term ambitions and overall direction. This is perhaps not helped by a lack of wider staff discourse on strategic and academic development; and that might, in part, be seen to result from the delivery model of the Faculty. This model relies heavily on teaching by academic staff drawn from outside the country, mostly Serbia, and their focus, inevitably, is on day-to-day academic delivery with few opportunities for their wider engagement in the opportunities and challenges facing the Faculty in the medium to long term.
- 2.3 The 2014 evaluation report identifies a number of developmental issues relating to governance and institutional decision-making. The establishment of the Adriatic University in 2017, as an umbrella institution for a number of previously independent faculties, presented a potential solution to some of the concerns expressed in the 2014 report that FPM appeared somewhat isolated in the country's higher education landscape and might benefit from greater involvement and interaction with other faculties. However, the team understood that, after some consideration, the Faculty's ownership had decided against pursuing discussions to join the Adriatic University. The team did not explore the specific rationale for this decision. And while the team did recognise some progress on collaboration with institutions in Serbia and Slovenia it did, however, want to *reaffirm the need for the Faculty to develop further its relationships with other higher education providers both within and outside Montenegro*. This should flow, in part, from a recognition that the Faculty's financial

sustainability is currently wholly dependent on tuition fee income and that any further reduction in student numbers would clearly be extremely challenging for the Faculty.

- 2.4 For the team, the rather tentative progress made by the Faculty on mutually beneficial relationships with other higher education providers is perhaps symptomatic of a lack of coherent and systemic strategic thinking and decision-making at the institutional level. The strength of the Faculty appears to lie in day-to-day executive management and, as consequence, many important developments have been identified as “work in progress” and this appears to have been the case for some time. The team is aware that a strategic level document - *Quality Assurance Strategy* - is in progress but it is concerned that the production of this document might be seen as an end in itself and not as part of a more deeply embedded strategic planning process. Such a process should include the establishment of milestones, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and the monitoring of, and reporting on, outcomes. The team understands the difficulties of planning given the degree of fluidity in the external environment but all strategic development has its risks and, in the view of the team, it is important not to allow risk aversion to become a dominant strand in the Faculty’s thinking. There are also other consequences that flow from the absence of a clearly defined strategic development framework; the team noted, for example, a lack of well-developed internal policies and procedures. Some of these issues are noted in the 2014 initial evaluation report and *the team believes that it is now of critical importance that the future direction of the Faculty be presented in a well-developed longer term strategic plan that allows the Faculty to state its aims, goals and objectives in a clear and measurable way.* At the heart of such a Plan should be the Faculty’s sustainability in a changing environment, not least in ways that greater income diversification might be achieved. *The team also recommends that the Faculty finds ways of engaging all its internal and external stakeholders in a meaningful discussion on the key principles underpinning such a Plan.* For example, the team understands that there is a degree of informal consultation with external stakeholders in the development process for the Faculty and *this might become more productive if the Faculty’s management establishes a specific business/industry forum that could meet on a regular basis and share common interests and views.*
- 2.5 Given its size and private ownership, the team believes that an appropriate governance structure is now in place for the Faculty. The remits of the Managing Board, the Executive and the Faculty Council are reasonably defined although there is an inevitable cross over of responsibilities in the role of the Dean as both part-owner and head of the executive. Meetings are said to take place on a regular basis. The team is also pleased to note that the recommendations of the previous round relating to the size of the Faculty Council, the establishment of a Student Parliament and increased student participation in decision-making bodies have either been actioned or are firmly under way. However, there continues to be a weakness in the

way that governance opportunities are communicated to students. The first year students that the team met showed little understanding of the ways in which the student voice could be highlighted through formal governance mechanisms and this also related to academic governance structures at the level of study programmes. *The team recommends, therefore, that the Faculty make a further effort to support student understanding of, and engagement with, the various decision-making forums of the Faculty.*

