

**INTER-UNIVERSITY CONFERENCE OF  
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

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**QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION:  
FROM ANALYSES TO IMPROVEMENT**

*Guidelines for Macedonia with a View to  
Current Practices in Europe*



**Skopje, May 2004**

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## INTRODUCTION

It has often been observed, sometimes approvingly, sometimes critically, that in the course of the past ten to fifteen years the introduction, expansion and elaboration of procedures of quality assurance (QA) and control has been one of the defining characteristics in the development of higher education systems throughout Europe and beyond. The situation in Macedonia follows this general trend. With the introduction of the 2000 Law on Higher Education QA in Macedonia is organized in such a way that it constitutes a quality cycle consisting of the following distinct elements or stages:

- self-evaluation performed by the individual higher education institutions (HEIs);
- external evaluation conducted by the Evaluation Agency of the Republic of Macedonia;
- submission of the evaluation report(s) to the Accreditation Board of the Republic of Macedonia (as well as to the Ministry of Education and Science and other relevant government authorities);
- measures being taken for the improvement of the educational and research capacity of the HEIs. This cycle is followed through every five years.

For the readers of this publication, the rationale behind the proliferation of QA and quality monitoring processes as a means of regulating, directing and adjusting the progress of higher education institutions and systems are know all too well: The key words are Bologna, internationalization, increased participation and expansion in student numbers, new expectations in terms of “employability” of graduates, transparency vis-à-vis a broad variety of stakeholders (the list is not complete). However, the single most important, and consequential, *raison d’être* for QA lies in a simple equation: QA promises to set the balance straight between the demand for *more autonomy* (on the part of the universities) and the corresponding requirement for *more accountability* (on the part of the stakeholders which, in the case of European institutions is chiefly defined by the State as the

provider and sustainer of higher education). Whatever complex and erudite reasoning for QA might be given by groups and interested parties, from the perspective of the universities it all comes down to the ultimate policy goal of strengthening the practical level of autonomy of the HEIs. As universities try to obtain more autonomy, they have agreed more or less reluctantly to implement procedures of accountability and external quality assurance. However, we have to be aware of the fact that in many systems what counts as quality is not solely defined by academic institutions, but also by the norms and expectations of other external players (extended peer-groups). Thus it is important to understand quality assessment as a crucial point in the articulation of the relation between the State, different economic players and the university system.”

In which respect is this relevant to the Macedonian higher education system in its efforts to tackle the multiform challenges that it is facing? Like in many other countries in Southeast Europe, autonomy of the universities is an issue in Macedonia mainly because of the need to redefine the relations between the state authorities (in this case the Ministry of Education and Science) and the HEIs. It is the question of how to overcome a narrowly-defined and obsolete ‘state authority’ over higher education in favor of more modern governance models de-emphasizing the role of state control and supervision and placing more responsibilities in the hand of the universities in exchange for increased accountability. In Macedonia, like in the European context as a whole, the traditional notion of university autonomy will be considerably altered and higher education institutions will be left more to their own devices to develop their profiles as intellectually vibrant, socially responsive and economically viable establishments - a trend that involves both new opportunities and new risks for the individual university.

Within a relatively short period of time, QA has become a focal concern within Macedonian higher education and the ‘mechanics’ for quality monitoring processes are well in place which is commendable and very encouraging. But at least from an outsider’s perspective there still seems to be a missing link that connects QA to the larger questions of institutional strategy

and policy-making. This link, however, is of critical importance if QA is to be used, and appreciated, as a means to an end, and as a true 'cycle of innovation' and institutional progress. Put in other words: Without this link, QA can easily be misunderstood as an instrument of control and sanctions. The link is not a matter of just verbal support for QA by the top university leadership or the ministry; it must consist of an array of concrete projects that are conceived and shaped on the basis of the self-evaluations and assessments of the HEIs and that address an institution-wide strategy and policy of innovation and reform.

The reader will notice that there is a certain overlap in the different chapters of this publication which is not by accident. The authors deliberately chose to present the results of their joint work in a synergetic, complementary, and sometimes contrasting fashion which produces a multi-layered picture and results in different images, and sometimes mirror images. This by itself is reflecting the diversity of QA and Evaluation approaches practiced in Europe today – the slogan of “European standards” is referring to a chimera, and a uniformity of quality assurance and improvement that fortunately does not exist. Up to a point, it is not that important to follow one (*the*) model; what really counts is that quality is a concern, and how it is an issue of continuous improvement.

Therefore this publication focuses on the improvement aimed at, emerging from and resulting of, formal quality procedures. In the view of all authors, quality control processes by themselves are indeed futile and a waste of energy and resources, if they don't serve as a motivation of the entire academic community and all stakeholders towards change for the better.

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This publication combines the internal views of experts who helped established the QA system in Macedonian Higher Education, and external perspectives from interested colleagues. It was conceived within, and in fact concludes the work of a two-year project with the University of Skopje generously financed by the Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Chapter 1 thus puts relevant experiences from the first QA cycle in Macedonian HE in relation to theoretical approaches, and attempts to outline some of lessons learned;

Chapter 2 thus presents suggestions (“Guidelines for Institutions”) describing how evaluation visits and processes can already pave the way to a long-term view on improvement;

Chapter 3 (“Guidelines for Peer Reviewers”) proposes a catalyst function for visiting experts, which engage in a joint developmental process of mutual learning;

Chapter 4 presents the findings from visits to Macedonian faculties to a larger public, by moving from individual findings to a horizontal view on issues of relevance in Macedonia; and

Chapter 5 draws some conclusions and offers some preliminary observations how the developments in Macedonia fit into the overall picture of QA provisions in European higher education.

A special emphasis should be given here to the annexes: they consist of several short documents that are intended to provide some practical advise on the overall theme of this booklet: From Analyses to Improvement - not in the sense of a prescribed method, but as a stimulus to broaden the approach to QA:

- a scheme is suggested for “taking stock” of all experience and expertise already existing at Macedonian universities, but not always used to unleash synergetic effects;
- a “checklist” for furthering quality practice at any level of Higher Education is provided;
- contents of the reports on the performed external evaluation
- there are some suggestions how to cope with the burgeoning literature on QA by establishing a regular review service of carefully selected “references” (publications, reports, web-based reading resources etc) including an examples how a commented bibliography might look like;

The annexes are meant to provide input to a ‘hands-on’ approach to QA and it is the hope of the authors of the present booklet that it will be this approach that characterizes the further advancement of higher education in Macedonia.

## **1. FROM QUALITY ANALYSIS TO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT**

### **1.1 Brief Overview of the Results of the Workshop “From Words to Action” (Bucharest, 2003)**

The globalization of higher education in Europe has provoked great interest, especially on the part of the countries from Southeast Europe, which, due to the changes in the social and political systems, undergo a period of transition. They are experiencing radical alterations in all areas of activity, as well as in education.

In the process of realization of the reform in higher education in Southeast Europe, workshops present important contribution regarding issues linked with the changes that will result in closer cooperation with the rest of the European family of universities.

In that manner, the following themes were looked into at the mutual conference on “Governance and Management in Higher Education in Southeast Europe”, that was held in Bucharest, in June 2003 (the title of the workshop was “From Words to Action”):

- creation of strategy for higher education development;
- institutionalized strategic plan and management;
- financial management and institutional relations with the civic society and the local economy;
- development of quality and study programs.

The common workshop was sustained by documents produced by the ministries responsible for higher education and pilot-universities in the countries-beneficiaries.

Thorough analysis of the current affairs in the systems and institutions of higher education was provided, making use of the experience, knowledge and methodologies that were shared during the seminars for training and study visits, organized in the framework of the project.

Regarding the **structure and functioning of the governance and management of higher education**, it was decided that the differences between the regulations in the countries-signatories of the Bologna Declaration and the countries from Southeast Europe should be decreased. The recommendations were divided in two groups: general and specific issues.

#### *General issues*

Under the Law on Higher Education, the former relations between the governments and the higher educational institutions will be modified; thus, the university autonomy and accountability, as well as the development of the democratic processes at the universities, will be enabled.

The Law on Higher Education needs to be based on strategic suggestions; thus, this procedure will lead towards formulation of alternatives, having in mind the short term and long term goals, as well as participation of all the members in higher education, academic staff, students and others, at the relevant debates.

*The state financing* is insufficient with view of normal functioning of the systems and institutions.

The *current organization* represents a weak federation of autonomous faculties that are legal bodies. Transformation of the universities into *integrated structures* is recommended. We need new administrative philosophy and more effective participation of the students, academic staff and other stakeholders in the governing bodies. A sovereign and accountable system should be set up, as well as financial autonomy of the higher educational function, followed by effective system for quality management, strategic planning and financial management.

Several issues were underlined:

- The institutional strategic planning intends to protect the academic and cultural identity of the university;
- An emphasis should be put on quality management, on national and university level, since it is connected to the implementation of financial and strategic management. The

lack of critical mass with reference to the possible participants in the state evaluation systems, should be resolved with production of network on interregional basis, and beyond, which would have the task of mutual evaluators' training, creation of regional core of evaluators, exchange of experience as well as benchmarking through a good example.

- On state level, every agency for quality assurance or accreditation is to be legally organized. The responsibility lies in the ministries, universities and other stakeholders, in order to provide financial means and infrastructure for efficient and effective activities, as well as appropriate leadership and academic staff.
- On institutional level, the roles and responsibilities of the quality management's personnel need to be defined. There need to be identification of the action activities; development of monitoring processes; improvement of the teaching process and emphasis of the results of the monitoring processes; definition of effective and transparent criteria and processes for academic staff selection and their improvement.
- Special attention should be given to research at the universities, through significant increase of the finances provided by the government as well as other stakeholders (commerce and private companies).

Regarding the sustainability of this process, it was concluded that the commencement of the new initiatives should be supported by augmentation of the national and international cooperation in the region, by means of adopting the goals of the Bologna process and development of appropriate network activities.

## **1.2. Quality Assurance**

The term "quality" has relative as well as relational meaning. Namely, that which can be designated as quality is always connected with certain conditions, and there is always room for improvement.

The quality has three dimensions: cultural, professional and research. There can be no upgrading of research level if the professional and cultural dimension have not been secured.

**Quality culture** is the basis for quality assurance system in higher educational institutions, thus, it should always be nourished.

The best way for developing a quality culture is through knowledge and its distribution. As a consequence of knowledge, the opinion of the individuals changes, thus provoking subsequent change in their attitude. When the number of the participants in quality assurance with changed attitude is sufficient, then, the attitude of the higher educational institution towards quality changes. This is the map for creation of quality culture, Fig. 1.

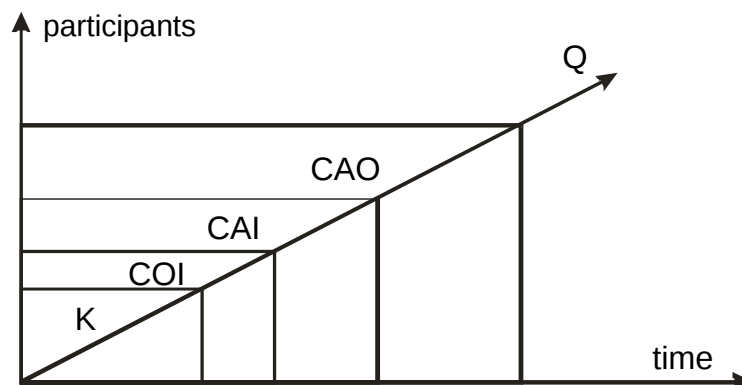


Fig. 1 The map of quality

(K-knowledge, COI-change of the opinion of the individual; CAI-change of the attitude of the individual; CAO-change of the attitude of the organization)

In order to secure the quality in the higher educational institutions, it is compulsory to **“turn the cycle of quality: plan-realize, evaluate-take actions”**.

The quality on a state level is planned by:

- Strategy for development of higher education
- Book of norms and standards for establishing a higher education institution and conducting educational activities
- Guidelines for quality assurance and assessment of higher

education institutions and academic staff in the Republic of Macedonia

The quality on the university level is planned by:

- Strategy for the development of the university
- Book of rules on unified criteria exclusive and procedure for the selection of teaching-research, teaching, teaching-professional and assistant staff members
- Book of rules on unified principals for ECTS, transfer from one to other study programs and transfer from one to other faculties into the university.
- Book of rules on conditions and criteria for enrolment on undergraduate studies
- Book of rules on uniform principals for organizing postgraduate and doctoral studies
- Guidelines for uniform principals of evaluation and evaluation procedures of universities

The quality on the faculty level is planned by:

- Strategic plans for development of the faculty
- Guidelines for evaluation and evaluation procedure at the level of faculty/higher educational institution/research institute

The quality is assured at the level of faculty and university.

The quality is assessed-evaluated and accredited on state level through the Agency for Evaluation of the Higher Education and the Accreditation Board, while previously, process of self-evaluation is realized at faculty and university level, through commissions for self-evaluation.

The evaluation (self-evaluation and external evaluation) procedure is described in the Law on Higher Education, adopted in 2000, as well as in the Guidelines for evaluation on the level of the Agency and at the level of university/faculty/higher educational institution/research institute, accredited for education.

The reports from the external evaluation are submitted by the Agency for Evaluation to the President of the State, the Premier

of the Government, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Rector of the University and the Dean of the Faculty.

On the basis of these reports, activities for assurance or improvement of the quality are undertaken, on the appropriate level of responsibility of the stakeholders in higher education.

**The systematic collection of data** is of crucial importance for quality assurance. Organized data are needed in order to provide fitting and impartial opinion for the current status of the higher education. The guidelines explain the means and procedures for the collection of the data, as well as provide useful information and entire methodologies regarding the implementation of the empirical data. This is done by means of checklist for the institutions and survey for the students.

This information is compiled in large number of documents in every higher educational institution, as study programs with syllabuses and subject contents, a list of teaching staff and assistants, a list of realized research projects and on-going projects, information of a large number of students regarding their opinion for the teaching process and the attitude of the professors, etc.

However, regardless of the stocktaking of these documents, the **qualitative marks**, given to the institution, are important, assessing the framework of the university as a whole, as well its connection to the “outside world”.

**The mechanisms for quality assurance**, in terms of evaluation and self-evaluation guidelines, as well booklets on quality assurance, are well-designed and clearly state *what is to be done, who should do it*, as well as *who assess the reports of the findings about the quality*.

Still, there is a part that is missing, a ring in the chain, with reference to the strategy and policy of the institution regarding the plans for quality assurance and improvement. This piece is designated as **an action plan**, which is to be proposed by the commission for evaluation at the faculty/university after receiving the report for external evaluation from the Agency for Evaluation.

These plans have to contain various concrete projects, designed and shaped on the basis of the self-evaluations and the received grades, and have to impact the strategies of every institution and the policies for innovations and reform.

### **1.3. Management Tasks in Quality Assurance**

Most of the university leaders and officials responsible for the implementation of the policy in higher education have demonstrated knowledge of the European tendencies and development, with regard to the governance and management of higher education. These individuals follow the trends by participation at conferences and realizing the needs for change. However, they know only what is to be done, for example, the implementation of the Bologna Declaration or introduction of European Credit Transfer System or Quality Assurance System with mechanisms for evaluation and accreditation, introduction of Diploma Supplement, harmonization of the study programs with the study programs at the European universities, etc.

The Government and the Ministry of Education and Science are mostly focused on the political agenda, with insufficient knowledge for leadership and application of the new knowledge.

This scenario leaves the observer with the impression that the universities function as pure management or good administrative service. Having in mind that no concept or practice exists, the notion of autonomy boils down to a signature for total independence of the academic staff inside their own institution.

Principles for action:

- from theory to practice;
- the barriers need to be eliminated;
- universities serving the needs of students;
- general participation of all stakeholders in the process of building an image for the faculty;
- participation with active role;
- establishment of targets and results;

- instituting new approaches to the inner culture of the institution.

**The strategic management** deals with issues that result in decisions regarding strategy and governance of the higher educational institution. These issues are:

- How are decisions in the higher educational institution made?
- Is there a positive atmosphere within the decision-making bodies for change and agreement?
- Which are the weaknesses and the positive characteristics of the different procedures for making decisions?
- Does the structure of the university governance and leadership have to undergo change in order to be more efficient and effective in the reform process?
- What is the role of the strategic management and leadership in this sense?
- How are the goals and priorities for the institution realized?
- Is the management of the academic processes at odds with the academic processes themselves?

In every higher educational institution, the goals and the competency are divided among professors, managers, administrative staff, institutes, departments, boards) which function on different levels. It is not only important to know who is responsible but there has to be understanding between all the participants. This is of great importance for the structure of the management as integrated institution.

There are four models for making decisions.

Making decisions is a central part of every organization. Everyday decisions are being made by different individuals, or groups of people, on different levels inside an organization and referring to various goals.

In the higher educational institutions, the decisions are made by the professors, deans, boards, councils, etc. in accordance to the definition, creation, design of the teaching and research programs, research centers or individual courses.

There are four selected models for bringing decision:

- collegial model;
- bureaucratic model;
- political model;
- organized anarchic model.

The basic difference between the four models lies in the following:

**The collegial model** is characterized by consensus of the academic staff and it is based on the principle for shared responsibility.

**The bureaucratic model** is run by the traditional administrative approach (according to scheme).

**The political model** is characterized by conflict of interests and strong involvement of the government.

**The organized anarchic model** is based on events happening at periods of time and different interests.

The collegial model is action towards “equality on the same level” (Peer Reviewers), which results in mutual work towards the realization of common goals. The community of the learned (collegiate) applies the mutual principles, especially the academic standards. The roles, regulations, values, beliefs and ideologies are essential elements in the collaboration.

In order to prove successful, the collegiate model needs to have:

- consensus for the fundamental adoption of the shared responsibility;
- open-minded participants with mutual respect;
- time and possibility for discussions;
- regulations and standards for the realization of the goals.

**The key principles of higher education** are to be respected:

- the process and the structure of planning have to follow the “*consequential*” approach (*Cost and Effect*);
- the planning should be *defined in terms of time*;
- *all the participants* have to be included in the planning (employees and students). They have to be capable of

discovering their own ways for contributing to the process of planning (a principle of democracy in collecting ideas, and after the decision is made everyone has to follow the agreed course of action);

- the process has to be *governed*, that is to say prepared, applied and monitored in accordance to a time scale. Once the plan is approved, consultations and debates for its implementation have to follow. The application may be envisaged by the rectors, deans and the managers of the research institutes/departments;
- the process has to be *inconspicuous*, in order for the employees and the students to continue their everyday activities without disturbance;
- the process for planning has to be *transparent*. The making decisions procedures have to be clear and visible.
- the process for planning is performed with *unanimous vote of confidence* of all the stakeholders within and outside of the institution.

#### **1.4. Evaluation Mechanism**

The quality assurance system can be described as a systematic, structured and continuous effort for quality assurance and improvement. The continuous efforts for quality assurance and improvement represent *sine qua non* for quality assurance.

Mechanisms for these efforts are the evaluation-assessment and validation of quality.

Evaluation represents a process which is realized by a large number of participants within the higher educational institution and a small number without the institution that is under evaluation. These phases of evaluation are of equal importance. The first phase, self-evaluation bears importance because a critical review on the condition in the higher educational institution is made, having in mind the factors that determine the quality: academic staff, teaching methods, facilities, equipment, logistics, external cooperation, research and financing.

**The role of the individual in the self-evaluation** is significant. Namely, in the process of examination of the situation, every employee, especially the academic staff has an opportunity for self-control, by means of checklists. Thus, every one has a chance to see what he or she has achieved during the period that is subjected to evaluation. Every professor faces issues as similar as the ensuing:

- How many students were in my groups?
- How many classes did I have this year?
- Which methods did I employ in my classes?
- In what way did I organize the examinations?
- What results were achieved by the students?
- In what way did I motivate the students and how did I prepared them with my lectures and discussions?
- Am I pleased with the examinations' results?
- What were the problems in the teaching process and examinations tests?
- What am I to do in order to better the knowledge of the students and thus improve their success?
- Who am I cooperating without the institution?
- How many candidates for doctorate did I have?
- What are the results from the doctoral dissertations?
- How many magistrates and doctors of science did I have?
- Am I pleased with their theses and achievements?
- Did I have the necessary work conditions?
- In what way am I to improve the work conditions or who is responsible for their improvement?
- Did the students have the necessary study conditions?
- What is missing in the laboratories for normal activities?
- Do I make sufficient use of the computers and other communication technologies in the teaching process?
- Are there enough books in the library, regarding my discipline or how to obtain them?
- What works did I write last year?
- In how many projects did I participate last year?
- Did I participate at conferences, symposia, congresses or why not?

Thus, these questions put to every member of the faculty can provoke an activity. First, there is the self-criticism; hence follows the criticism arising from the report of the commission for self-evaluation at the institution, and then, follow the Dean's Management and the Teaching - Scientific Council.

The following principles should be applied during this process:

- the success or the failure of the students are the result of my efficiency/inefficiency;
- change of teaching methods in accordance to the needs and the possibilities of the students;
- cooperation with the colleagues from the same faculty, other faculties in the country and abroad, regarding introduction of new, more successful methods for the teaching process and assessment of knowledge;
- compulsory cooperation with the business sector and institutions within the state that deal with professional issues from the discipline I teach, wherein the students can more easily learn the practical part of my subject.

Observed from the “consequential” approach, every professor has to face his own insufficiencies in his/her work.

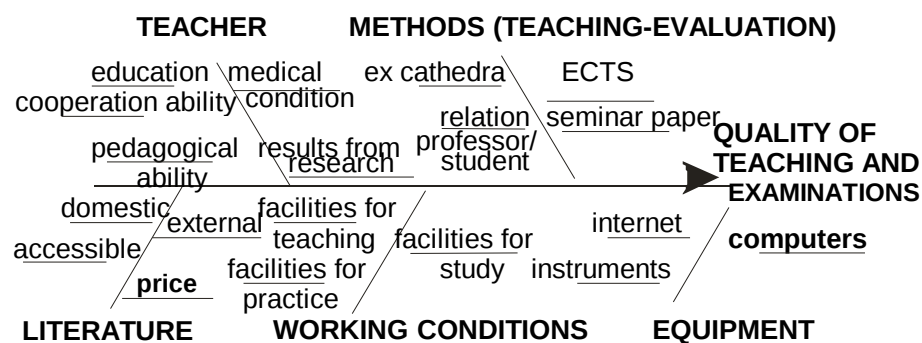


Fig. 2. Diagram for quality of the teaching process and examinations

The management of a HEI, in the process of self-evaluation should answer to the following questions:

- What is the institution doing in order to assure quality? (Mission)
- In what way is the institution attempting to realize its mission? (Quality Assurance System)
- How does the institution know the mission has been accomplished? (Evaluation)
- In what way does the organization change for purpose of rectification? (Strategic Planning)

When an analysis of the quality in a higher educational institution is being made, all the segments from the teaching and research processes are investigated, and questions are put to the management of the institution:

- How many study programs are there for graduate and postgraduate studies?
- Are the study programs harmonized with the programs of the European universities?
- How great is the interest of the students for each of the study programs?
- What are the possibilities for employment after graduation at certain study program?
- Are the general, basic and professional courses well structured?
- What is the size of the contents of the disciplines?
- Do we have enough credits for teaching in order to realize the curricula for every study program?
- What is the number of working hours per week foreseen for every professor?
- What are our criteria for selection of academic staff?
- Is the relation professor-student friendly?
- Is the principle for the teaching process unified for all of the professors, with regards to ex-cathedra approach, interactive teaching, individual work, mentors, practical work, field work, work in projects and work in teams?
- Is the approach for knowledge and evaluation check-up unified?
- What is the extent of the cooperation of the institution with the commercial and non-commercial organizations?

- What is the institution doing in order to monitor the success of its students that have graduated?
- How many students graduate per year?
- How many candidates specialize and obtain Master's degree?
- How many candidates receive Doctoral degree?
- How many students leave the studies, in what academic year and what are the enlisted reasons?
- Through which students' associations are the students involved in the decision-making process?
- What are the room capabilities for teaching, practice and learning; how can we make better use of the available space?
- How can we improve the conditions for practical work?
- How can we secure contemporary means and equipment for research, access to information data?
- How can we enlarge our library, what forms of cooperation, exchange of books should be undertaken?
- How many faculties/universities from abroad do we cooperate with?
- How many of our professors have been visiting universities in foreign countries?
- How many visiting professors have we been host to?
- How many projects have been produced with cooperation with the commercial and non-commercial organizations last year?
- How many international projects did we realize?
- How many of our professors and assistants have participated at international research meetings?
- How many of our professors and assistants have participated at domestic research meetings?
- How many books did we publish last year?
- How many research and professional reviews did we publish?

When a higher educational institution has undergone the SWOT analysis, on the basis of the collected data from its employees, it experiences content and discontent from the achieved results,

due to the strong and weak parts in its work. At the same time, the institution understands the obstacles that stand in its way on the development and it has to be prepared to overcome them if it is to reach the desired goal for progress.

All these activities can help the institution assure quality and, at the same time, improve it.

Self-evaluation is based on the principle: “The quality can be improved where it is made”.

**The external evaluation** bears specific importance for quality improvement, since the quality of the higher educational institution is of interest not only to the employees and the students, but to a larger circle of entities in the state as well.

Higher education is one of the pillars for development of every country. Thus, there is interest in establishing quality in higher educational institutions on behalf of the Government, employees, young people who want to study, their parents. In other words, the entire citizenship is interested in advancing the quality in higher education.

That is why, beside self-evaluation, an external evaluation is necessary. It is performed by experts' commissions that consist of highly renowned professors, outside the institution that is subjected to evaluation. Also, foreign experts can be included in the external evaluation.

The Experts' Commission follows a certain protocol in undertaking an external evaluation:

- examination of the self-evaluation report, and if necessary, it seeks additional information;
- discussions with the management of the institution, members of the commission for evaluation, professors, assistants, students from various study programs and in different years of studies;
- assessment of the material working conditions and housing capacities.

After it has completed the external evaluation, the Experts' Commission adopts a conclusion and presents its findings before

the management and the employees of the institution. Then, the Experts' Commission sends its report of External evaluation to the Agency for Evaluation of Higher Education in R. Macedonia.

The Agency studies the Report and, provided all the rules and principles of the evaluation have been observed, it sends the Report to the President of the State, the Premier of the Government, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Accreditation Board, the University and the Faculty.

### **1.5. Action plans or What comes after evaluation?**

After the evaluation every participant in the process has learned some new things.

The higher educational institutions understand what needs to be changed and where they can seek the solutions in order to improve the quality.

The management of the higher educational institution should undertake action plans in order to rectify the weaknesses, especially regarding the characteristics of the academic staff.

The Government, and especially the Ministry of Education and Science should secure the necessary conditions for elimination of the deficiencies in reference to the activities in the teaching and research process.

The students have to be assured that they can contribute to the quality improvement. This change of opinion would increase their responsibility in realization of the students' surveys.

After the completion of the evaluation, as well as the revision of the weaknesses and improvement of the quality, the first cycle of quality finishes and a new cycle of quality begins: plan-realize-revise-rectify.

In the new cycle of quality, the planning proceeds from the action plans that are to be realized in improved conditions. Then, a new process of evaluation follows, succeeded with new draft-measures for quality improvement.

This is the quality spiral since the “quality is never-ending task” (Fawzi).

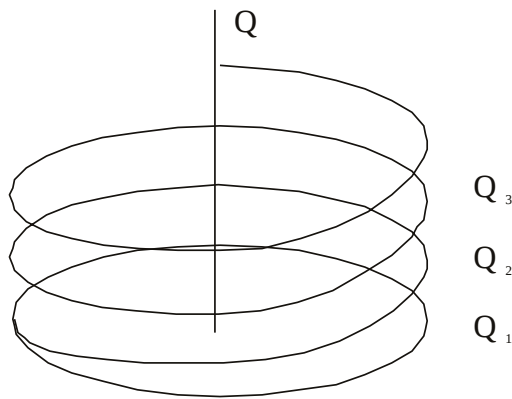


Fig. 3. Quality spiral

Every new cycle begins after 5 years. During that time, after every semester, a students’ survey is performed, and at the end of every year, the results of the academic staff and the employees are analyzed. The external evaluation also follows in every 5 years.

After the annual self-evaluation, the higher educational institution is expected to solve the problems that are of internal nature, so it can rightly expect, after 5 years, to receive the necessary financial means from the Government for the assurance of the prescribed quality.

## **2 Guidelines for Peer Reviewers and Institutions**

### **2.1. The Need for External Evaluation with International Experts**

Since Republic of Macedonia is a small country, and the professors from the two state universities are acquainted more or less to each other, this can contribute to a subjective view of the quality of the higher educational institutions.

Thus, the Agency for Evaluation concluded that besides the three experts from Macedonia, it would be useful to invite a foreign expert in each of the Experts' Commissions.

The external evaluation with the domestic experts lasted for two days whereas on the third day they were joined with the foreign experts.

The collaboration with the foreign experts is assessed as highly useful and significant since the evaluation of the quality is for the first time undertaken in Republic of Macedonia. This is also a relatively new moment for the European universities as well.

All the participants in the external evaluation expressed their interest to exchange knowledge, observations and experience.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Austria, in collaboration with the Austrian Embassy in Skopje, understood the efforts that "SS.Cyril and Methodius" University is making for the implementation of the Bologna Declaration, and after the analysis of the achieved results from the project "Evaluation of higher educational institutions in Republic of Macedonia", decided to provide a grant for a realization of an external evaluation with participation of foreign experts from Western and Southeast Europe.

This was the beginning of the external evaluation at the six faculties.

## **2.2. Preparation for External Evaluation at Institutions**

At the beginning, the foreign experts met with the management of the University, read the Rules' Book and the Exclusive Criteria for Selection of Academic Staff, as well as other relevant documents for evaluation. They received the Reports for self-evaluation, from the 6 faculties, in English language.

Bearing in mind that the foreign experts cannot evaluate and provide accreditation to the institutions they visit, these were their concrete tasks:

- sharing of experience in their field of expertise;
- provision of recommendations for quality assurance as they perceive the situation at the faculties, after the one-day visit, and as a result of the discussions with the management, academic staff and students from the institutions;
- augmentation of the evaluation processes started at the two state universities;
- improvement of the knowledge of the evaluation' experts themselves.

They set a goal to provide constructive advice on the basis of similar situations in other higher educational systems. The focus of the activities was placed on the profile of the appropriate institution, as well as the effectiveness of the current provisions for quality assurance in view of the fulfillment of the goals.

Thus, these were the specific goals that were set by the experts:

- analysis of the nature of the changes (regional, national and international);
- making decision regarding the sustainability of the mission and the strategic priorities, as well the academic profile and the organizational processes;
- recommendations, as result of their international experience that consists of relevant and good examples for benchmarking.

The analysis should start from the Self-evaluation Report in order for the experts to understand the problems of the

institution. The reports proved that the host-institutions were ready for self-criticism.

The one-day evaluation with the foreign experts is a very short period of time in order to define the exact situation of the quality of the higher educational institutions. However, there was the conclusion that the evaluation of the study programs and curricula are of importance to the University, since these are central parts in the Bologna Declaration.

The foreign experts stated: “We don’t pretend we could evaluate the curricula and syllabuses in a period of one single day. However, we can be of assistance for some important issues and thus help our colleagues in Macedonia to independently assess the curricula and syllabuses, however, with altered viewpoints”.

This agreement for the future activities helped to define themes and issues for discussions with the employees from all levels, as well as students.

### **2.3. Guidelines for Peer Reviewers**

In principle, Quality Assurance (QA) and Evaluation exercises in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) relate to two groups of participants, involving either internal or external persons (or a combination thereof). Both of them have their specific conditions, advantages and disadvantages.

While internal QA processes can rely on the already existing knowledge of the HEI in question, they are less capable of providing objective judgements. External involvement in a QA process implies a certain degree of transaction losses in terms of information, which need to be acquired by the external reviewers. In contrast, external experts can provide the HEI with additional and hitherto unknown information and experience. These guidelines are meant to propose questions and methods for external peer reviewers (i.e. experts in higher education or from another HEI, who are asked to help assess and evaluate the institution in question). They are call peer reviewers on

purpose here, as it is the conviction of the authors that the positive results, yield and impact of a “peer review” aiming at improvement and mutual learning are more useful and much higher than “inspectorial” activities aiming at merely formal accountability and measurement.

Often external review and evaluation consist of visits of faculties which previously have undertaken self-evaluations, and which explicitly request consultation by national or international peers as a way of augmenting the ongoing internal evaluation process through informed external assessment. Due to time and financial constraints, such visits usually last one to three days.

The combination of international and national experts, working as tandems, yields high synergy, and proved to produce far better results. As a national/international team, evaluators can complement each other, correct each other, cover for each other (when blackout, fatigue, or knowledge gaps happen), show different approaches to one theme or questions, help to avoid the single-truth-trap, learn from each other, observe more from the students, have more fun, etc. This is why we propose to consider the combination of national and international evaluators, who assist each others before, during and after visits, and jointly author and validate the resulting draft reports.

Except for formal accreditation procedures, most experts do not engage in any kind of inspectorial capacity; rather, they come:

- to share their experience in their field of expertise;
- with the hope that their activity will have a positive impact on the quality of the education at the respective faculty;
- to enhance the evaluation process started already;
- to improve their own level of knowledge and for colleagues abroad.

#### *Character of Activities by Peer Reviewers*

Visitors to a HEI should be aware that their role is (unless agreed otherwise) not that of a formal external (quality) evaluation or accreditation visit. It is rather that of a group of colleagues

charged with providing constructive advice to peers in similar positions in other higher education systems. The focus of activity should be that of the mission and profile of the host institution, what it is attempting to achieve in its particular environment, and the effectiveness of the ongoing quality assurance provisions to reach these objectives.

Thus the visitors shall:

- analyse the nature of the environment challenges (regional, national and international);
- consider whether the mission and strategic priorities, academic profile and organisational processes are adequate to meet these challenges;
- propose, from international experience, relevant good practice for the consideration of the host university or faculty.

The operating style should thus be friendly, firm, courteous and constructively critical.

The recommendations should be as specific and detailed as possible and appropriate, leaving the university and faculty in no doubt of actions proposed.

*Prior to the experts visit the Host Institution should provide the reviewers with:*

*At least four weeks before the visit:*

**1. A clear indication of the advice sought from the expert(s):**

A compilation of topics and questions indicating the advice sought. This should include **an analysis of the issues and problems to be examined**. What is the precise nature and pertinent background of the issues in question? Which attempts, if any, have been made so far to remedy the problem? Why have these attempts not been entirely successful? What are the proposals for change? The analysis should be based on the recent self-evaluation which will allow the Visiting Advisors to gain clear insights into the issues they are expected to address. It is important that the host institution be prepared to engaged in

genuine self-criticism. It is recommended that the analysis be produced after internal deliberations and as a joint effort consisting of all groups and individuals who will participate in the program of the visit. Serious preparation and thorough background documentation is essential for the desired outcome of the consultations.

**2. Factual information about the host institution, the state of higher education in the host country, and the social, political and economic conditions of the host country** (as far as they relate to higher education) as well as any other information deemed necessary which is not contained in the Self-Evaluation Report.