3. Quality culture

- 3.1 It is noted earlier in this report (para 2.2) that the Faculty's reliance on externally-based academic staff presents challenges in terms of capturing their voice in strategic planning and development. The same could be said to apply in relation to quality culture. The 2014 evaluation report notes that "a common feeling of ownership for a quality culture at FPM by its members (staff and students) is not visible". In purely practical terms, because all discussions with Faculty staff were limited to the same group of five representatives, the team was unable to explore whether the wider staff body is committed to the core underpinning principles of quality assurance and quality enhancement. Certainly, the normal indicators of such activity continue to be absent - policies and procedures, explicit and well embedded feedback and monitoring mechanisms, discussion forums for sharing best practice, stated enhancement themes such as technology enabled learning and innovation in pedagogy. The team gained the impression that these are not at the forefront of the Faculty's concerns and that there are no obvious plans under consideration to challenge this state of affairs. This lack of engagement with quality themes is reinforced to the team by the fact that the specific recommendation from 2014 in the area of quality culture has not been commented upon, or responded to, in the SER.
- 3.2 The team notes, of course, that, in the past, at the level of programme accreditation/re-accreditation, the Faculty has been successful in meeting the requirements of the national agency. In that respect, quality approaches must have operated at those times to achieve the benchmark standard for delivery of basic and specialist education. However, the specific nature of these mechanisms is not fully transparent and this surprised the team given that a further round of re-accreditation might be taking place in 2018³. The team did hear that the *Quality Assurance Strategy* document that was currently in progress would provide some basis for any re-accreditation process. However, the team believes that this reflects a rather too reactive approach to quality matters and that *it would be sensible to establish core quality policies and procedures - based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) - within a Faculty quality manual. This could be adapted and amended as appropriate to the immediate national needs and requirements and, at the same time, form one of the practical building blocks for a shared quality culture.*
- 3.3 Necessarily, quality culture also revolves around other internal and external stakeholders, particularly students and those representing local society. In many ways, the team feels that the Faculty is missing opportunities to embed such contributions into its ways of working. And while the team accepts that some students are often

³ The Faculty was at pains to point out that it had been struggling to establish with the Ministry of Education whether this re-accreditation process would take place given the impending move to the 3+2 model of education.

reticent in presenting their views on the quality of their educational experience, and that they sometimes worry about the anonymity of surveys, the team believes that it is essential for the Faculty to establish and maintain formal student feedback mechanisms as part of its quality arrangements. The team was told that students did have the option to speak informally to academic staff and some students confirmed that they did so; but, even in a smaller institution, this should not be regarded as a sufficient basis for feedback. The team was also informed that some academic staff had stated that previous formal student feedback arrangements had led to inappropriate challenges to their subject expertise. Notwithstanding such issues, *the team recommends that the Faculty urgently consider the re-introduction of formal student feedback mechanisms, for example student questionnaires, for all years of study and preferably on a semester basis.* There are many examples of well-designed questionnaires available in the sector and the Faculty may wish to utilise expertise in student feedback that exists in organisations such as the European Students Union (ESU) and in other HEIs both inside Montenegro and in the wider European space. This should help to provide a degree of clarity to both staff and students on the ways in which such mechanisms can support the enhancement of the learning experience.

- 3.4 *The team hopes that such an initiative on student engagement with quality culture can also be extended in a systematic way to external stakeholders.* In the view of the team there are many benefits from bringing local organisations and businesses into the discourse on quality culture. The local and regional stakeholders will, after all, be some of the beneficiaries of the graduate pool of talent emerging from the Faculty. This can start with external stakeholder involvement in broader questions of future direction (see para 2.4 above) but more immediately it should be regarded as an important source of experience and applied expertise in maintaining the currency of academic programmes, especially through meaningful participation in programme development. This can be a “win-win” situation for both the Faculty and the local/regional economy and the suggested business/industry forum (see para 2.4 above) would be one way of facilitating this feedback.

4. Teaching and learning

- 4.1 Since the 2014 evaluation the most significant change in relation to teaching and learning has arisen in the external environment as a result of the Government's decision to transition the national awards framework to the 3+2+3 model of delivery found in most parts of Europe. As is noted earlier in this report this presents a range of opportunities and challenges to the Faculty in the short to medium term. As the change is implemented it should help secure greater recognition of qualifications by employers in Montenegro and beyond; and it should also help promote student and staff mobility and the transfer of academic credit. For the moment, the team recognises that the Faculty feels somewhat "betwixt and between" in terms of the immediate implications of this change. Notionally, it needs to prepare for the re-accreditation of its existing 3+1 programmes in 2018 and it has sought Ministry clarification as to whether this is to go ahead. The team understands from the Faculty that it has been told informally by the Ministry that the re-accreditation process will not take place and that existing programmes will continue with approval until the introduction of the new 3+2 provision in 2020/21. Naturally, the Faculty is keen to have this confirmed in writing by the Ministry. There is also a considerable challenge for the Faculty, and indeed the wider sector, in the national requirement that 25% of each programme should involve work experience or appropriately developed experiential learning.
- 4.2 In some ways this national strategy for re-modelling the core educational model in Montenegro has also impacted on the precise relevance of some of the recommendations for teaching and learning made in the 2014 report. However, the broad thrust of those 2014 reflections - relating as they do to the composition of faculty staff, the extent of work experience in programmes, ECTS and the general learning environment - remain pertinent.
- 4.3 In the SER the Faculty seeks to highlight a number of external legal constraints on the employment and promotion of academic staff in independent faculties in Montenegro. The team understands that core rights to employ and promote staff, together with the establishment of academic titles, rests with the country's universities. Given that the Faculty has chosen not to pursue a constituent relationship with the Adriatic University, this limits the Faculty's employment practice to a considerable degree. The Faculty, therefore, continues to seek the services of established professors from the former Yugoslavia and the team notes that some well recognised professors do form part of the academic staff establishment. This does, however, reinforce a concern from the 2014 evaluation that academic staff are mostly peripatetic part-timers and that there are too few full-time resident professors. The team has some sympathy with the dilemma facing the Faculty in this regard and has no doubt that the senior leadership are aware of some of the negative consequences of this position. No doubt the country's independent faculties will

continue to engage in a conversation with national authorities to see whether this situation can be modified in any way. *In the meantime the team encourages the Faculty to try and establish more full-time resident professors as this can (a) support the sharing of good teaching practice and the development of new approaches to pedagogy (b) help provide an improved teaching and learning experience for students,* some of who commented to the team that lack of regular contact with their professors is an issue of concern to them. On a more direct financial level, an increase in full-time resident staff could reduce overheads in terms of travel and accommodation expenses.

- 4.4 The team found that, in general, the learning environment is supported by positive relations between teaching/administrative staff and students. However, as is noted in the paragraph immediately above, students would prefer their professors to be resident to allow them greater support in terms of follow-up after lectures and tutorials and to change the dynamic of academic communication from email to conversation and personal interaction. In the view of the team, this type of personal interaction is important in supporting the development of a broader academic culture and identity in the Faculty, not least as a significant proportion of students were said to miss some classes as they were working. It was also the case that the physical space available to the Faculty for teaching and staff offices is limited. The library, for example, is regularly used as an additional teaching room. There is, therefore, no social space for students which, in normal circumstances, would also help generate the sense of an academic community. The students that the team met seemed unsure as to how best air their views and achieve change in relation to these matters. They said that, on the whole, the Faculty library did not meet their needs and that, as a consequence, they went to other libraries and sources to obtain the books that they required. The team also noted one teaching room that was equipped with older style PCs but comments to the team from the new students indicated that they were largely unaware of this resource and, indeed, did not know if they could use the computers. For the team these details resonate closely with the conclusions of the 2014 report which recommends that the Faculty should promote study conditions for its students. It is difficult to see any real progress in this respect although the team noted that in the SER the Faculty explains the lack of action in this respect as stemming from an absence of interest amongst students. *The team recommends that the Faculty looks again at how it might provide an improved learning environment for its students, including some dedicated social space, and that it works closely with the student body to arrive at a shared view of how this might be best achieved.* The coherence of the student learning experience can also be improved by a further consolidation in the availability of the teaching timetable, currently provided to students two weeks in advance - a slight improvement since the last evaluation - but ideally set for the full semester which would allow for greater predictability and the more even distribution of classes.