*At least two weeks before the visit:*

1. **Brief biographies of university personnel** (including students) who will meet with the visiting consultants at the given faculty.
2. A **list of selected topics prepared by the relevant faculty** outlining the major issues that they would like to see addressed during the visit, and why.
3. A **proposed detailed itinerary of meetings scheduled with specific topics** for the day-long visit including meetings with all relevant parties (dean, the members of the team that prepared the self-evaluation report, senior professors, junior staff, students, external stakeholders like employers, ministry officials etc, where appropriate).
4. **Confirmation of local hospitality** (arrangement of visit, and if necessary, interpreters into English).
5. A **pre-visit briefing note** by a representative of the evaluation agency to be circulated to those who will participate in the meetings.
6. **Any additional materials** that may be helpful for the purpose of the visit, above and beyond the self-evaluation report.

This may be followed up by direct contact between the reviewer and the contact person at the host institution, by phone, e-mail or video conference.

*Upon arrival:*

1. The expert team consults in advance as a group to exchange views on expectations, experiences, set up some agenda items of their own, and discuss future procedures.
2. At beginning of the visit, the reviewers should meet with the responsible manager of the HEI (Rector, Vice-Rector, Dean) and the related team of the host institution to summarize the institutional concerns and expectations, and confirm the agenda for the visit.
3. Subsequent individual meetings should be structured according to the concerns identified by the faculties. The faculty should determine in advance which university personnel will meet with the team member(s). The representatives of the university should be familiar with the background analysis sent to the team prior to the visit.
4. It is helpful if one or more key members of the Rector's (Dean's) staff are present at all of the meetings to ensure continuity and make sure that all of the information exchanged on various topics is known to the university or faculty leadership. A typical meeting would involve:
  - a brief presentation of the theme by university staff (but most of the information on the topic should be sent to team members in advance, to save valuable time);
  - questions of clarification by team members, and dialogue with those present- discussion of relevance of western ideas on the theme; and
  - concluding comments by team members and university representatives.
5. A debriefing meeting for the expert team should be scheduled after each day of the visit, to provide an opportunity to discuss the progress of the visits and to begin preparing the individual and reports. Ideally the reviewers' team begins writing the final feedback during the experts visit.

*Focus of the visits:*

The following themes are often selected as the very focus of such visits, but are touched by most QA discussions in HEIs:

- how many curricula are there at the graduate and postgraduate studies;
- what is the ratio of size of the general, basic and professional courses;
- is the student, according to the content of the study courses, qualified to be an expert, with reference to the diploma he/she acquires;
- is an appropriate academic staff for the curricula of the study programs employed;
- are suitable teaching facilities (classrooms, laboratories) provided;
- is suitable equipment for teaching and practice provided.

This Focus will enable the Visiting Experts to start discussion from a concrete topic, but it is understood that general goals of Quality Assurance processes will be touched upon equally.

Other pertinent issues that are likely to be addressed by the peer reviewers during the visits to the individual faculties include the need to

- develop a clear academic strategy and robust provisions for quality assurance
- elaborate a systematic staff development and human resource strategy
- update program offerings in light of external developments (e.g. EU enlargement; the so-called “Bologna Process,” market shifts in terms of the popularity of courses)
- convert the existing study programs into B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. curricula according to the Bologna model
- add innovative program specialization in fields of emerging academic and employment interest, particularly in relation to the expanded EU and related accession issues
- offer programs on a part-time as well as full-time basis, to pick up continuing education and lifelong learning markets in an

innovative manner, which presumes credit-based programs, to facilitate credit transfer and accumulations and that would also open up fresh income sources

- diversify funding sources.

After visits and if time and resources allow for it, it proved useful to hold at least a de-briefing meeting or ideally a brief workshop, in which findings of the visit are summarised, and follow-up action is discussed. This may lead to the development of a strategic action plan. The following questions and actions are recommended

*During a de-briefing meeting or planning workshop:*

The reviewers convene at the workshop. Each visiting expert is asked to draw up a **preliminary oral feedback** (approximately 10-15 minutes) which should include:

A summary of the substantive areas covered in discussions, structured as **observations, challenges and recommendations** (arising from the discussions and visit), and **additional suggestions** (beyond the very themes discussed).

For each of these areas, internal affairs of the Faculty, and external matters with regard to other authorities and stakeholders should be referred to and presented:

| <b>QAE Topics</b> | <b>Observations</b> | <b>Recommendations</b> | <b>Suggestions</b> |
|-------------------|---------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Internal          |                     |                        |                    |
| External          |                     |                        |                    |

*After the experts visits:*

**1. Individual Expert Feedback.** The written reports by each expert should be submitted at the latest 2 weeks after the visit. These reports will be each about 3-5 pages in length.

**2. Draft Final Report.** The leader of the visiting experts should then coordinate the writing of the Final Report, which should be delivered in draft at the latest one month after the visit. The Final Report is reviewed by all team members, and a preliminary copy

should be sent via email to the people responsible for the evaluation and the manager of the HEI and faculty stakeholders concerned with the request that any factual inconsistencies be corrected. These are included into the report, be it in the text or as footnotes.

**3. Comprehensive Final Report.** This Report is then submitted to the host institution. The host institution is expected to discuss the report in detail, and publicise it in a transparent way (paper copies, posting, web-site) to the relevant people and authorities both within the university as well as outside the university.

The Final Report provides an in-depth analysis of the specific issues discussed during the visits, and the suggestions and recommendations from the reviewers to the Rector (Dean) and university personnel. There is no pre-determined format for this document, but in general it should help to create a consensus within the host institution with regard to academic or administrative changes that seem promising in solving problems, improving operations, or achieving objectives that the hosts themselves have identified for consideration. The report shall explicitly commend the university on successful measures implemented so far to address institutional concerns. It is important that the report includes and mentions follow-up activities, including materials promised to the host institution. The Final Report should be at least twenty pages in length.

**4. Follow up.** It is expected that the host institution will send the Final Report to the relevant authorities both within the university as well as outside the university (e.g. ministries, members of local government, chamber of commerce, etc.). Further, within 3 months after the visit, it is understood that the host institution will provide feedback to the reviewers regarding the strategy planned to implement suggestions and recommendations.

Ideally, such visits are seen by both parties as part of an on-going two-way relationship between the reviewers and the host institution. It is hoped that the experts maintain contact with the staff of the host institution and its scientists, so that recommendations and suggestions made may be implemented. This contact may include on-going advice, provision of materials

promised during the visit, or exchange and even a refreshment visit in the framework of academic mobility.

**5. Mutual Cooperation of the Experts.** The host institution and reviewers should ideally agree to cooperate in any activities related to the evaluation of the Experts' Visits, such as responding to the questionnaires about the effectiveness of the visits, their results, and the final report. The Evaluation results should be also forwarded to the hosting institution, a monitoring institution or evaluation agency, and the competent Ministry of Education or Science.

### **3. Peer Visits and Joint Analysis**

#### **3.1 Visits to Faculties**

Within the Austrian Project "Support for Higher Education at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University", peer visits to 6 Faculties were executed on 21-22 October 2003. These peer visits took place in conjunction with the national external evaluation, and focused on the theme of Study Programmes and Evaluation Process. Rather than "examining" these UKIM Faculties, the international experts engaged in fruitful, profound and mutually beneficial exchange of experiences and ideas.

The international experts were high-level specialists in the field of university management and evaluation in the education field:

Prof Alfred Ebenbauer, former Rector of the University of Vienna  
Prof Aleksa Bjelis, Vice-Rector of the University of Zagreb  
Prof Stefan Diukandjiev, Director of the EU Tempus Programme in Serbia and Montenegro  
Prof Tzako Pantaleev, Managing Director of the Center for Educational Strategy, and Professor of Management in Sofia  
Dr Jochen Fried, Director of the Universities Project, Salzburg Seminar  
Dr Helmut Schramke, former Head of the University of Vienna Reform Group

Later, using the same approach, an external evaluation was performed to five more HEIs in the area of medicine and health, with participation of the foreign expert, Prof. Dr. Asen Djolev from the Medical Faculty at University of Novi Sad, Serbia and Montenegro.

The list of the enlisted domestic evaluators is given in annex 6.4.

The findings of the foreign experts will be added to the already existing reports of the national evaluators, and conclude the evaluation cycle at UKIM, held for the first time, and representing a crucial step towards quality improvement in the spirit of the Bologna Process for Higher Education in Europe.

The non-Macedonian experts found the Faculties well prepared by Commissions for Self-Evaluation and their reports, and were enthusiastic about the collegial and cooperative atmosphere with their Macedonian colleagues.

While methodological and strategic recommendations were given directly to the Deans and their teams, the fact that an evaluation culture has solidly taken roots in UKIM is a significant step to solidify UKIM's membership in the family of European universities.

### **3.2. Conclusions from Workshop on “Dissemination of QA Experience” (Ohrid, October 2003)**

As an activity within the Austrian cooperation project, this international workshop on quality assurance and study programmes took place at Hotel Millenium in Ohrid on 23-24 October 2003. The workshop served primarily to report in detail on the visits to the Macedonian Quality Assurance Experts, and to discuss with them general findings for the whole University and its strategic development.

Participants were members of national external evaluators, members of the Evaluation Agency, the UKIM Working Group on Quality Assurance, and 9 national and international experts on behalf of the Consortium navreme (Vienna), Salzburg Seminar (Salzburg) and DETRA (Skopje).

The exchange between Macedonian and foreign evaluators resulted in agreement about the following development needs at the level of UKIM:

- The Procurement component of the Austrian project (improved computer network) will help to increase the low degree of cohesion between UKIM Faculties, given that only as a integrated university UKIM will be able to live up to the challenges of European Higher Education, and be able to attract foreign projects, student and professors;
- The Mobility component of the Project will bring fresh thematic and scientific input to UKIM's students and lecturers,

and also contribute to creating sustainable links with Austrian and other European Universities;

- Specific Macedonian problems like the over/aging of teaching staff, too long, too broad and too numerous study programmes will need hence urgent, though at the same time cautious action from the responsible managers and the Ministry of Education and Science, in order to avoid a further slowdown of innovation in terms of contemporary teaching methods (e.g., no "ex-cathedra teaching");
- The scarce financial support for research at the University was identified as a major hindrance for the continuous improvement of quality teaching;
- New programs will need to be developed within many Faculties in order to broaden and diversify their student intake and include the working population, post-graduate students, or distance learning students, in order to respond to the societal trend and the need for "Lifelong Learning";
- The highly beneficial process of self-evaluation needs to be followed up by information of results back to the faculties, action plans, and ongoing review at regular intervals.

### **3.3. Summary of Aggregated Findings by Foreign Experts**

The essential findings of the international experts from Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, and Serbia during their visits to the Faculties of Architecture, Civil Engineering, Economics, Technology, Mining/Geology, and Philosophy were the following:

#### *Four Observations*

1. The Peer Visits and External Evaluation exercises were held - despite insufficient information before the visits - in a spirit of excellent cooperation and agreement. Better preparation on the side of Faculties would have been desirable, and a meeting between national and international experts prior to the visits to discuss and coordinate the various approaches would have increased the value of the visits even more. National experts with

broader working experience made more critical remarks on the performance of the faculties, whereas the international experts underlines the positive fact of such quality assurance system being implemented for the first time as a major success for UKIM.

2. High commitment and enthusiasm on the side of internal self-evaluation commissions, and openness and interest of Faculty management for the process resulted in a solid diagnosis, thorough analysis, and a long list of recommendations for change. Moreover, in some cases measurable change was already reached at as a direct result of the self-evaluation process.

3. Self-Evaluation and External Evaluation are now accepted practices at UKIM - a major step forward that other European universities have not yet done. The first cycle was done in a sincere fashion, and while methodological improvement is still possible, already some positive results were visible as a direct consequence of the findings during the self-evaluation.

4. One statement made at the workshop by the former rector of the University of Vienna deserves quoting: "we also face similar problems but the University Ss. Cyril and Methodius is on the right track, through application of consistent evaluation procedure, to become a respected member of the family of the European universities".

#### *Six Challenges and Recommendations*

1 There is an urgent need for swift and transparent feedback from the reports of external evaluators. Information on the accumulated results of student questionnaires, the recommendations given, and action taken by the management of the Faculties and UKIM are a crucial part of a functioning evaluation system.

2 The Faculties at UKIM are too much focused on themselves and live in splendid isolation. In order to be acceptable partner for international cooperation, to attract foreign students, and to be visited by top scientist and educators from other countries, the

University as a whole needs to be seen. Instead of the unknown (fictitious) Goce-Delchev-Faculty for Aegain Studies in Gevgelija, the well visible Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje will be their preferred partner.

3 The over-aging of staff was identified as a time-bomb for UKIM. Filling this gap with excellent young staff, and using their capacity instead of that of inactive professors without knowledge or practice in modern teaching techniques is a necessity. There is a urgent need to increase the number of positions for assistants and young faculty at all the Faculties visited.

4 Study Programmes need to be broader, less numerous, and shorter. Broader programmes are requested by the labour market, where a Bachelor in stamp licking is not requested but rather flexible graduates who can swap from one field of action to another, applying so-called core skills and inter-disciplinary experience to a rapidly developing job market.

5 Continuing training offers, a variety of post-graduate programme (to be organised also jointly with and for industry and commerce), and specialisation courses for employed people are both a growing request from society and a possible source of income. Every University needs to react to the trend towards Lifelong Learning across Europe.

6 Innovation in teaching is badly needed across faculties. Despite individual successes, on average far too much inefficient ex-cathedra teaching takes place. It is to be substituted by contemporary, interactive and project-like and practice-oriented training and learning styles. Training of staff in this field, and tools for measuring the outputs of the teaching units should be developed therefore. Students' ability to cope with their challenges after graduation is the most important criterion to be used in this respect.

#### *Five Additional Suggestions*

1. PRO and MOB (the procurement and mobility components of the Austrian project) will serve as means to integrate the faculties, inform their staff, and inject international research and

teaching into UKIM. Tempus can serve as an additional trigger for international cooperation = which is a must for universities. Instead of a confederation of isolated Faculties, a highly cohesive and networked university identity with optimal distribution of power, budget and impact should be aimed at.

2 The Follow-up of the student questionnaires is extremely important to demonstrate to students that their input is taken seriously. Results need to be published, and management corrective steps announced as soon as possible. A regular mechanism and practice should become routine, by which students are included and integrated in planning and review of curricula and teaching.

3 Alumni organisations should be set up. Far beyond their immediate function of telling the Faculty/University what happens to their graduates, in many countries they have been found an extremely helpful source for inspiration, innovation, information on labour market requirements, sponsorship and political contact.

4 The budget allocated to research is deplorably low at present. Regulations that earmark 90% of the total budget to teaching (= staff costs) are counter-productive to innovative and updated curricula. Attractive teaching based on high quality research is key to attract the best students, and to guarantee to them success in their professional life, as competent individuals, and as democratic citizens.

5 The process of self-evaluation that started very promisingly should be re/launched with new tasks, triggered with new responsibilities, and the Commission should be empowered to undertake further prioritisation and operationalisation of necessary change. Tools like a bi-monthly "Public Letter to the Dean", proposals for immediate action, or newslogs on the Faculty website should be considered. At the end, an institutionalised and regular system of continuous self-improvement and external advice will enable Faculties and UKIM to keep up with the pace of development in international Higher Education.

In conclusion, the international Peer Visitors and Workshop participants commended UKIM for having started a profound and sincere self-evaluation process, but also strongly urged UKIM to keep up the momentum of the process, and further support and back up the experts involved in order to arrive at a robust, perpetual, and action-oriented Quality Assurance System.

## **4. Opinions of Experts on QA at UKIM in Skopje**

### **4.1 Observations, Recommendations, and Suggestions**

#### **Observations**

##### *Mission and Profile*

With the Republic of Macedonia having signed the Bologna Declaration in September 2003, it could be expected that all Faculties in the country will intensify their efforts to revise their curricula in keeping with the stated common goal of the signatories which means the introduction of a two-tier modular degree system.

The Faculties are aware that in order to fulfil their mission they must be prepared to constantly challenge the conventional wisdom and to dynamically modify and readjust teaching and research by incorporating new areas of interest and concern (and out-phasing those that have become obsolete). This is not always an easy process to manage, even more so under very difficult and volatile economic conditions which characterize the situation at UKIM and in the Republic of Macedonia in general. But from the conversations during the visits it seems that there is a good amount of healthy self-confidence, mutual trust and a forward-looking attitude prevailing at most UKIM Faculties which is a major asset in terms of the capacity to handle this process.

Many Faculties have been always open for self analysis and restructuring, due to their complexity and dependence on the changing economic environment - the last substantial restructuring of the Study Programmes and the development of new ones in 1999 is the proof thereof. The primary aims were the modernization of the curricula in considering the European programmes, introduction of new courses corresponding better to the market, inclusion of eligible courses, and opportunities for self-determination for students.

The Faculties assume well their place as autonomous institutions, although perhaps less their role as a constitutive part

of the UKIM. The statement about the mission of the faculties, if available, is presented in their Self-evaluation reports (2002). The main objectives are focused on the assurance of relevant study programmes and their appropriate provision for the students. The faculties see their responsibility in helping students to develop additional skills, enabling them to master the challenges of the changing social economic environment. At the same time, some mission statements do not clearly position the Faculties with regard to the other stakeholders – state, state and private enterprises, local community, etc.

Many Faculties are very complex and multiple institutions. They offer a range of undergraduate programs, often corresponding to their sub-division in institutes and departments (e.g. one program - one institute) and a number of post-graduate study programs in these institutes and departments. PhD studies have not been introduced yet in all cases. The undergraduate and post-graduate study programs qualify also personnel for education provision and research work within the range of the scientific areas covered with the study programs accordingly.