- 4.5 As a response to the 2014 evaluation, the SER includes a section that sets out the Faculty's approach to the calculation of ECTS and, in particular, the relationship with learning outcomes. The team understands that this has been developed with the support of external expertise; however, it is also the case that the Faculty will need to take a fresh look at ECTS with the move to the 3+2 model. The team agrees that this is a sensible course to take, not least as the present construction, as it appears in the SER, is not sufficiently clear and requires re-thinking to make it more easily intelligible to various stakeholders, particularly students. In discussion with students, the team found that they had only a very limited appreciation and understanding of ECTS although the syllabus given to them on enrolment includes ECTS values.
- 4.6 The limited internal understanding of the Bologna Process is perhaps understandable given the size and profile of the Faculty. But in line with the emphasis that is now being placed on the European model at a national level the *team feels that it is important for the Faculty to enhance the degree of understanding of that model amongst key staff so that the adoption of the Bologna principles can be led from within the organisation rather than simply received as part of external consultancy.* The Faculty acknowledges that it is finding it difficult to take forward the implementation of the Bologna process and points to the lack of guidance from the Ministry. However, the team does not think that this lack of government support should be regarded as an insurmountable barrier to progress. Internal staff development is an obvious path to follow in filling this knowledge gap and this process can draw on the wealth of expertise that is available in other HEIs and higher education organisations. From the team's perspective, it is crucial that the Faculty takes ownership of these developments. Equally, it is critical that the Bologna focus in the Faculty is a broad one and not one that is constrained by a formulaic approach to ECTS. *In particular, the team believes that the concept of student-centred learning requires significant development, particularly in relation to the articulation of learning outcomes.* This is obviously fundamental to programme design and should be at the forefront of the Faculty's deliberations as they transition programmes to the 3+2 structure; but it is also important because the Faculty's students need to better understand their own critical role in their learning experience and how the achievement of learning outcomes should be one of the key measures of their success on their courses and overall programme.
- 4.7 The need to redesign programmes because of the move to 3+2 also offers the Faculty the chance of exploiting ICT as a way of enhancing student learning. The team was told that the Faculty did not have an e-learning platform as the cost of such a license would, in all likelihood, be prohibitive for a small institution such as FPM. However, there might be an opportunity to explore such an option in co-operation with the other independent faculties or even by engagement with the universities to see if that might offer a way forward. In the meantime the team heard from students that there is a lack of consistency amongst professors in making learning materials

available online. At the very least, this is an issue that the Faculty can tackle in a drive towards the greater and more consistent use of technology to support student learning.

- 4.8 The team acknowledges that the Faculty is aware of the limitations of the practical/work experience that is currently available in their programmes; internships exist although of limited duration (two to three weeks) and are lacking in supervision. The 2014 report recommends that the Faculty “extends practical parts of the curricula in Bachelor programmes and establishes longer internships (lasting at least three months)”. The Faculty’s response in the SER is that this is simply not feasible if internships are to have any value at the level of undergraduate education. Companies were said to be largely uninterested in working with HEIs on internships, not least as there is already pressure on them to maintain their existing staffing establishments; and internships can be seen as a source of unpaid substitute labour. In the meantime, the government’s decision that programmes should include work experience or practical elements amounting to 25% of the curriculum (either by course/subject or by year) is presenting institutions with a new reality if their programmes are to achieve accreditation in the future. The senior leadership of the Faculty does not hide its frustration that this requirement is being imposed by the national authorities without, in its view, either appropriate consultation with the sector or a realistic assessment of the weaknesses of the country’s current employment market or its future prospects. The team is sympathetic to the significant challenges that the Faculty will face in developing these practical elements of the curriculum but, nonetheless, it does want to stress the importance of approaching the required changes with an open mind, particularly in relation to the opportunities provided by experiential learning as a way of meeting the national requirements. Equally, the response to this challenge requires clear analysis and planning. It might be that there is some external expertise that the Faculty can draw upon to facilitate this process. Certainly, there is a real need to reinforce and expand links with local businesses and organisations. The Faculty should also take advantage of the fact that many of its students are part-time in employment and use that situation as a platform towards innovative forms of work-based learning.
- 4.9 For students, both existing and prospective, factors such as employability will always be at the forefront of their minds. It is important, therefore, that they understand, from the commencement of their programmes, the key features of their learning experience, whether it be course content, learning outcomes, practical experience, learning resources or more general academic progression matters such as feedback mechanisms, opportunities to repeat assessments/exams and ways to appeal results. The team is not convinced that academic induction, either at the institutional or programme level, is as comprehensive as it needs to be. *The team therefore recommends that the Faculty review its approach to academic induction to ensure that students are better prepared for the commencement of, and progress on, their*