The profile of most Faculties is very broad. They were following a gradual expansion of the range of scientific domains and the economy and industry of Macedonia, and the need to prepare the specialists in given fields. The programs are covering many and quite different subject areas. The decline of some industries and the overall changes of the socio-economic environment is a real challenge for some Faculties in re-adjusting their missions and profiles. Institutes in natural sciences and technology are more affected. The Deans and the majority of academics are well aware of the need to redesign the profiles and the study programmes – including suggestions to reduce the heterogeneity of the Faculties.

Students and all staff confirmed that it is the leadership of a Faculty that to a great extent predetermines the values, the attractiveness and the innovation environment for learning. In this respect they feel satisfied in terms of new opportunities which are open to all of them.

The Faculties are reconsidering their approach to these major issues as a necessity to start the implementation of the Bologna principles. Many have set up a Commission which will review their current structure and the study programmes and propose a plan for revision and redefinition.

### *Structure and Provision of the Study Programs*

The study programs within the curricula are very well documented, sometimes they are also on the Internet and are presented in English and Macedonian. A few Faculties have also published all courses taught in the syllabi in booklets (occasionally also in English). The transparency and access to information about what is lectured is at very high level, and this is probably one of the reasons for the great interest of the clients (students, parents, as well as business and industry).

In general, undergraduate programs are highly prescriptive and consist predominantly of mandatory subjects supplemented by only very few elective or optional subjects, whereas M.A. programmes offer much more choice to the students to pursue their studies according to their own preferences and talents. In some cases, the directive nature of the undergraduate curricula is mainly owing to the fact that they fall under the category of "regulated professions" where the requirements for the degree are to a large extent determined by rules and standards that are set by professional bodies and that define the necessary knowledge and skills to be recognized.

In spite of the fact that the general *content* of the curricula is largely pre-mediated, it seems, however, that the implementation of the study programmes leave some room for developing a more flexible and more distinct curricular profile. Currently the individual subjects are taught in a relatively isolated manner with the tacit assumption that students can be expected to combine the various pieces of knowledge to a coherent whole. However, given the complexity of both intellectual and practical qualifications that they must acquire, this assumption may be overoptimistic.

The conversation and the discussion with the students showed that the Faculties visited not only have a good reputation within the country which attracted generations of young people in the past, but also in the last years have changed in a way to draw school leavers who show great promise. This is due mainly to the fact that new study programs that have been introduced that strive for compatible diploma qualifications compared to similar programs and universities elsewhere in Europe. The fact that some courses are taught (or to be taught) in English puts additional value to the learning opportunities offered by some UKIM Faculties.

The production of a new study program is a challenge, as it has a long way to go until it is adopted by the Ministry and in some cases even the positive reaction of the Parliament is needed. This time-consuming procedure is discouraging the faculties to even start the process, but despite these difficulties some innovative Faculties have renewed nearly all of the study programs since the Republic of Macedonia became a separate entity.

Proposals for the new curriculum are developed at the level of institutes. They are then forwarded to the Dean. The Academic Council adopts them. They then go to the Rectorate. Finally, they reach the Minister. However, the curriculum becomes official when the Rector signs it. The contents of the curriculum are decided by the Faculties.

In the discussions, some Faculty staff members highlighted this process of introducing new study programs as an example of the proven capacity for innovation and team work. In the best cases, updates and further development of up to 20% of every subject program is carried out on a yearly basis, so within 4-5 years in fact each program can be renewed. Some discussion partners stressed the importance of the practices existing in the most advanced Faculties to:

- discuss broadly (i.e. with all stakeholders and partners) the need of introducing a new study program;
- produce a profile for the new program;

- develop the program together with all examination procedures and the ongoing evaluation of the students' achievements;
- look for partnership and expertise from foreign Universities to validate the programs, to add value to the compatibility of the study program, and to help in delivering it;
- produce and find the most appropriate learning materials for the program.

In most cases, the Faculties consider the (mostly undergraduate) study programmes revised in 1999 compatible with the international practices. For this reason during the Self Assessment the focus was more on their provision and less on their structure and content. However, gradually a new consensus has been evolving following the need to:

- reduce the number of the Institutes;
- reduce the number of the Undergraduate Study Programmes;
- shorten the formal duration of the Study Programmes from 9 to 8 semesters;
- improve the ratio between the compulsory and elective subjects;
- increase the intra-Faculty and inter-Faculty horizontal mobility of the students.

The Faculties are taking serious measures to implement these objectives. As it was mentioned before, special commissions have been created with the task to work out and to propose a plan for redefinition of the structure and the study programs.

The interlocutors, especially the Deans' teams and the Commissions for Self Evaluation, were showed strong determination to put the restructuring of the Faculties and the study programmes as a priority task for them.

At the same time, the need to develop a credit system is well understood. The current structure of the study programmes is not favourable for this important task. In the view of the experts, major obstacles are:

- the long duration (9 semester) of the Bachelor studies;

- the existence of too heavy workload subjects, some of them spreading over two-semesters;
- too strong weight given to the diploma theses, both for the Bachelor and for Master studies;
- the current examination procedure.

Academic staff as well as students should be aware that the accumulation of disconnected knowledge in great quantities is not the ultimate measure of success in studying; instead, the primary goal should be seen in the education and development of the students' potential as skilful and flexible experts in a changing labour market, as responsible individuals and citizens, and valuable members of the society. In the light of this, it would seem advisable if the Faculties considered to provide even more opportunities for the students for project-oriented work, 'laboratories', practica, service learning and for professors for co-teaching.

The duration of curricula is still a compromise because the number of hours defines the budget from the Ministry of Education. Only a small degree of individualisation of curriculum is possible, although only for certain sequences within the programme, and based on certain conditions ("if - then rules").

Many Faculties are aware of the need to define relevance and scope of the curriculum, and develop ideas about the involvement of the community. Also, the need to teach students to be become responsible and democratic citizens is in teachers minds yet, but there are yet no procedures to ensure this input and output criterion.

All together study programmes are complying with the 2000 Higher Education Act, calling for international compatibility and introducing the dimensions of quality assessment and accreditation. The UKIM colleagues assured the foreign experts that this was possible, because the 2000 Act had been in discussion for many years and the Faculties and the academics knew its major terms before it was adopted.

In this context, the Faculty staff are aware of the necessity to reduce the heterogeneity of study programmes. However, some self-evaluation reports do not address the issue of the duration of individual courses. Some of them are unjustified from a contemporary position, i.e. a too long duration of two semesters. Frequently the students have more than 10 exams per year. The majority of subjects are 3+3 hours per week (45+45 per semester). Even during the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year, the week workload is often above 30 h/week, not including the extra auditorium works. Often, the first two years are mainly common for all programs, while the diversification starts in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year.

Critical views regarding the present structure of undergraduate studies include:

- optional courses are not present in the curricula;
- more profiled specializations are not offered;
- curricula contain too many long (two semester) courses;
- fieldwork contents are insufficiently present;
- the curricula do not offer interdisciplinary and/or multidisciplinary combinations, particularly those combining engineering and managerial or similar skills.

Formally all relevant faculty groups are involved in the discussions related to this curricula development. Usually students are not yet well prepared and organised to analyse the strong and weak part of the study programs, especially the new role of the Bachelor and Master programs. Even if this is understandable, it was recommended to teach students also to acquire more knowledge in this regard, in order to be able to approach these issues with a better understanding.

However, it seems that it would be a mistake to build the future B.A. curricula directly on the existing five-semester program since it then would be no more than a derivative of the 'real' (ten-semester) diploma program and not a curriculum in its own right. The introduction of the B.A. and M.A. programs, in the spirit of the Bologna Process, offers a unique opportunity for the Faculties to renew and redesign curricula. They should embrace this opportunity and not get sidetracked by backward-looking debates about the need to preserve high academic standards

(as they happened in most European countries) - that cannot be satisfied by a three-year program.

### *Postgraduate Studies and Distance Learning*

Most Faculties provide large numbers of Postgraduate or Master programmes, and some Faculties are planning to increase their number. Some of these courses are taught in English. These Master programmes are usually presented in the Students' Guideline, which enables students to make their choice in the early stage of their undergraduate studies. Also the structure, the content and the provision of the master programmes are not always assessed in detail and as well as the Undergraduate Study Programmes during the Self-assessment. Consequently, no SWOT analyses were presented, and neither specific action plans were proposed for postgraduate studies.

Regarding postgraduate studies and the educational process after the undergraduate level in general it can be noticed that:

- a rather small number of students enrolled in postgraduate studies succeeds by acquiring M.Sc./M.A. degrees;
- the number of doctoral thesis is much higher than the number of MSc thesis; this signals that the regeneration of human resources at the highest scientific level has a negative trend;
- continuous education studies or courses are not offered.

The 4 semesters postgraduate study programmes include only a small number of new subjects. The main part of the workload is devoted to the preparation of the Master thesis. The majority of the Master students are completing their studies by preparing an experimental diploma thesis, and only few (in technical subjects) finish with a composition. This issue is a subject of reconsideration in order to combine these two complimentary requirements.

The current Master programmes are designed exclusively for the graduates of the same faculty and they are not attractive for other faculties' students. To improve this, more subjects should be included, what will provide other students opportunity to

create enough new knowledge and to address relevant diploma thesis subjects.

### *Quality and Evaluation of Teaching*

At present, like at universities in other countries of the region, the number of classroom hours for students at UKIM is very high. More recently, the Faculties have undertaken steps to reduce this number which is very commendable and should be continued. However, for as long as the remunerations policy in Macedonian higher education as a whole mainly rewards the number of hours that a professor spends in the classroom, there is little hope that a more fundamental re-orientation with regard to the traditional form of classroom teaching can be achieved.

The discussions with the staff pointed out that a further need for training of the teaching in interactive methods of teaching, discussions, individual work, project and case study work, and team work. This will probably (according to the students) make professors' experience and knowledge more accessible to individual students - not only to large cohorts as it is now. Still in some cases the attendance at the ex-cathedra lectures and the one-to-one reproduction of texts and figures is considered the major merit for good achievement at exams. Now the mobility of the staff is also contributing to the innovative and sometimes simply different approaches in teaching and in faculty life as such. The diversity in teaching is increasing also due to joint programs with partner universities.

According to the students, there are incentives for professors to improve their teaching. A number of subjects lasts for two semesters - with all problems associated with it. There is a (to-be-strengthened) trend to update the provision of teaching by extension of interactive methods and increasing the seminar-type exercises. The problem stays as for the minimum modernization of the practical part.

Assistants and students seem not to be really involved in the curriculum development process and partly as a result of this it looks like they do not have strong ideas about the future of the

faculty. Their involvement in the evaluation process is “underdeveloped”.

A very basic evaluation of curriculum quality is done through the re-election of teachers by the teacher’s council (without vote of the students) every two years. However, the quality of teaching is not specifically measured and there is yet no procedure in place at the Faculty for the inclusion of feedback from students.

At the same time, there is a complex system of control to secure the quality of lectures. In some Faculties there are two surveys:

The first is at the level of the University. It is conducted annually and is anonymous. The other is done by the Students’ Organization. It is done quarterly and the results from these two surveys are forwarded to the Academic Council. However, due to the lack of established standards and criteria of “good” and “bad” professors such surveys have never resulted in anything specific.

On the other hand there are the following levels:

1. The level of students: In order to get their signatures, they have to attend classes regularly. Since some of them pay tuition fees, they have theoretically the right to demand better conditions. For the past 2-3 years the students have been conducting an anonymous survey expressing their opinion of the professors;
2. Control on behalf of the management: The academic council adopts an overview on who does what, who teaches which subject, how many hours and how many students. All this information is readily accessible and clearly presented. This enables easy assessment of whether the lecturers hold classes regularly. Each professor prepares a monthly report. The report is being checked by the Head of the Institute, and is later sent to the Dean. Given that there is a variation of salary of about 20%, in this manner the monthly payment is eventually calculated.

#### *Students and Assessment*

The conversation with student representatives showed that their opinion about the Faculties is predominantly affirmative. They stressed that they are proud to be students of UKIM. They

pointed out a general impression about good relationships between lecturers and students. Referring to a recently published report about corruption at Macedonian higher education and at UKIM in particular, they also pointed out that several Faculties were identified as institutions where there is no indication of any malpractice.

All students stated that their secondary education (including the VET one in some fields) did not sufficiently prepare them to study and learn at university level – not to speak about the continuity between these levels in terms of knowledge and skills. Thus a lot of time and efforts are invested in learning how to learn at the university level from both students and faculty staff.

A similar observation can be made in terms of the number and the format of exams that students have to take at the end of each academic year: There are far too many and, being mainly oral examinations, it is questionable whether they are 'fit for purpose' (there is a long list of literature about the shortcomings of orals exams). Here, the Faculties have the possibility to introduce change by their own decision-making power, and they should do so by developing new and different modalities of student assessment.

The real duration of the many undergraduate studies in Macedonia is much longer than projected, in some cases up to 7-8 years. For a long period this was seen as normal. Now, however, everybody is aware of the gravity of this problem, and gradually an understanding evolves that it is directly related to the structure of the study programs and the quality of their provision.

Examination is of big importance considering the large number of exams and overloaded subjects. The examination definitely has its influence on the low success rate of the students, and the high number of the drop-out students, respectively. Starting last academic year (and as a result of the self evaluation), some Faculties successfully introduced a new examination approach and procedure, including mid-term examinations. The first results are extremely positive – a dramatic reduction of the drop-outs.

### *Mobility*

The horizontal mobility of the students within and between Faculties is rather limited at the moment. This is not the case because the leadership is not putting an effort in it (while some Faculties still have low degrees of mobility due to low numbers of elective courses, at some Faculties 20% of the subjects studied are elective), but a result of the existing limitations in terms of quantification of the curricula.

The accreditation and evaluation processes, and the introduction of ECTS are expected to cut the connection between the professors and the subjects and to give opportunities for them to cover fields of knowledge other than exclusively in their own discipline.

Mobility needs to be planned in a pro-active manner, be it intra-Faculty, inter-Faculty, inter-University, or international.

### *Staff and Faculty Policy*

The government placed the Faculties within the realm of public administration, and there was no change in the staff. This year 150 young professors are expected to enter the University, replacing the professors pending retirement. Human resource policy at the Faculty is having a replacement for each retired professor. The Faculty should make use of the chance of rejuvenating its academic staff.

The aging staff is the main challenge for the Faculty – as it is for the whole of the UKIM. Last year several Faculties for the first time in years appointed new assistants but at the same time many professors went on retirement. Having in mind that 10 years in average are needed for the assistants to become good lecturers, it is obvious that the generation gap will impact any further development. The intensity of the study programs as of now and the number of staff available do not allow professors the time to work individually with the students.

A junior assistant can be elected to the same position only twice, i.e. for 6 years. An assistant can be elected 3 times, but after getting their Ph.D. they can become lecturers, or remain

assistants indefinitely. There are three more titles in this line: docent, associate professor, and full-professor. Every 5 years there is a re-election.

The given structure and qualification of staff (age, academic titles in the group of full professors) is such that it appears natural to encourage staff members with more professional (and less scientific) orientation towards vocational aspects of study programs, or even towards organizing full vocational programs (perhaps shorter, three-year studies).

#### *Actions Related to QA*

The work of the Commissions for self-evaluation has resulted in comprehensive and detailed assessments of the Faculties. After the submission of the reports, the Commissions continued to be active in proposing specific steps and measures to address shortcomings and to change certain aspects in the operations of the Faculties. Some of these suggestions resulted in important improvements (e.g. re-organization of studies in the first and second reacting to justified criticism of students; efforts to employ of new assistants, etc).

The self-evaluation report and the evaluation and accreditation procedures themselves are found very useful for the development of the Faculty by all members – students, professors and the administrative staff. Several Faculties therefore decided to produce self-evaluation reports every year. These reports will judge the progress of work on the recommendations given, and will frame the background for future developments.

The Reports of several Faculty Commissions for self-evaluation recognized some steps which could be immediately undertaken in order to initiate modifications and changes. Often, the Faculty leadership has acted in this manner in some cases, e. g. by initiating changes in methods of teaching and the assessment of learning progress. This approach led to immediate improvements, and therefore deserves to be greatly encouraged. More widely, it would be useful if the Commission continues to

monitor permanently the conditions of studies, and proposes appropriate steps towards ameliorations during its mandate.

Literally all Faculties see the Self Evaluations and External Evaluations as the main instrument for improvement of quality and for establishment of a functional QA system. They readily appointed Evaluation Commissions with the mandate to prepare comprehensive reports based on the instructions of the Evaluation Agency. Despite considerable time pressure that was imposed on the Commissions by the Agency, most of them accomplished their tasks in an impressive manner by producing honest and constructive assessments that highlight (using the instrument of SWOT analyses) the achievements, shortcomings, and challenges, as well as the common goals that the Faculties should aspire to.

The leadership of all Faculties visited adopted a positive stance towards the self-evaluation exercises and saw them as an opportunity for mobilizing a change-oriented attitude within the Faculties. Regrettably, the original momentum was weakened and to a certain degree even lost due to a lack of feedback on the part of the Evaluation Agency. Up until late 2003, the Faculties had been waiting for an official reaction from the Agency and nobody seems to know what is causing this long delay. It is very unfortunate that these uncertainties regarding procedural matters have impaired the possible impact of the self-evaluation at the level of Faculties.

High commitment and enthusiasm on the side of internal self-evaluation commissions, and openness and interest of Faculty management for the process resulted in a solid diagnosis, thorough analysis, and a long list of recommendations for change. Moreover, in some cases measurable change was already reached at as a direct result of the self-evaluation process.

At the same time, the visits confirmed the ongoing commitment of the Faculties' leadership to raise quality standards by addressing the most pressing issues that were specified in the Self-Evaluation Reports: e.g. their insufficient research profile,

the inverse age pyramid of the academic staff, the need to strengthen the postgraduate program, generating new sources of income, reducing the average duration of studies and the drop-out of students, to name just some of the challenges. However, the discussions during the visits showed that not everyone was aware of the results of the reports, and even less sure what consequences and plans for action should be drawn from it. Instead of waiting for a feedback from the Evaluation Agency or the Ministry, it would therefore seem advisable if the Deans took the initiative to identify priorities for change and improvement, and, jointly with the members of the Evaluation Commission, develop a strategy for action.

The Faculty Commissions for Self-Evaluation are ready to continue assuming the key role in the QA issue until the end of their mandate. The commission are willing to continue to interact with the University commission and the Evaluation Agency on these issues.

As a result, the self-evaluation reports provided a comprehensive analysis of all major activities, and the discussions on the Self Evaluation Reports within the Faculty Senates were sincere and serious. Their acceptance was not just a formal vote, but rather the expression of a commitment to the implementation of the proposed plans for action and improvement. There are already a number of positive results as a follow-up of the Self assessment:

- The strong devotion to QA issues by the majority of staff promoted positive personal changes in the Faculties;
- Some Faculties set up a special Commission with a task and mandate to prepare and propose a project for redefining the study programmes;
- Serious efforts were made to streamline the examination requirements for students;
- It was acknowledged that the high drop-outs rate of students are a critical problem and that measures need to be undertaken to reduce this rate;
- A growing motivation can be perceived to shorten the official and the real duration of the undergraduate and postgraduate studies;

- Faculties are exploring procedures for a real involvement of the students in the permanent evaluation and improvement of the quality. At some Faculties, a decision has been taken to organize a regular (annual) student assessment.

Also the Macedonian external experts noted that some of their recommendations from previous external visit are already considered, e.g.:

- Selection of new Associate Professors;
- Strict application of the rules for retirement in order to free positions for young teaching staff;
- Recruitment of young teachers for the first time in many years.

There is a need to design a follow up process and to improve the feedback information to all Faculty groups and especially to students.

#### *Career Advancement Process*

In principle, the teaching at the faculties is organized to meet international standards and to be compatible with the best practices existing in the fields covered. For the moment the development of the restructured economy of the Republic of Macedonia does not offer a lot of opportunities for co-operation and development of joint practices.

Still, the word of warning should be added here regarding the fact that a considerable number of graduates from various Faculties were traditionally successful in continuing their professional carriers abroad: The flip side of this observation is that Macedonia, like other countries from the region, suffers from a large degree of brain-drain, particularly in natural sciences, and medical and technical disciplines. For other Faculties, the job opportunities for graduates in Macedonia are poor, and the international market for jobs is stagnating or decreasing.

A very positive indication for the quality of postgraduate studies is the fact that a high number of their graduates are employed. This is to show that some Faculties are well recognized institutions for upgrading not only the knowledge but also the

skills for a broader and already experienced part of the workforce in the economy and industry of the Republic of Macedonia. At the same time, some undergraduate students clearly stated that the M.A. programs do not directly lead to employment.

### *Research and International Cooperation*

Professors at UKIM are usually well acquainted with international developments in education and research and there is a balance between trying to 'catch up' with these international trends, and some kind of rather hopeless survival strategies.

Research is a key element for universities, both as part of their mission, and as an input and attitude for teaching activities. However, detailed data on the scientific output expressed in terms of publication in international and domestic journal were not available. The number of participants at international and domestic conferences, symposia and seminars varies in the last five years.

International relations are considered by the Faculties as an important instrument for overall improvement of management and teaching. Most Faculties are also members of (several) international organizations for their academic field.

Under the Tempus programme, several Faculties were involved in Joint European Projects, by which new Study Programmes were designed or special departments or Centres were created. Also some new equipment in the faculties was purchased exclusively with the help of Tempus resources. To be able to compete as university and as a student from this university one needs to be compatible with the international players in this field. This is what some faculties accomplished in the Tempus projects through partnerships with well-known institutions in Europe.

The Faculty staff noted a very important hindrance for its development. Only recently graduates from other faculties than the ones in Skopje, Zagreb and Beograd are joining the Faculty of Economics at UKIM, and thereby address the absence of more diversity in teaching methods, learning materials and textbooks. The low degree of graduate mobility also explains to a

great extent the inertia that was still to be noticed a couple of years ago.

It seems that the predominant orientation in research activities is towards contracts for professional expertise. This is not surprising considering the financial situation. In terms of scientifically oriented activities, they are mostly organized through projects financed by Macedonian sources (Ministry for Education and Science), and few international projects (in collaboration with other former Yugoslav and other Southeast European countries like Bulgaria and Romania, and within Fifth Framework Programme of the European Commission).

The main task now is to find a way to maintain the existing partnerships, and to continue the exchange of teachers and students. This should be focused more on the issues related to the Master programs, which become more and more international.

#### *Financing and Facilities*

The study programs are financed by the Ministry for Education and Science, and by student fees (ranging from 100 to 200 Euro for all students, and from 400 to 1000 Euro for so-called self-financed students). Research programs and projects are also covered by the Ministry, and partially through international cooperation.

Another part of the income is generated by providing services (e.g. technical expertise and projects) for the government, industry and similar partners. The data in the Self Evaluation reports evidently show that the part of budget from the Ministry has constantly decreased in the last five years), while the part from additional sources increased accordingly. The situation regarding the financing from the state budget is even worse in many cases, since this part of the Faculty budgets decreased also in absolute figures. Several Deans stated that the state is less and less participating in financing. Faculties are thus forced to look for other sources on the open market, which could

obviously have harmful consequences on the quality of research and lecturing.

Some Faculties have very good premises and libraries, and the atmosphere in the building is conducive for learning and studying. Others have to cope with an infrastructure (building, lecture rooms etc) which is mainly in bad conditions. It is evident that the permanent lack of financial means prevents regular maintenance and improvements, not to speak about investments into new facilities. On top of this, due to the weak facilities and material supply, it is difficult to see how all the students can prepare good theses.

In general, the computer rooms are overcrowded. The direct insight during the visits indicated that the number of students in the computer rooms, as well as during lectures based on the use of PCs, is too large with respect to capacities.

Many libraries are also not appropriate for the wider use of students. Furthermore, it happens that they are only partially available to students during the usual working hours, apparently because the number of librarians is insufficient.

In several Faculties, the problems related to the poor material facilities for modern content and provision of study programmes were the priority issue for discussion with all groups, including the students. These Faculties and the academics are struggling to ensure the practical part of the curricula, and this is recognized as the biggest problem both in the Self Evaluation reports and within the discussions. This problem affects also the opportunity for good quality Master theses.

The students consider the use of, and the knowledge and skills transferred in, ICT quite inadequate. The practical learning for ICT is still insufficient and the access to the facilities is somewhat limited. The students have a clear idea that compared to previous years they have now better opportunities to work with computers and the Internet, but they also stressed the fact that most of the innovations introduced in the study programs can not be utilized without ICT knowledge and skills. In addition, Faculties feel a need to upgrade ICT infrastructure to be

practically competitive with the industry sector and the partner universities.

### *Stakeholders*

Most Faculties visited do not have an alumni organisation which goes beyond informal relations with former students. It is recognized by both the Deans and the Faculty members that the establishment of such organisation can support the learning opportunities (by using the alumni network), and can enhance the public recognition of the achievements.

Several faculties maintain good relations with their partners from the business and industry sectors, both for assuring the compatibility of the programmes and for securing adequate training and employment opportunities for students.

### *Supplementary Remarks*

It is no question that the introduction of ECTS is very important and the University has of course to take part in the Bologna process. But in the discussions the impression emerged that Bologna and ECTS became a kind of “magic formula” as if the new European architecture of studies would “automatically” solve all the problems in this field. (One can find similar views in other countries, also in Austria.) ECTS and Bologna can only offer a kind of setting, nothing more.

A member of the academic staff made the important remark that many colleagues consider the implementation of ECTS as a simple task while in reality it will be very difficult to adapt the existing study programs to ECTS requirements. Mechanisms and assistance are needed to focus the professors on this task and generate greater engagement on their behalf. The reform of the University is not a reform that could be done solely for the inside, but it relates to the society as a whole.

Many Faculties begin to realize the need for a realistic strategy of permanent improvement of management structures, of updating the study programs and their provision, and conferring

to students a real responsibility and ownership of the quality assurance process.

The self-evaluation was a promising start but the Faculties are now challenged with the task of turning the 'diagnosis' into a proper 'therapy'.

## **Challenges and Recommendations**

### *Mission and Profile*

Faculties are encouraged to develop further the positive initiatives to undertake a new cycle of revision of their structures and the study programs.

They are also invited to continue to review and, if necessary, revise teaching and research in accordance to internal (academic) and external (socio-economic) needs and demands. Such revision may even include the reduction of the number of Institutes. The complexity of many Faculties raises the question whether these institutions are still coherent or – more or less – “only” an agglomeration of institutes. It is no question that the “leading teams” are well accepted by the members of the Faculties and that there is a kind of “corporate identity”. But on the other hand the experts also got the impression that in the respective fields of studies there is far too little interdisciplinary cooperation between the institutes and their specific subjects. The “one institute – one curriculum” formula is increasingly becoming an obstacle to the establishment of new and interdisciplinary programs. In a nutshell: The Faculties resemble more a kind of puzzle, not a picture.

### *Structure and Provision of the Study Programs*

Study programmes need to be broader, fewer, and shorter. Broader programmes are required by the labour market, where a Bachelor with only narrow competencies is not appreciated but rather flexible graduates who can easily transfer from one field of action to another, applying so-called core skills and inter-

disciplinary experience to a rapidly developing job market. A first step may be to proceed with a modularisation of the big subjects.

Given the isolated manner in which subjects taught at present, it would seem sensible if the Faculties made deliberate efforts to emphasize the importance of an integrated and cohesive study program. By doing so, they would have to give more priority to the synthesis of the individual subjects rather than just offering them one by one, for example by defining thematic modules consisting of a group of subjects.

It must be the goal of the existing and future B.A. degrees at UKIM to qualify graduates for a dynamic (and to a large degree unpredictable) labour market by endowing them with generic knowledge and skills in their field, and enabling them to be functional within the work environment that they choose.

Innovation in teaching is badly needed across faculties. The current curricula are explained mostly only in content terms, too little is said on theory, methods, modules, no critical approach.

Despite individual successes, on average far too much inefficient ex-cathedra teaching is still taking place that must be substituted by modern, interactive and project-/practice-oriented training and learning styles. Since this won't happen by itself, staff training programs are needed to 'instruct the instructors' on the use of active teaching methods in the classroom.

The Faculties should realise the evolving consensus for shortening the under-graduate study programmes (at least) to 4 years (8 semesters), by increasing the number of optional and elective courses, to discuss the division of the undergraduate study programmes in two groups, and to increase the common parts of the obligatory courses within each of these groups.

At several Faculties there are subjects which are being taught at different institutes without much cooperation or coordination. New and modern programs (e.g. Gender Studies) are not always a question of budget but also a question of dynamics and cooperation. Cooperation of this kind also could and should include other Faculties of the University. Finally, in this context

the introduction of the position of a “Dean of Studies” should be discussed.

Often curricula are very strict and restrictive, giving students no choice by selecting professors or courses, or to concentrate on their particular fields of interest.

This is part of the age-old academic argument about specialization versus a more liberal approach to higher education. This question should be considered carefully, given the widely held international view that undergraduate education should enable the student to enter and benefit from several career options. Employers want employees with a broad education, capable of performing real-life tasks in their jobs but also prepared to benefit from life-long learning education. Today, an undergraduate degree is only the first step in a lifetime of learning; indeed, more - even graduate - programs are becoming multidisciplinary in nature. It is a timely and important to organize discussions on the relevance of asking students to prepare diploma theses for getting their first (Bachelor) diploma. At the same time, there may be a lack of theory and theoretical discussion and the belief that knowledge is more important than (soft) skills. It may thus be important to put more emphasis verbal and quantitative aptitude, to enable the students to think creatively and to deal analytically with complex problems. Ideally, university education produces a person who provides community leadership while at the same time has a sound concern for fellow citizens - in short, a humanitarian.

The establishment of a Credit Transfer System compatible with the ECTS should guide the intended revision of the study programs. The introduction of ECTS, on which some Faculties have been working since 1998 and a few Faculties have started to introduce in 2002, meets with some formal obstacles, mainly because of the difficulty in quantifying the knowledge and learning within the study programs. Also, students often feel ill-informed about the need for the changes towards ECTS. The formal requirements from MoES (minimum of 90 teaching hours for every subject) hinder the process of quantification of the

learning material; and, there is hardly any flexibility for students to select courses.

For example, because the introduction of ECTS requires a reorganization of the curricula and the study programs, the previous continuity and sequence of the courses have ceased. Efforts on both sides are needed to try to adjust and fine-tune the study programs. The existing involvement of students in evaluating the learning process is a positive element, but it could become an even more regular and systemic instrument for development.

Therefore Faculties may consider to make a deliberate and effective effort to further integrate the curricula. Taking into account a rather demanding level of study programs, it would be advisable to invest more into some stimulating steps, like increasing the number of student scholarships, offering more possibilities for specializations abroad, increasing the external mobility of students, engaging more visiting professors from abroad, etc. Also, it would be highly beneficial for UKIM to attract more foreign students to Skopje and again have a similar proportion of such students like before the economic and transitional crisis of the last decade.

One element in such integration should be to establish a curricula commission at each Faculty to design a B.A. program from scratch; as the starting point, it should develop a qualifications profile for the future B.A. graduate taking into account the national requirements of social development, and economic and employment growth.

### *Postgraduate Studies and Distance Education*

The experts recommended to group some of the current Master programs and to have a reasonable minimum of students in order to rationalize the structure and the teaching process, and to include more subjects into Master programs in order to ensure new round-up knowledge and skills for students.

It would be advisable to introduce optional courses and to modify programs in a way that would ensure more structured final

profiles and specializations. This is particularly important taking into account that Macedonia has recently joined the Bologna Declaration which also inaugurates more possibilities for students to choose the content and direction of his/her studies. Furthermore, study programs would have to be more oriented towards practical skills and complementary knowledge (like management, etc) apart from the narrowly defined professional qualifications.

The future M.A. programs should offer a broad variety of specializations for those who have the talent and the ambition to deepen their knowledge, and to work towards a more advanced professional (or academic) careers. But it is critically important that Faculties accept the B.A. as their 'main product' instead of openly or silently depreciating it as an 'incomplete M.A.'.

Similar to the B.A. level, curricula commissions should be set up to design future a M.A. programmes from scratch; as the starting point, it should develop a qualifications profile for the future M.A. graduate taking into account the national requirements of social development, and economic and employment growth.

Interdisciplinarity and cooperation should also be considered when all Faculties start offering PhD studies, which should be done as soon as possible.

### *Quality and Evaluation of Teaching*

Tools for measuring the outputs of the teaching units should be developed. Students' ability to cope with the requirements of their jobs after graduation is the most important criterion to be used in this respect.

### *Students and Assessment*

Most Faculties understand the advantage of engaging the students in the management. This should go beyond the formal representation of the students in the Faculty administrative bodies. Special programmes should be developed for training students in curriculum development and the implementation of

relevant methodology of provision, including a modular structure and a credit transfer system.

The Follow-up of the student questionnaires is extremely important to demonstrate to students that their input is taken seriously. Results need to be published in an appropriate format, and management corrective steps announced as soon as possible. A regular mechanism and practice should become routine, by which students are included and integrated in planning and review of curricula and teaching.

It is also suggested to proceed with the in-depth analysis of the high drop-outs problem, and to distinguish between the internal causes (quality of the curricula and the methods of provision) and the external (social-political) causes.

As far as student assessment is concerned, it is recommended to continue and to broaden the implementation of the new examination procedure, to replace oral examinations by continuous assessment of students' learning progress, and to analyse critically the reasons for failure in exams, prolonged study periods and student drop-out.

It may be a golden opportunity also to have a critical assessment of the total student number at each Faculty: what is the optimal capacity relative to existing resources (academic staff, rooms, equipment) *and* societal needs (labour market, employment prospects, economic development)?

### *Mobility*

There is still substantial room for improving the mobility of students within and between the study programs of a given Faculty. The introduction of the credit system provides an excellent chance to introduce a sufficiently broad selection of elective courses – thus providing more opportunities for students to make their own choices from a list of optional courses across (and even outside) the Faculty.

### *Staff and Faculty Policy*

The Faculties should try to hire teachers from outside the university and from outside Macedonia ("fresh blood argument"). But they also have to take care of the advancement process of their own young scholars.

It is an urgent necessity to employ new young lecturers (at the levels of assistants and associate professors) and the number of positions for assistants and young faculty at all the Faculties visited.

A first step in this direction was done with the employment of young academic staff in 2003, which was a very encouraging sign after a long period without any new positions.

However, the geriatrification of senior academic staff was identified as a time-bomb for UKIM. Unless this menace is being addressed swiftly and vigorously, Macedonian higher education is facing a collapse.

### *Actions Related to QA*

In the short-term, there is an urgent need for swift and transparent feedback from the reports of external evaluators. Information on the accumulated results of student questionnaires, the recommendations given, and action taken by the management of the Faculties and UKIM are a crucial part of a functioning evaluation system.

As next steps, it seems natural to broaden the discussion within Faculties concerning the key issues and main challenges analysed in the Self-Evaluation Report. This means to re-appropriate the QA process by turning it from an instrument of external accountability to a tool for internal advancement and institutional development. It would keep up the positive attitude towards improvement and the trust in the Faculties' own strengths.