studies and have clear signposts as to how they can pursue any questions that might arise during their studies.

5. Research

- 5.1 In the SER the Faculty does not respond to the specific recommendation from the 2014 evaluation that it “develops an effective research policy”. It does, however, provide details of a number of projects that are said to form the basis of the Faculty’s research activity over the next 3-5 year period. The projects cover what appear to be largely areas of individual interest amongst academic staff. It is acknowledged by the Faculty that research is undertaken by individual professors and, as a consequence, it is not always attributed to the Faculty. Nonetheless, the team is encouraged to see that research activity is now being considered in a wider time frame and that it looks to embrace specific project proposals.
- 5.2 It is not clear to the team, however, how far the Faculty is contemplating broader research themes, aims and ambitions on a systematic, institutional basis. In the view of the team such reflection is needed to help articulate a broader research strategy for the Faculty. This is especially pertinent given that FPM’s application for a government research activity license is under way and it is hoped that this might be awarded in 2019. To receive this license the Faculty needs to provide the Ministry of Science with information on infrastructure, staffing and the programme of research activity that it intends to pursue. An accreditation visit takes place to help determine the formal outcome of the application. This license is critical to moving the research environment at the Faculty beyond its current *ad hoc* state based on individual activity. And, most importantly, it would allow applications for research grants, co-operation with other HEIs on projects and, indeed, the development and delivery of doctoral programmes. *The team recommends that the Faculty uses the process of applying for a research license as an opportunity to engage with its academic staff and other stakeholders to formulate a research strategy that is appropriate for a largely teaching institution. Accordingly, it should establish, inter alia, clear priorities for research that can be monitored by way of outputs, ways in which research activity can be supported through, for example, financial or other incentives, plans, if any, for doctoral research, the connection between research and education, and the potential for applied research relating to the local economy.*
- 5.3 The team is conscious that any research initiatives will need to be set against the impending demands of accrediting bachelor and masters programmes as part of the new national qualifications framework. Clearly, there is a balance to be struck in managing the workload of taking forward demands in both education and research. There is, however, a degree of overlap that should be beneficial to this process as the introduction of masters programmes will require the development of courses on research methodology and consideration of student research projects and their supervision. As is indicated elsewhere in this report, the team regards strong and clear leadership within the Faculty as a *sine qua non* for successful outcomes in the development of its research capacity.