In order to do so, assistants and students should be given a stronger role in the discussion about the QA agenda.

### *Research and International Cooperation*

As the local “market” will not fully support the existence of all HE institutions in their current role, the main challenge for the Faculties is globalisation. Becoming parochial should not be an option for UKIM. Therefore, stronger efforts must be undertaken to upgrade UKIM’s capacity to be an active part, and partner, in the competitive environment of international research and education.

Most members of the Faculties’ staff are fully aware and dedicated and committed to the values of establishing a common European area for Higher Education, as promoted in the Bologna Declaration. At the same time, they realise that it is not possible to start this process and to be successful by running alone. It is at the level of UKIM, and in cooperation with the other HE establishments and stakeholders, that a common strategy and common quality criteria need to be agreed upon in order to provide a positive environment for change.

Considering the rather small number of students in postgraduate study programs, it seems that the best possible solution would be to organize joint study programs on a cross-border regional (or even broader) basis, and to incorporate professors, students and research facilities of the Faculty into wider and more intense and efficient framework.

### *Financing and Facilities*

At some Faculties, the staff quite realistically stated that state financing is very limited - but that they can understand these restrictions. At the same time, the flexibility in operating with the available funds available is also limited – a situation which can, and has to be, overcome.

It would be surely advisable to undertake efforts towards increased use of international sources and the inclusion into European networks of research funding and joint study programs.

The search of Faculties for additional sources of income would have to be selective in order to prevent a decrease of the quality in research and teaching. Routine expertise service to outside clients which is not focusing on scientific and innovative problems should be assigned mainly to those staff members who are not primarily involved in research activities.

A considerable proportion of the income from this type of contracts should be channelled towards the improvement of working and studying conditions (including necessary repairs and improvement of basic facilities). Furthermore, the contracts with domestic partners would have to include components of applied research, beside standard expertise contents.

Re-organising finances, in all cases, implies a reviewing of priority objectives. While some activities will be financed with a higher budget than previously, some will stay at the same levels, and some will suffer from a reduction. Increasing all budget lines is impossible, and therefore difficult choices have to be made. When based on transparent priorities for the Faculty or University as a whole, such decisions can be accepted easier even from those whose activities are not among the new priorities.

### *Stakeholders*

Alumni organisations should be set up. Far beyond their immediate function of telling the Faculty/University what happens to their graduates, in many countries they have been found an extremely helpful source for inspiration, innovation, information on labour market requirements, sponsorship and useful political contacts.

In addition, for all the above recommendations, it is highly beneficial to involve all possible stakeholders, including non-academic partners (industry, employers, NGOs etc) in strategic planning.

## **Additional Suggestions**

### *Mission and Profile*

The Faculties should take active part in the processes aiming at a more integrated university, particularly by adopting new study programs based on the Bologna study scheme which the Macedonian higher education will have to comply to after the signing the corresponding declaration.

### *Structure and Provision of the Study Programs*

The first suggestion here is to continue with the curricula development process that has started with several Tempus projects, and – after the recent signature of the Bologna Declaration - to implement the new curricula swiftly. Moreover, the Faculties should actively identify criteria to become an (even more) interesting place for students and teachers from all over the world. The labour market needs, the price/quality relationship of studies, new teaching methods, cooperation projects with international industry and other universities could be areas that serve this purpose.

It would be necessary and useful to reconsider the efficiency of the existing division and distribution of staff into the *cathedra* structure which seems rather crude and inappropriate with regard to modern demands on the organization of scientific work and study programs. A re-organization would also have a positive effect on the system of Faculty governance and decision making which is currently hampered by the fact that each *cathedra* irrespective to its size and its relative contribution to research and teaching is represented the Dean's Collegium. It would be also necessary to ensure more balanced distribution of staff across the *cathedra* structure (if it is to be kept), taking into account the needs for modernization of curricula, in particular of those programs that are geared towards cross disciplinary and multidisciplinary professions.

### *Postgraduate and Distance Studies*

UKIM Faculties should consider the development of joint Master programs with other Faculties and (national and international) universities.

Another field of expansion could be the question of distance learning. Distance learning can be used to reach a much broader market. Continuing education and distance learning represent a great opportunity to serve expanded educational needs and produce an important source of income. It would be a good idea to combine distance learning with the aspect of lifelong learning that contributes to human fulfillment and positive social change.

Continuing training offers, a variety of post-graduate programme (to be organised also jointly with and for industry and business), and specialisation courses for working professionals are both a growing request from society and a possible source of income. Every University needs to react to the trend towards lifelong learning across Europe.

### *Quality and Evaluation of Teaching*

It is suggested to study the experience of other Faculties and universities in Self assessment and developing a QA culture; Blaming the government and its scarce budget for the poor stage of the practical part of the teaching is neither a single explanation, nor is it constructive. Most likely, the financial provision will not improve in the coming years, whereas Faculties should find solutions today.

It is advisable to place more emphasis on the quality of teaching by providing training in innovative teaching and learning methods for all academic staff (which should be mandatory for newly appointed staff).

### *Students*

With respect to students, an important question is the quality of the University admissions system. Obviously the Faculties want to allow more students to enroll. Due to the problem of increased

unemployment, usually after high school graduation, a large number of young people start studying. By admitting a greater number of students the quality of the educational experience is jeopardized. The number of students increases while the number of staff remain the same. That is the reason why tuition fees were introduced. All these problems are also well known in other countries – and the solution is not easy at all. In any case it is evident that a good entrance system is a must, and should precede any revision of teaching methods at high schools and tertiary institutions. As the University strives to grow in quality and stature it is critically important to maintain high admission standards.

Additional efforts should be invested to overcome the shortage of learning materials (more opportunities for use of ICT, books and textbooks, materials available and accessible on Internet) and the obligation of students to use textbooks produced by Faculty staff members. This should be done ideally without any additional financial burdens for the students.

### *Mobility*

It is no question that academic mobility first of all is a question of money. But there are many scholarships, many networks, many mobility programs in Europe and in the world. The Faculties offer very little assistance in the form of funds, information, recommendations. Faculties should make greater efforts to provide the students not only with free Internet access but also to assist them in getting information on mobility schemes, study abroad programs etc.

Furthermore, it would be advisable to take steps towards more flexible modalities of organization which would ensure more mobility of staff and students not only within the Faculty but also across the University.

The visits of faculty members to partner universities could be used specifically to collect experience in introducing new methods of teaching, and for their active dissemination among

colleagues. This is of particular importance to new staff that covers most of the seminars and practical exercises;

### *Staff and Faculty Policy*

With a view to the growing competition in Macedonia between universities, UKIM and its Faculties should define a clear and strict policy for engagement and side jobs at other higher education institutions. Cross-fertilisation and mobility between universities can be a positive phenomenon and should be encouraged. However, it can not be tolerated if professors neglect their professional duties at their home institution and afford less time for their students.

In general, a system of incentives should be designed, which rewards additional efforts of staff in attracting research, enhancing visibility and/or international cooperation.

### *Actions Related to QA*

The Commissions should be empowered to recommend further priorities and operational steps towards necessary change. It could be useful to create a permanent system for follow-up of the implementation of action plans based on the self-evaluation reports.

It is strongly recommended that the Commissions continue their activities in terms of providing strategic directions and practical suggestions to strengthen the teaching and research capacity of the Faculties. Even under the very precarious financial circumstances which characterize the present situation at UKIM, there are many possibilities to achieve meaningful improvement and change.

Another possibility is to develop information and training offers and activities for the teachers and for the students about the responsibilities and concrete obligations linked to the involvement of the Faculty in the Bologna process, and to put the implementation of these principles at the centre of Faculties' policy and strategy.

The current process of self-evaluation should be re-launched with new tasks, and triggered with new responsibilities. The new Commissions set up by the Faculty Senate could be given an even stronger mandate and assistance in order to address these issues more targeted, e.g. by assigning it to develop a strategic development plan following the findings of the Self-Evaluation Report

Finally, it is advisable to think about some joint actions (e.g. preparation of QA related projects) with the Tempus partner institutions or other international partner universities.

### *Research and International Cooperation*

In order to be acceptable partner for international cooperation, to attract foreign students, and to be visited by top scientist and educators from other countries, the University as a whole needs to present itself as a unified entity.

The introduction of the ECTS is an ideal topic for cooperation at all possible levels – faculty, university, cross-university and cross-border. The best idea is to address the Tempus partner institutions for cooperation and assistance in the search of good solutions and relevant experience.

Enhancing the research profile of the University must become one of the key priorities for all Faculties. Since the financial resources for research are very scarce, funds should be invested into areas of particular strength and promise. It would seem advisable to identify these areas in a targeted fashion by performing a specific SWOT analysis on research capacities, and developing an action plan (consider to invite outside, national and international, experts to participate in this exercise).

The Faculty members should consider to establish joint study programs at the postgraduate level. These arrangements would also be naturally linked to the international cooperation in research. It is therefore necessary to intensify international cooperation in the scientific programs, to encourage staff mobility, particularly the mobility of young researchers (on the PhD and post-doctoral level). Furthermore members of the

research staff, in particular those who are at the initial stages of their careers, should be encouraged, and supported, to strive for more international recognition (by publishing in the international journals, participating in important scholarly meetings, etc).

#### *Stakeholders*

It has proven to be an excellent move for universities in many countries to cultivate good relationships with industry and other stakeholder and to involve them in planned revisions of study programs and research orientation. To this end, it is suggested to invite a broad variety of stakeholder to join these commissions and try to initiate a discussion on qualification profiles that reaches beyond the Faculty itself.

#### *Supplementary Questions*

The experts were positively impressed by the dynamics at UKIM and the determination of its leadership to develop a new strategy for an even better university. But what is UKIM? Obviously there are lots of committees, councils, boards, etc. in the universities. For external visitors it difficult to get a clear sense of who and what is representative of UKIM; instead, they see an agglomerate and confederation of very independent Faculties which are often operating in 'splendid isolation'. What is the 'unifier' of these units? How can decision making been balanced between 'top down' and 'bottom up'? How can the Rector and the Deans better share their respective responsibilities and pursue a joint strategy in working towards a highly cohesive and networked university identity with optimal distribution of power, budget and impact?

### **4.2. Conclusions by Macedonian Experts in their Reports of External Evaluation**

#### *Integration of Faculties within the University*

It was stated that the faculties of similar research areas should augment the mutual cooperation with reference to the teaching, research and international collaboration.

At the same time, it was suggested that the faculties should set up mutual administration in the framework of identical research areas, situated in the existing teaching and research facilities.

**Recommendations:**

- centers for technological transfer should be set up in order to enable cooperation with the graduates in commercial, private and non-governmental organizations, which would be of interest for the further upgrading of their knowledge of the contemporary techniques and methods of work;
- creating a positive atmosphere for the activities of the self-evaluation commissions, which through the Commission for quality assurance at the university will analyze the conditions in higher education. These commissions would also point out to the concrete problems and work for quality improvement, with the assistance of the University Senate and the Rector's Management;
- inclusion of all the stakeholders and partners, commercial, non-commercial and non-governmental organizations, with view of strategic planning of the higher education.

*Governance and Management*

**Recommendations**

- the Commissions for Self-Evaluation at the faculties and the university need to be established as bodies that will pursue a permanent quality monitoring, analysis of the conditions, establishment of collaboration with the students through the students' survey, production of Reports on Self-Evaluation and application of the corrections according to the findings of the external evaluations;
- production of Strategy and Strategic Plan for the development of the faculties and the university;
- organization of various forms of team work in order to disseminate the Bologna Process' information and its application in the practical work of the faculties and the universities;
- introduction of a more stimulating system for rewarding the academic staff for their results;

- more equitable inclusion of the academic staff in the work of the commissions.

### *The Quality of the Study Programs*

#### Recommendations:

- re-organisation of the study programs for graduate and postgraduate studies with view of their harmonisation with the study programs of the European universities and application of the European Credit Transfer System;
- organisation of continuous education for graduate students in study programs which deal with current topics, methods and techniques;
- introduction of elective subjects in the study programs; thus, the students will be able to select subjects according to their potential and employability in the labour market;
- equal inclusion of the academic staff in the process of development of study programs;
- enlargement of the size of the teaching courses which would result in better and practical preparations of the students;
- introduction of project-oriented work in the study programs;
- establishment of collaboration with faculties of similar teaching and research study programs in order to develop the study programs and suggest new ones;
- invitation to experts from the commercial and non-commercial areas in the organisation and development of the study programs;
- obligatory introduction of the subject Computer Literacy in the first year of studies;
- more emphasis on the foreign languages' acquisition; minimum 2 foreign languages;
- decrease the size of the information in the disciplines, and stressing the importance of practical skills, in order to alleviate the students from cumbersome and redundant information;
- revision of the contents of the programs for the courses, which present difficulties for the students' mobility.

### *The Academic Staff*

The Faculties possess professional academic cores, wherein positive academic atmosphere and culture is nurtured.

The Rules' Book for selection of professors and assistants at the two state universities, as well as the Rules' Book for Exclusive Criteria and Procedures for Selection in Teaching-Research, Teaching, Teaching-Professional and Assistant Titles provide criteria for the selection of cadre with good quality.

Recommendations:

- more efficient cooperation between the academic staff at the faculties from the same research area in terms of the teaching process, production of research and professional projects, publication of books and teaching materials for the same discipline or area.
- greater mobility of the academic staff within and without the University's boundaries;
- improvement of the age structure of the academic staff;
- principled application of the Rules' Book for selection of professors and the Rules' Book for Exclusive Criteria for Selection of Titles;
- more efficient team work in the research projects and the preparations of the study programs;
- development of programs for continuous improvement of the professors and assistants regarding the contemporary methods in the teaching process and the pedagogical approach in the education.

### *Teaching Process*

Recommendations:

- introduction of European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in education;
- change of the education technology from ex-cathedra towards interactive approach;

- more active participation in the teaching process of the practical examples;
- greater extent of use of the computer sciences in the teaching process;
- improvement of the ratio student/professor;
- continuous analysis of the examinations results, in order to point out the concrete problems in the teaching process, and corrective measures to be undertaken for quality improvement;
- use of contemporary methods in education and exploration;
- involvement of experts proficient in practice in the teaching process;
- involvement of visiting professors from abroad in the teaching process, especially for the postgraduate studies;
- provision of monitoring for realisation of the teaching process on behalf of the Commission for Self-Evaluation;
- realisation of greater extent of communication and collaboration between the students and professors, by means of mentors;
- introduction of a regular students' practice outside the University.

### *Students*

The students should be aware that with the changes in the University and application of the Bologna Declaration they are becoming partners in higher education, not simply beneficiaries of services.

### *Recommendations:*

- realisation of a regular students' surveys as contribution of the students to quality assurance;
- change of the attitude and responsibility towards studying, that is to say learning directed towards knowledge and employment, not for simple acquisition of diploma;
- more active participation in the transfer of their thoughts regarding the teaching and research activities at the faculties,

through membership at the Teaching Councils, Rectors' Management and University Senate;

- more active involvement of the students in the commissions which have the responsibility to reorganise the study programs;
- more active involvement in the realisation of the study courses in the country and abroad;
- establishment of alumni associations as support to the reforms in the teaching process;
- involvement of the students in the research projects at the faculty/university level;
- analysis of the reasons for the longer period of studies and production of measures for their reduction;
- provision of more accessible approach to the computer laboratories.

#### *Housing Capacities, Equipment, Students' Service and Libraries*

Recommendations:

- procurement of contemporary instruments and equipment for teaching and research;
- increase of the number of computers for practical work; the ratio students per computer is insufficient;
- procurement of educational software;
- provision of international magazines, scientific publications and access to the international data base;
- connection of the library with the new data base;
- introduction of computer registration in the libraries;
- computerisation of the Students' Service;
- the working hours of the Students' Service and the libraries, as well as the computer labs need to be harmonised with the realistic needs of the students.

#### *International Cooperation*

In most of the reports on external evaluation an insufficient extent of cooperation of the academic staff with the foreign universities is registered. It came as a surprise to learn the fact

that many academics have advanced their knowledge through different forms of research and educational improvement in foreign educational centres in the past. There was also notable exchange of staff in both directions. However, in the last 5 years, as the reports shows, there is insufficient amount of exchange.

Recommendations:

- augmentation of the international cooperation with the foreign universities due to exchange of ideas, working methods in the teaching and research activities;
- inclusion of the realised international cooperation in the evaluation of the academic staff;
- larger institutional support from the faculties for the realisation of the international cooperation of the academic staff;
- larger extent of collaboration with the commercial and non-commercial enterprises, as well as non-governmental organisations;
- stimulation of the academic staff that realises non-institutional collaboration.

*Research Work and Arts*

Recommendations:

- development of team work between the academic staff at the faculties from the same research areas;
- greater involvement of students in the research activities;
- greater enthusiasm for publishing works in international magazines;
- introduction and development of system for rewarding which would valorise the work of the academic staff for their research activities;
- analysis of the influence of the research work in the betterment of the teaching process;
- realisation of all the individual projects exclusively through the faculty;
- additional equipment of the laboratories for research work with more updated and sophisticated apparatus.

### *Financing*

The reports on external evaluations found negative financial situation for the purpose of teaching process and highly negative conditions regarding the research activities.

#### Recommendations:

- production of a detailed financial plan directed towards realistic financial needs for quality assurance in the higher educational institutions, according to the documents on a level of Government, Agency for Evaluation of Higher Education and Inter-University conference;
- increase of the financial support on behalf of the state as well as continuous maintenance of the objects and equipment, as well as providing means for additional new equipment;
- procurement of financial means through the Budget in order to employ additional professors and assistants due to the legal obligations for introduction of European Credit Transfer System;
- exploring various possibilities for increase of the percentage of the financial means provided through external cooperation with the commerce, participation in international projects (for equipment), foreign donors and other kinds of applications.