6. Service to society

- 6.1 During the evaluation visit, the team met with a very small group of external stakeholders including the mayor. The business stakeholders stated that their collaboration with the Faculty relates largely to supporting students in their 2-3 week internships during the summer. Some students are also employed on a full-time basis following graduation. On the whole these employers were content with graduates' competences, although they pointed to the gap between their theoretical knowledge and their capacity to translate that into the work place environment. The team also heard that the commitment of the local authorities to the Faculty had been consistent since its establishment in 2005.
- 6.2 It appears to the team, however, that the nature of these relationships has been allowed to remain relatively static in the period since the initial evaluation. They are sustained on a largely informal basis and there has been little or no progress in extending the collaborations by way of consultancy or applied research. No doubt, in part, this is due to a lack of Faculty infrastructure to consolidate or take forward this activity. There are, for example, no specialist staff dedicated to exploring internship opportunities for students. As competition for external partnerships grows amongst HEIs, not least because of the national 25% practical experience requirement for new programmes, the team does not believe that an informal networking approach to stakeholder engagement is sustainable. *It recommends, therefore, that the Faculty take a more structured and institutionalised approach to developing and enhancing relations with external stakeholders.* This should feature in the strategic planning process for the Faculty.
- 6.3 The SER argues that the most significant social contribution made by the Faculty is in the area of the employment of its graduates. These graduates fill a wide range of positions in public and private institutions including in the fields of "naval commerce; local self-management; banking insurance; the Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Security Agency; and [the] Police Directorate". Other areas of employment relate to customs and tax administration and airport management. There is, however, some concern in the Faculty that there are insufficient graduate level jobs in the market and this is reinforced by the fact that graduate unemployment in Montenegro is currently showing at around 11%. In these circumstances, *the team thinks that it is important to generate robust data on graduate destinations so that the Faculty can analyse the progress of its graduates and use this information as a way of enhancing its provision and promoting the reputation of the Faculty.* This can then form part of a wider approach to developing a strong alumni network and can be pursued separately from the government's graduate tracer initiative.

7. Internationalisation

- 7.1 The recommendation relating to internationalisation presented in the 2014 evaluation report stresses the need for the Faculty to look beyond Serbia for its international policy direction. This includes student mobility, research collaboration and a greater emphasis on language development with, for example, courses delivered in English and text books in English to support such activity. There is no doubt that this exhortation to a wider international focus has been very challenging for the Faculty. Inevitably, there has continued to be a day-to-day engagement with Serbia given the backgrounds of the majority of academic staff teaching at the Faculty. They provide connections to institutions and collaborations in Serbia and clearly it would not make sense for the Faculty to ignore these opportunities; and collaborations with HEIs in Belgrade and Novi Sad are at the forefront of current activity. The Faculty is also exploring connections with some of the countries of the former Yugoslavia, especially Slovenia and it is hoped that this might provide the basis for additional staff and student mobility agreements.
- 7.2 Although there is some limited student mobility - both outgoing and incoming - students that the team met appeared, on the whole, unaware of international mobility opportunities, including those initiated at the state level. However, in the SER the Faculty states that there is “significant indifference of students for mobility”. In the view of the team there is an opportunity to break through this cycle of ignorance and apathy. The Faculty, therefore, has a two-fold task. First, *it should improve the degree of understanding and awareness of the range of mobility opportunities amongst its student body*. This can include providing more information at induction but also the facilitation of greater contact between ‘home’ students and incoming mobility students as a way of generating enthusiasm and the sharing of experience. In addition, there exists considerable potential for developing the Faculty website so that it is more user friendly to international students. This should be seen as an important adjunct to the intention stated in the SER to produce a marketing leaflet in English. Secondly, *the Faculty should seek to enhance the scope and extent of English language courses at the Faculty*. While English is taught in all years of study, students stated that the current arrangements were not as effective as they might be as they involved classes with students at all levels of competence; separate classes based on level of ability would be more beneficial to them. In terms of study time spent abroad the team was advised that this is processed through an external agency and that, more generally, the Diploma Supplement is issued in English.
- 7.3 The internationalisation of higher education in Montenegro is now being promoted vigorously by the government as part of its *Strategy for the Development of Higher Education, 2016-2020*. If it is not to be left behind in this wider higher education landscape the team believes that *it is important for the Faculty to build on the anticipated award of a research activity license from the Ministry of Science to*