## 5. Conclusions and an Outlook to the European Context of QA

Within a comparatively short period of time, the groundwork for quality monitoring processes in Macedonia has been firmly established by creating the necessary legislative and institutional/organizational framework (Evaluation Agency, Accreditation Board) as well as the initial practical documents (guidelines for self-evaluation and other relevant documents). Also, there is an increased awareness within the Macedonian academic community of the need to develop a regular and efficient way of evaluating the performance of their institutions in order to maintain and enhance the quality of the work and the service they are offering. The methods of how to define standards and criteria of good quality might still be disputed and there are definitely different views on how to promote quality. But the first steps towards a comprehensive QA system have been made and it is now vital to use this momentum and move from a more formalized and externally driven notion of quality control to a more self-directed and continuous process of institutional change and transformation through quality management.

The findings of the project on which this publication is based revealed quite a number of familiar concerns that are characteristic for countries with a still nascent QA system. The following itemizes some of these general concerns or questions and at the same points to general experience made in other European countries that underwent similar developments.

### (1) Dual Purpose

It has often been said that QA must be self-motivated and based on the intrinsic values of a HEI in order to be sustainable and successful. The quality cycle in Macedonia closely combines self-initiated procedures for quality assessment and enhancement (self-evaluation) and extrinsic requirements to operate the HEI (the (re)accreditation procedure). To be accredited is the *conditio sine qua non* for a HEI, and failure in the (re)accreditation procedure is an ultimate threat to an

institution. What are the potential downsides of this dual purpose of the quality cycle? Is there perhaps a danger that in the interest of fulfilling this condition the openness and rigor of the internal QA procedure might be weakened or flawed? If the ultimate goal of the quality cycle is (re)accreditation, the HEI may perhaps not be as self-critical as it could (and should) be because it wants to 'look good' in order to achieve this goal.

The experience in many European countries shows that the decoupling of accreditation and evaluation helps to create a more vigorous approach towards quality management that emphasizes the idea of self-improvement. Accreditation should be one, but certainly not the only goal of a HEI that cares about the quality of its work.

## **(2) External Evaluation**

In a small country like the Republic of Macedonia with a limited and circumscribed academic community ("everybody knows everybody"), there are some unavoidable limits to the idea (and the realities) of an "external evaluation". These limits could only be overcome by involving more international peers and/or Macedonian non-academic experts as it is regularly done in other European countries under similar circumstances.

It would seem logical to cooperate with QA agencies in neighbouring countries and create an exchange scheme whereby relevant experts would be involved as international peers in evaluation processes on a more regular basis.

## **(3) The Notion of 'Quality'**

'Quality' is a relative and relational term; what can be called 'quality' is always contingent on context(s) and circumstances, and - "there is always room for improvement". The general guidelines for QA in Macedonia talk a lot about quality per se, but there is not much mentioning about the specific conditions of HE in Macedonia (partly, of course, because the readership of the guidelines is familiar with these conditions by day-to-day experience). As an unintended consequence, QA might be

misperceived as a highly technical and abstract affair – an area for 'specialists' and not a concern for everybody within the academic community. There are good reasons why guidelines have to be technical and prescriptive. But unless the promotion of quality is more 'contextualized' and directly related to the daily worries and concerns of each professor and student, there is a danger that it is being seen as a purely formal, even bureaucratic exercise. One way of counterbalancing this tendency is by involving *all* stakeholders (internal and external) in the QA process.

This would be consistent with the developments in most European countries which emphasize the role of QA as a central tool for constant institutional transformation and adaptation according to self-defined goals and objectives. 'Quality' is not an abstract term or an outside measure but an organizational value that strengthens the ability of an institution to act autonomously. Transformation requires time, effort and the willingness and commitment of everyone in the institution to adhere to an organizational culture which is quality driven and ever-improving.

#### **(4) Action-oriented Approach**

QA is a twofold operation consisting of evaluation/assessment on the one hand (analysis) and planning/change processes (action) on the other hand. Both objectives ought to be balanced. Where this is not the case, and the former gets overemphasized at the expense of the latter, the more sceptical colleagues at universities in Macedonia might conclude that QA is mainly about 'control' (and not 'change for the better'). In an environment that has learnt to protect itself against control from above (state authorities or other agencies), this could result in a defensive attitude or in camouflage. Therefore, the key issue for the advancement of QA in Macedonia lies in the question: What can be done to strengthen QA as a forward-looking, action-oriented approach towards improving the conditions at HEIs (and reduce the perception of being a potential threat to those evaluated)? How can it become a more effective tool to stimulate the creative potential and to provide a common direction for those who are looking for change and positive development? In

other words: How can the emphasis of QA be shifted from analysis to action? How can the results of the QA processes be used more readily to initiate projects that address existing shortcomings?

As an answer to these questions, the link between evaluation and planning has become the centrepiece of quality promotion in many European countries. The evaluation report is not seen as a final verdict but as the starting point of an intense reflection and debate that culminates in the formulation of aims and projects and in the implementation of improvement measures. The philosophy behind this approach rests in the notion of involvement: The ultimate goal of the QA process is to create an institution-wide opportunity for substantial and comprehensive involvement for students, professors, administrative staff and stakeholders alike.

#### **(5) From Quantity to Quality**

A systematic collection of institutional data is absolutely crucial to any QA exercise. Excellent data are needed to obtain a sound and impartial view of where the HEI is at the present. The QA processes currently in place in Macedonia place a strong emphasis on gathering these data, and they provide helpful instructions and a methodology how to implement an institutional survey based on empirical data. The real challenge, however (as always with empirical research), is to bridge the gap between quantitative/factual knowledge and insights and qualitative/'normative' statements and value judgments. Who has the authority (power) to form these statements and judgments? As the goal of the self-evaluation and other stages of the quality cycle, the guidelines often refer to phrases and expressions such as "to form an opinion of..." or "to suggest recommendations for...". This is a necessary and in fact essential part of the QA exercise. But the simple question remains: Who has the mandate to do this and based on which qualifications and/or influence within the internal (institutional) or external (governmental) policy and power structure?

“While building up extensive quality monitoring processes is surely a central tool for the possible enlargement of the autonomy of the institution, the question of who determines the rules and value systems that are applied needs to be asked. Through quality assurance mechanisms, these values become so deeply woven into the procedures and judgments of the institution that they become gradually invisible and thus unquestionable.” (Felt, 2003, p. 27)

#### **(6) Transparency and Legitimacy**

Transparency at all levels is an essential requirement for the QA operation since it is vital to the credibility of the process and the results of this operation. The most promising way to achieve transparency is by the broadest possible involvement of those affected by the operation which potentially is the entire university community - academic staff, students and administration, (not to mention external stakeholders like government, parliament, relevant agencies as well as business employers, social partners, business companies, local communities etc). It is entirely legitimate that universities develop their own criteria and measures for what they call "quality". But at times when financial resources are increasingly scarce (and competition for money is increasing) it is also becoming more and more important to develop a shared perception of what is good and bad quality.

It cannot be expected that everyone at the university is keenly interested in the QA operation - academics are notoriously individualistic and often don't have much trust in judgment 'from outsiders'. However, only transparency can create legitimacy for the QA process, and thus there is a permanent demand on those responsible for this operation to communicate and actively involve the entire university community. Some say that the ultimate purpose of the QA operation is to strengthen and focus the communication channels within the university as a whole as well as to the 'outside world'.

Thus, as the next step in the evolution of QA in Macedonia, emphasis should be given to establishing a continuum between evaluation/assessment and strategic planning/change initiatives on the level of HEIs, “domain universities” as well as the higher education system in Macedonia as a whole. This will require a wholesome review of the legal and governance framework within which HEIs are operating. It is also likely that meaningful quality improvements of Macedonian higher education will mandate additional financial resources.

Therefore this publication offers reflections and practical guidelines to move from the current analyses to sustainable improvement – for all those who are keen to shift Quality Assurance and Evaluation in Macedonia into a higher gear.

## **6. Annexes**

### **6.1. Method for QA Stocktaking**

#### Introductory remarks

Under the component of QAE (Quality Assurance and Evaluation System), 2 workshops-with Quality Assurance and Evaluation System experts from UKIM and other Macedonian Higher Education Institutions-have been held in the framework of the Austrian Project “Support for the Higher Education at “SS. Cyril and Methodius” University in Macedonia”, financed by the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, 6 faculties were visited by external peer reviewers, and several documents on QA were analyzed, and numerous discussions were held.

From all of these, the following facts emerged:

- Several individuals within UKIM possess high knowledge and have accumulated relevant experience on issues of quality assurance and evaluation;
- All faculties, institutes and departments at UKIM have been involved in the self-evaluation and accreditation procedures;
- A number of faculties and institutes have themselves gathered practical experience from their own informal endeavours of improving their performance and assuring quality in their work;
- A number of faculties and institutes have been involved in other international projects which have focused on issues of QA processes, above all within the Tempus Programme;
- The Macedonian Evaluation Agency has produced highly operational guidelines for the processes of self-evaluation and external evaluation.

At the same time, there is no overview at the university level on all of the above activities, and the experience and knowledge they resulted in. Neither is there collected evidence, or list of expertise available at the University and in Macedonia. Finally, it seems that most activities so far were undertaken by different units individually, without making use of the expertise already available within the University.

Moreover, it seems that the quantity and depth of expertise is concentrated in areas of gathering and analysing information on higher education institutions, and comparatively less information is available on the following, permanent, and improvement-oriented measures-which are supposed to follow the analytical phase.

This is why a comprehensive Stocktaking of QAE expertise is proposed here.

### Stocktaking Benefits and Methods

The scope of this stocktaking is to provide UKIM with a complete and transparent information base, in which the following aspects are collected:

- A list of past and ongoing projects in the field of QAE;
- A record of dates when these were carried out;
- An address book of people who were involved;
- A contact list of (Macedonian and foreign) organizations and institutions involved;
- A register of specific expertise gathered on aspects of QA and Evaluation;
- A library of texts, documents, brochures, books, etc. on QAE themes;
- A directory of people responsible for QAE in each of UKIM's institutions;
- A direct contact telephone and email list for help and advice on several sub-themes of QAE.

A questionnaire to all UKIM institutions, and possibly to all HEIs in Macedonia, should be sent out by the Rectorate, with the request to fill in the required information.

Once the information is sent back by the UKIM institution, a table can be produced (best in a spreadsheet programme) which would map and thus “stock-take” the available expertise, and thus enable those interested in QAE activities to contact, consult with, and receive help from their colleagues across the University.

The Stocktaking Inventory would, as a consequence, reduce the need of UKIM to rely on external and foreign experts, and enable the consultation, enhance the cooperation and facilitate the collaboration of Macedonian and UKIM experts in the field.

Moreover, it would constitute a valuable list of experts for the use of Evaluation and Accreditation Agencies.

Once completed, the list should be made available to all UKIM institutions, and be posted also on UKIM's Intranet, in order to encourage the use of it.

Finally, as with all information, there is a need to update this information base on ongoing basis, and thus arrive at a regular stocktaking exercise.

## 6.2. Checklist for Continuous QA Process

### *Follow-up to the Self-Evaluation Report*

| <i>Action</i>                                                                                                                                             | <b>Who</b> | <i>When</i> | <i>Next Step</i> | <i>Deadline</i> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------|
| What has been the reaction to the self-evaluation report within the Faculty?                                                                              |            |             |                  |                 |
| Have you received a formal response to your self-evaluation report from the Evaluation Agency? (If not: Did you ask for it?)                              |            |             |                  |                 |
| Did you discuss the observations, recommendations and suggestions of the external reviewers in the Faculty Council?                                       |            |             |                  |                 |
| Do you use the self-evaluation report as an input in the Faculty's reform process? If yes: in which way? If no: why not?                                  |            |             |                  |                 |
| Did you look into the further steps needed to finish the evaluation cycle?                                                                                |            |             |                  |                 |
| Did you set yourself a deadline for "first-aid" on critical but promptly resolvable problems identified by the self evaluation or the external reviewers? |            |             |                  |                 |
| Did you to engage in strategic planning to develop a plan of action based on the self-evaluation?                                                         |            |             |                  |                 |
| Did you consider to give the Self-Evaluation Commission a mandate to a strategic planning committee to the Dean?                                          |            |             |                  |                 |
| Did you move towards implementation of some of the recommendations?                                                                                       |            |             |                  |                 |
| Did you communicate the areas in which your Faculty – according to external reviewers – is doing exceptionally well?                                      |            |             |                  |                 |
| Did you investigate why you are doing well in these areas?                                                                                                |            |             |                  |                 |
| Did you analyse which success factors can be transferred to other areas?                                                                                  |            |             |                  |                 |
| ...                                                                                                                                                       |            |             |                  |                 |

### *Review and Re-evaluate*

| <b>Action</b>                                                                            | <b>Who</b> | <i>When</i> | <i>Next Step</i> | <i>Deadline</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Did you evaluate the whole evaluation process?                                           |            |             |                  |                 |
| Did you read the self-evaluation reports of other UKIM Faculties?                        |            |             |                  |                 |
| Did you ask partner institutions from abroad to share their evaluation reports with you? |            |             |                  |                 |
| Did you update/improve/complete the evaluation process?                                  |            |             |                  |                 |
| Did you schedule a second round of evaluation?                                           |            |             |                  |                 |
| Did you appoint colleagues responsible for QA and evaluation on a continuous basis?      |            |             |                  |                 |
| ...                                                                                      |            |             |                  |                 |

### *Enlarge and Deepen*

| <b>Action</b>                                                                                       | <b>Who</b> | <i>When</i> | <i>Next Step</i> | <i>Deadline</i> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Did you identify new areas in need of evaluation?                                                   |            |             |                  |                 |
| Did you identify special issues which need more thorough investigation?                             |            |             |                  |                 |
| Did you contact external experts who may help you to address specific areas in need of improvement? |            |             |                  |                 |
| ...                                                                                                 |            |             |                  |                 |

### Disseminate

| Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Who | When | Next Step | Deadline |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|-----------|----------|
| In what manner and quantity has the self-evaluation report been distributed WITHIN the institution                                                                                                                                                                               |     |      |           |          |
| (a) to academic staff                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |     |      |           |          |
| (b) to students                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |     |      |           |          |
| (c) to administrative staff                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |     |      |           |          |
| (d) others?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |     |      |           |          |
| In what manner and quantity has the self-evaluation report been distributed OUTSIDE the institution, and to whom (ministries, members of parliament, employers association, media, political parties, academic peers within and outside the country, other outside stakeholders? |     |      |           |          |
| Did you ask stakeholders for their view on priority action taken by your Faculty?                                                                                                                                                                                                |     |      |           |          |
| Did you ask stakeholders for their own prioritisation of action?                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |     |      |           |          |
| Did you set up an alumni association?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |     |      |           |          |
| ...                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |     |      |           |          |

### **6.3. Contents of the Report on External Evaluation**

Although in the Guidelines for Quality Assurance and Assessment of the Higher Educational Institutions and the Academic Staff in R. Macedonia, a framework contents for external evaluation is provided, the performed evaluation showed that some reports do not contain all the necessary elements for evaluation and valorisation of the quality and even certain segments of evaluation are insufficiently presented.

In order to provide a guide to the experts-evaluators during the process of production of the report, the following model for definition of the content and size is recommended. The model is not an obligation but serves as framework. The experts-evaluators are at liberty to convey their creative capabilities.

#### **Contents of Report**

*(Evaluation of the higher educational institutions in Republic of Macedonia)*

Under this title-as an introduction-the legislation for quality in higher education, according to which the evaluation was performed, is enlisted.

Also, the Report on Self-Evaluation and the documents used in the higher educational institutions are contained. The meetings realised in the institution served as basis on which conclusions and analysis were presented in the report.

Then, the composition of the Commission of External Evaluation is stated.

According to the Guidelines for Quality Assurance of the Higher Educational Institutions and Academic Staff in Republic of Macedonia, the Commission realised the following activities:

- detailed analysis of the Report on Self-Evaluation. The Report was translated into English language for the use of the foreign experts;
- visits to the institution with duration of 2,5 days with working hours from 9 to 17, according to the Protocol wherein contact persons were designated on behalf of the managing

structures, members of the commission for self-evaluation, academic staff, students and administration;

- during the visits discussions were undertaken and the housing capacities and equipment were inspected.

What is the content of the report?

1. *Brief description of the preparations for the realisation of the evaluation process*

2. *Structure and organisation of the institution*

- Description of the institution regarding the national educational system and the legislation
- Management and leadership
- Connection of the faculty with the university
- Suggestions

3. *Study programs for graduate and postgraduate studies*

- The number, name, classification of the classes and the manner of making changes
- Recommendations

4. *Teaching-research and assistant cadre*

- Condition, structure and program for academic staff development
- Structural ratio and characteristics (ratio of the professors in opposition to the students)
- Organization and realization of the procedure for selection of academic staff
- Recommendations

5. *Teaching-learning activity*

- Teaching activity
- Educational activity
- The size of the lectures, practical activities, production of seminar papers
- Methods for examinations
- Production of final examinations (dissertations)
- Exchange of visiting professors with foreign universities

- Forms and degrees of adoption of European educational systems

#### *6. Students*

- Description of the meeting with the students, number of students in the discussions
- Is students' survey for the attitude of the academic staff realized, with reference to the teaching process?
- Is students' survey for the level of skills they are equipped with during the studies realized?
- Problems regarding the testing of the students' knowledge (examinations)
- Involvement of the students in the research work
- Students activities (in the framework of the faculty and the university)
- Recommendations

#### *7. Facilities and material resources*

- Properties and legitimacy
- Didactical facilities
- Computer equipment and networking system
- Description of the didactical facilities, computer network and connection to other institutions in the country and abroad
- Recommendations

#### *8. Logistics*

- Description of the Students' Service, library, lounge, and other facilities
- Recommendations

#### *9. International cooperation*

- Description of the cooperation and participation during the realization of international cooperation
- Cooperation with the commercial and social organizations
- Internal and international mobility of the academic staff and students
- Recommendations

*10. Research activities at the faculties*

- Organisation, management and development strategy
- Resources and computer connection
- Creative productivity and achievements in the last 5 years
- Participation of the academic staff and students, postgraduates in research projects

*11. Financing*

- The items for the sources of the Budget of the faculty
- The average costs for studies for one student
- Recommendations

*12. Quality assurance*

A general conclusion is made as to the understanding on the part of the faculties regarding the need and responsibility for quality assurance as well as securing the mechanisms for continuous quality improvement. Reports about a strategy for continuous management improvement, updating of the study programs, transfer of responsibility to the students and managing process for quality assurance are enlisted.

#### **6.4 List of external evaluation' experts**

During the period from 2001 to 2004, two projects for quality assurance in higher education were realized: "Evaluation of Higher Educational Institutions in R. Macedonia", 2001-2002 and "External Evaluation of Higher Educational Institutions in R. Macedonia", 2003-2004. In the framework of these projects, 5 workshops with participation of foreign experts were realized, for the purpose of training for quality evaluation and mechanisms for self-evaluation and external evaluation. The projects were managed by Prof. Dr. Violeta Cepujnoska from "SS. Cyril and Methodius" University in Skopje and Prof. Dr. Bozin Donevski from "St. Kliment Ohridski" University in Bitola.

In the framework of the project and the workshops the following experts, according to the different disciplines, participated:

##### *Technical and technological sciences:*

Prof. Dr. Violeta Cepujnoska  
Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, Skopje, "SS. Cyril and Methodius" University, Skopje  
Prof. Dr. Bozin Donevski  
Faculty of Technical Sciences, Bitola, "St. Kliment Ohridski" University, Bitola  
Prof. Dr. Kiril Gramatikov  
Faculty of Civil Engineering, Skopje, "SS. Cyril and Methodius" University, Skopje  
Prof. Dr. Kosta Talaganov  
IZIIS, Skopje, "SS. Cyril and Methodius" University, Skopje  
Prof. Dr. Dragan Slavkov  
Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, Skopje, "SS. Cyril and Methodius" University, Skopje  
Prof. Dr. Kristi Bombol  
Faculty of Technical Sciences, Bitola, "St. Kliment Ohridski" University, Bitola  
Prof. Dr. Gordana Bogoeva  
Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, Skopje, "SS. Cyril and Methodius" University, Skopje  
Prof. Dr. Ljupco Panovski

Electro-technical Faculty, Skopje, “SS. Cyril and Methodius”  
University, Skopje  
Prof. Dr. Aristotel Tentov  
Electro-technical Faculty, Skopje, “SS. Cyril and Methodius”  
University, Skopje  
Prof. Dr. Nikola Krstanoski  
Faculty of Technical Sciences, Bitola, “St. Kliment Ohridski”  
University, Bitola

*Medical sciences and health sector*

Prof. Dr. Bona Bajraktarova  
Faculty of Dentistry, Skopje, “SS. Cyril and Methodius”  
University, Skopje  
Prof. Dr. Ljubica Pavlova  
Faculty of Medicine, Skopje, “SS. Cyril and Methodius”  
University, Skopje  
Prof. Dr. Sloboda Dzekova,  
Faculty of Medicine, Skopje, “SS. Cyril and Methodius”  
University, Skopje  
Prof. Dr. Perko Kolevski  
Faculty of Medicine, Skopje, “SS. Cyril and Methodius”  
University, Skopje  
Prof. Dr. Jordan Kramnar  
Faculty of Medicine, Skopje, “SS. Cyril and Methodius”  
University, Skopje  
Prof. Dr. Svetlana Kulenova  
Faculty of Pharmacy, Skopje, “SS. Cyril and Methodius”  
University, Skopje

*Social sciences:*

Prof. Dr. Gordana Reckoska  
Faculty of Tourism and Gastronomy, Ohrid, “St. Kliment  
Ohridski” University, Bitola  
Prof. Dr. Marika Basheska-Gjorgjioska  
Faculty of Economics, Prilep, “St. Kliment Ohridski” University,  
Bitola  
Prof. Dr. Elena Gradiska

Faculty of Law, Skopje, “SS. Cyril and Methodius” University,  
Skopje

Prof. Dr. Jane Miljoski

Faculty of Law, Skopje, “SS. Cyril and Methodius” University,  
Skopje

Prof. Dr. Cane Mojanoski

Faculty of Pedagogy, Stip, “SS. Cyril and Methodius” University,  
Skopje

Prof. Dr. Gordana Trajkoska

Faculty of Economics, Prilep, “St. Kiliment Ohridski” University,  
Bitola

Prof. Dr. Violeta Arnaudova

Faculty of Philosophy, Skopje, “SS. Cyril and Methodius”  
University, Skopje

Prof. Dr. Mustafa Avzi

Faculty of Philology, Skopje, “SS. Cyril and Methodius”  
University, Skopje

Prof. Dr. Pere Aslimovski

Faculty of Tourism and Gastronomy, Ohrid, “St. Kliment  
Ohridski” University, Bitola

Prof. Dr. Arif Ago

Faculty of Philology, Skopje, “SS. Cyril and Methodius”  
University, Skopje

Prof. Dr. Donka Rose

Faculty of Philology, Skopje, “SS. Cyril and Methodius”  
University, Skopje

Prof. Dr. Zlatko Zjoglev

Faculty of Pedagogy, Bitola, “St. Kliment Ohridski” University,  
Bitola

Prof. Dr. Violeta Achkoska

Faculty of Philosophy, Skopje, “SS. Cyril and Methodius”  
University, Skopje

Prof. Dr. Mirko Gjoshevski

Faculty of Philosophy, Skopje, “SS. Cyril and Methodius”  
University, Skopje

### *Bio-technical sciences*

Prof. Dr. Gjorgji Martinoski

Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences  
Prof. Dr. Boris Angelkovski  
Faculty of Bio-technical Sciences, Bitola, "St. Kliment Ohridski"  
University, Bitola  
Prof. Dr. Velimir Stojkovski  
Veterinary Faculty, Skopje, "SS. Cyril and Methodius" University,  
Skopje  
Prof. Dr. Mitko Nacevski  
Faculty of Forestry, Skopje, "SS. Cyril and Methodius" University,  
Skopje

*Natural sciences:*

Prof. Dr. Trajce Stafilov  
Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Skopje, "SS. Cyril  
and Methodius" University, Skopje  
Prof. Dr. Mitko Spasenovski  
Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Skopje, "SS. Cyril  
and Methodius" University, Skopje  
Prof. Dr. Margita Konpopovska  
Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Skopje, "SS. Cyril  
and Methodius" University, Skopje

*Humanities:*

Prof. Dr. Simon Semov  
Faculty of Arts, Skopje, "SS. Cyril and Methodius" University,  
Skopje  
Prof. Dr. Jelena Luzina  
Faculty of Drama, Skopje, "SS. Cyril and Methodius" University,  
Skopje  
Prof. Dr. Dimitrie Buzarovski  
Faculty of Music, Skopje, "SS. Cyril and Methodius" University,  
Skopje

## 6.5. Literature, References & Resources

Those who want to learn more about QA and turn to the existing literature for insight and enlightenment will soon be quite bewildered: The list of reading matter on this topic is vast, diverse and fast growing both in term of scope and level of detail. A google search for “Quality Assurance in higher education” produced almost 700,000 hits (when narrowed down to Europe, there were still 220,000 references, and for Macedonia it was about 7,000). As a comparison: The search for “Democracy in Macedonia” resulted in slightly more than 300,000 references.

The reason for this remarkable proliferation of books, articles, documents, statements, reviews as well as other resources and materials about QA has been alluded to earlier: In the course of the past decade or so, QA has undoubtedly become one of the most central issues of higher education policy making and shaping worldwide (and perhaps even *the* most central issue). Accordingly, a whole new professional area started up and a plethora of new organizations, agencies, units etc has been instituted, all trying to stake out their territory by producing all sorts of publications. Thus, the exponential growth of literature on QA is really not surprising: however, for those seeking advice, instruction or simply a good and solid introduction in this field, the abundance of literature remains a source of frustration.

In the light of this, there is a palpable need for reliable sources of information about relevant, accessible and usable publications on QA. It would be self-defeating if QA is being left in the hands of those with arcane or privileged knowledge because quality monitoring processes at universities will only be effective and sustainable if they promote involvement, participation and ‘ownership’ on the part of the larger academic and stakeholder communities. QA specialists should therefore see it as a prerequisite for the success of their work to provide guidance for these communities to stay well-informed.

It is strongly recommended that the appropriate institution/organization, presumably the Evaluation Agency, publishes regularly (online and/or printed) a “QA Brief” with full

bibliographical information and summary comments on pertinent books, brochures, documents and other materials that can help enhance the knowledge and the discussion about QA in Macedonia. The following is a sample how the entries of some of the more recent literature might look like:

#### *MODEL FOR QA BRIEF*

##### *Books*

CAMPBELL, Carolyn/ROSZNYAI, Christina (2002): Quality Assurance and the Development of Course Programmes, Bucharest (UNESCO-CEPES Papers on Higher Education)

*A product of the EU-sponsored UNESCO-CEPES project on “Regional University Network on Governance and Management of Higher Education in South East Europe”, this book offers the first comprehensive overview on quality control, monitoring and enhancement processes focusing primarily on the Southeast European environment. A well structured and readable account of the state of affairs QA in Europe - concepts, purpose, approaches, methodologies, scope, cost, challenges and criticisms – with a rich documentation of QA in Central and Eastern European countries including Macedonia (based on the 2001 INQAAHE survey). Particularly useful: a 25 pages list of references, bibliographies and web-resources, partly commented. This book is an absolute ‘must’ for anybody involved in the reform of higher education in Southeast Europe!*

VLASCEANU, Lazar/GRÜNBERG, Laura/PARLEA, Dan (2004): Quality Assurance and Accreditation: A Glossary of Basic Terms and Definitions, Bucharest (UNESCO-CEPES Papers on Higher Education)

*Another product of the above mentioned UNESCO-CEPES project, and an exceedingly useful one offering detailed “definitions” (which are more explanations and discussions) of thirty key terms ranging from ‘Accreditation’ and ‘Assessment’ to ‘Standards’, ‘Student survey’ and ‘Validation’. The term ‘Quality (academic)’ is divided into no less than eight subcategories: Quality Assessment/Quality Review, QA, Quality Control, Quality*

*Management, Total Quality Management (TQM), Quality Audit, Quality Culture and Quality Planning. The practical value of this small volume cannot be overestimated: The 'quality hype' in higher education has generated a lot of Babylonian talk, and sometimes gibberish. This book will help to (re)establish a common language.*

#### *Articles*

HAUG, Guy (2003): Quality Assurance/Accreditation in the Emerging European Higher Education Area: A Possible Scenario for the Future, in: European Journal of Education, September 2003, vol. 38, issue 3, pp. 229-241

SCHWARZ, Stefanie/WESTERHEIJDEN, Don F. (2003): Accreditation in the Framework of Evaluation Activities: Synopsis of the Current Situation and Dynamics in Europe ([http://www.gew.de/berlinkonf\\_0403/pdfs/synopsisakkreditierung.pdf](http://www.gew.de/berlinkonf_0403/pdfs/synopsisakkreditierung.pdf))

#### Papers

European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)  
(<http://www.enqa.net>)

*Apart from training and advisory support, ENQA also disseminates general information, experiences, good practices, and new developments in the fields of quality assessment and quality assurance in the form of conferences or reports. The ENQA Occasional Papers are an important source of state-of-the-art discussion on QA matters all over Europe (and mostly from a transnational perspective), especially as they relate to the Bologna Process. Here are some examples:*

ENQA (2001): Institutional Evaluations in Europe Helsinki (ENQA Occasional Papers 1)

ENQA (2003): Quality Procedures in European Higher Education, Helsinki (ENQA Occasional Papers 5)

ENQA (2004): Transnational European Evaluation Project, Helsinki (ENQA Occasional Papers 6)

ESIB – The National Unions of Students of Europe (2002): European Student Handbook on Quality Assurance in Higher Education

([www.esib.org](http://www.esib.org))

*Starting in 2001, ESIB has undertaken a multi-year QA project which as one of its results produced a comprehensive handbook with the goal of familiarizing local and national student representatives with the relevant issues and debates, and to encourage them “to get further involved in the QA process. Students are one of the key partners within higher education and should be involved in the quality mechanisms.” A good overview with a particularly helpful section on “Local Dimensions – Students Involvement in QA”. Required reading for all student representatives who want to surprise their professors with thorough insights into the QA discussion!*

EUA’s QA Policy Position in the Context of the Berlin Communiqué, April 12, 2004

([http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/EUA\\_QA\\_policy\\_position.1081955225903.pdf](http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/EUA_QA_policy_position.1081955225903.pdf))

*The paper offers a discussion of the first policy line on QA of the Berlin Communiqué which had invited the ENQA, in cooperation with EUS, ESIB and EURASHE, “to develop an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance”. This paper is important because it raises justified reservations against the sloppy use of the term “(European) standards” as it related to QA procedures. It insists that “a diverse and innovative HE sector across the continent” is needed for Europe in order to reach the Lisbon objectives of becoming the most competitive knowledge society in the world. “In risking to stifle diversity and innovation in the sector, standards would constitute a threat to reaching” these objectives. The paper suggests that instead of abstract standards, evaluations should focus on the capacity for HE institutions to adjust to changing environments: “Evaluation approaches that are based on standards, quantitative methods, sets of criteria or checklists will not*

*improve quality meaningfully and may not even control it significantly because they will not capture the complexity of the educational enterprise. (...) Autonomy is a precondition for a capacity to respond to change. Thus, university autonomy requires that each institution decides on its standards in the context of its mission and goals.” A strong and authoritative voice for a more thoughtful and flexible approach towards QA, and a voice against the a mislead notion of, and reference to, ‘European standards’!*

#### *E-Newsletters & Resources*

*More and more, the Internet is becoming a primary source of up-to-date information on trends and developments on the QA sector. The ‘grey literature’ about QA on the Web has been mushrooming which impedes its practicality. However, there are numerous newsletters and websites that can help filter the abundance of information, for example:*

*EvaNet (Evaluations-Netzwerk zur Evaluation und Qualitätssicherung an deutschen Hochschulen/Evaluation Network for Evaluation and Quality Assurance at German Universities)*

*<http://evanet.his.de/evanet/index.html>*

*An initiative linked to the German Rectors Conference which publishes a helpful newsletter with a wealth of information on QA developments and projects in Germany and beyond (unfortunately only available in German)*

*The Joint Quality Initiative  
(<http://www.jointquality.org/>)*

*The joint quality initiative is an informal network for quality assurance and accreditation of bachelor and master programmes in Europe, geared towards bottom-up action on quality assurance issues that are of shared concern. It stems from the Bologna declaration (1999) and from the follow-up Prague communiqué (2001) in which European ministers of Education committed themselves, among other things,*

- to adopt a higher education system essentially based on two main cycles;*

- *to co-operate in quality assurance*
- *to design scenarios for mutual acceptance of evaluation and accreditation/certification mechanisms*
- *to collaborate in establishing a common framework of reference*
- *to disseminate best practice.*

*The initiative originated from a meeting in Maastricht of countries with comparable quality assurance systems, which introduced or considered introducing accreditation of bachelor and master programmes.*

*Actions are aimed at transparency in bachelor and master programmes.*

European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)  
(<http://www.enqa.net>)

ENQA (see above) also maintains a web-site with further references, and a newsletter on QA in HE.

#### *Periodicals*

Quality in Higher Education (Carefax Publishing Taylor & Francis Group)

*“Quality in Higher Education” is an international refereed journal aimed at those interested in the theory, practice and policies relating to the control, management and improvement of quality in higher education. Articles focus on: reported research results, especially where these assess the impact of quality assurance systems, procedures and methodologies; theoretical analyses of quality and quality initiatives in higher education; comparative evaluation and international aspects of practice and policy with a view to identifying transportable methods, systems and good practice.*

Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education (Carefax Publishing Taylor & Francis Group)

*“Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education” is an international peer-reviewed journal which publishes papers and*

*reports on all aspects of assessment and evaluation within higher education. Its purpose is to advance understanding of assessment and evaluation practices and processes, particularly the contribution that these make to student learning and to course, staff and institutional development.*

Higher Education in Europe (Carefax Publishing Taylor & Francis Group)

*“Higher Education in Europe” is a quarterly review published on behalf of the European Centre for Higher Education (CEPES), UNESCO. It is a scholarly publication dealing with major problems and trends in contemporary higher education. It presents information, interpretations, and criticism in regard to current developments in the field. While focusing primarily on Europe and North America within the context of the other activities of the Centre, it regularly features contributions from other regions of the world as well.*

*Standards, Procedures, Indicators*

Francois Tavenas (2004): Quality Assurance: A reference System for Indicators and Evaluation Procedures, Brussels (European University Association -- EUA), available online in English at

<http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/>

ELU\_EN.1082042243703.pdf

and in French at

<http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/>

ELU\_FR.1082043002992.pdf

*Prepared for the ELU (The Latin European Universities group, an informal group of EUA members), this report by the founding rector of the Université de Luxembourg offers an in-depth view of performance indicators and quality procedures in several Latin countries of Europe and compares them with practices in North America, notably with the Quebec system where Tavenas was a rector for many years. A well structured and highly useful study.*