institutionalise and strategically plan its international policy. This should then, as highlighted in the 2014 evaluation report, look to take advantage of collaboration and partnerships outside the immediate Balkan region.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 The team notes that there has been some progress in developing the Faculty since the initial evaluation in 2014. This provides some indication of the ability of the Faculty to implement change; however, the speed and extent of this change remains limited. It is the view of the team that the upcoming changes in the higher education landscape in Montenegro, especially the move to a 3+2 educational model and the 25% practice requirement in programmes, constitute a significant challenge to the Faculty. The Faculty is aware of the size of this challenge but it appears not to be fully prepared for meeting it. The key elements of such preparation need to involve the development of strategic planning, complementing strategy with implementation and, more specifically, fully engaging relevant internal and external expertise in programme design and development, especially at masters' level to see through the transition to the requirements of 3+2 and greater work based learning.
- 8.2 If the Faculty is able to respond to these challenges it should be able to ensure its financial sustainability and develop its reputation both inside Montenegro and the wider Balkan region.

Summary of the team's recommendations to the Faculty

- 1 It reaffirms the need for the Faculty to develop further its relationships with other higher education providers both within and outside Montenegro.
- 2 It believes that it is now of critical importance that the future direction of the Faculty be presented in a well-developed longer term strategic plan that allows the Faculty to state its aims, goals and objectives in a clear and measurable way.
- 3 It recommends that the Faculty find ways of engaging all its internal and external stakeholders in a meaningful discussion on the key principles underpinning its Strategic Plan. Informal consultation with external stakeholders in the development process could become more productive if the Faculty established a specific business/industry forum that could meet on a regular basis and share common interests and views.
4. It recommends that the Faculty make a further effort to support student understanding of, and engagement with, the various decision-making forums of the Faculty.
5. It would be sensible to establish core quality policies and procedures - based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) - within a Faculty quality manual. This could be adapted and amended as appropriate to the immediate national needs and requirements and, at the same time, form one of the practical building blocks for a shared quality culture.

6. It recommends that the Faculty urgently consider the re-introduction of formal student feedback mechanisms, for example student questionnaires, for all years of study and preferably on a semester basis.
7. It recommends that engagement with quality culture is extended in a systematic way to external stakeholders.
8. It encourages the Faculty to try and establish more full-time resident professors to help support the sharing of good teaching practice, the development of new approaches to pedagogy and an improved teaching and learning experience for students.
9. It recommends that the Faculty look again at how it might provide an improved learning environment for its students, including dedicated social space, and that it works closely with the student body to arrive at a shared view of how this might be best achieved.
10. It is desirable to see a further consolidation in the teaching timetable, currently provided to students two weeks in advance, but ideally set for the semester allowing greater predictability and even distribution.
11. It is important to enhance the degree of understanding of the European model amongst key Faculty staff so that the adoption of the Bologna principles could be led from within the organisation rather than simply received as part of external consultancy.
12. It believes that the concept of student-centred learning requires significant development, particularly in relation to the articulation of learning outcomes.
13. It recommends that the Faculty review its approach to academic induction to ensure that students are better prepared for the commencement of, and progress on, their studies and have clear signposts as to how they can pursue any questions that might arise during their studies.
14. It recommends that the Faculty use the impending award of a research license as an opportunity to engage with its academic staff and other stakeholders to formulate a research strategy that is appropriate for a largely teaching institution. Accordingly, it should establish, *inter alia*, clear priorities for research that can be monitored by way of outputs, how research activity can be supported through, for example, financial or other incentives, plans, if any, for doctoral research, the connection between research and education, and the potential for applied research relating to the local economy.
15. It recommends that the Faculty take a more structured and institutionalised approach to developing and enhancing relations with external stakeholders.

16. It is important to generate robust data on graduate destinations so that the Faculty can analyse the progress of its graduates and use this information as a way of enhancing its provision and promoting the reputation of the Faculty. This can form part of a wider approach to developing a strong alumni network and can be pursued separately from the government's graduate tracer initiative.
17. It should improve the degree of understanding and awareness of the range of mobility opportunities amongst its student body.
18. It should look to enhance the scope and extent of English language courses at the Faculty.
19. It is important for the Faculty to build on the anticipated award of a research activity license from the Ministry of Science to institutionalise and strategically plan its international policy. This should then, as highlighted in the 2014 evaluation report, look to take advantage of collaboration and partnerships outside the immediate Balkan region.