

To Whom it May Concern


Tirana, on 22.11.2018

Dear Sir or Madam,

Kindly be informed that the document attached, entitled "Quality Assurance Strategy", realized in the framework of the Erasmus + "561510-EPP-1-2015-1-AT-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP"-*"Strategic support on strengthening the quality assurance structures at the private higher education institutions in Albania-QAinAL"* project, is approved to serve as a principal document for restructuring and further developing the Curricula Development and Quality Assurance Unit, as well as a guide and in attention to all the Departments within Marin Barleti University, with the Instruction No. 51, date 22.11.2018, of the Rector.

Marin Barleti University,

Rector Prof. Dr. Marenglen Spiro






QUALITY ASSURANCE STRATEGY
“MARIN BARLETI UNIVERSITY”

Tirana 2018

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Introduction

UMB is a non-public institution of higher education, grounded on Albanian legislation on higher education. At present, the institution is adapting its activity to the requirements of the Law no. 80/15, dated 22.07.2015 "*On the higher education and scientific research in the Institutions of Higher Education in the Republic of Albania*". UMB has developed its strategic project in line with the national activity in education aiming at the strengthening of the democratization, modernization in full adherence to Europe. Created, as a higher education institution with a humanist approach, UMB aims at the development of the institution in yet another dimension, by getting closer to the university practices of an entrepreneurial institution.

In the Albanian context, UMB aims at fulfilling its institutional purpose, through a combination of the liberal, classical school and its ideals for independent critical opinion and free thinking with the fundamental qualities of the entrepreneurial mind and spirit. UMB diplomas are a blend of academic challenge with training and qualities that not only prepare students for future employment, but also endow them with capabilities of becoming Albania's ambassadors in Europe and beyond. UMB is not politically engaged and works in the interest and to the benefit of the society in several correlated manners:

- as an instrument of acquiring knowledge and creating intellectual sustained capital;
- as a critical collaborator of the governments, able to assess and guide the policy-makers;
- as a source of generating and supporting social and economic development;
- as a source for the nurturing of democratic values and ideas.

UMB's vision is to become a premier university, by matching democratic and liberal education to the entrepreneurial spirit. We aim at thinking globally by nurturing our international awareness and by promoting a new and innovative culture of teaching and learning. We are committed to acting not only on a national level, but also, on a regional one, to prepare a sustainable future and to contribute towards a more prosperous economy and a more fair society that encourages its citizens to fulfill their goals.

UMB's mission is to prepare highly prepared students, able to accomplish their professional goals within and outside the country, and above all, capable of pursuing their passions and interests to the benefit of the communities, where they live and work. Study programmes aim at providing a flexible academic offer, by creating an active experience for its students, applicable scientific research, services to business and entrepreneurship. Institution's goals and objectives are ambitious.

MBU aims to provide undergraduate studies in different cycles, based on research and scientific knowledge, to prepare young specialists and scientists. In the context of lifelong learning, MBU aims also to provide short-term study programs for qualifications and specializations, as well as updating the knowledge acquired. To fulfill its purpose, MBU can cooperate and enter into agreements with public and private entities for joint teaching activities, research, consultancy and services in favor of third parties. MBU is engaged in promotion, organization and accomplishment of cultural and creative services in regional and national territory. Academic, executive, technical and administrative staff and students, as part of MBU, according to their area of competence, functions and responsibility contribute in meeting institutional goals of this higher education institution.

Procedures of realization of Quality Assurance system Strategy and action plan

MBU composed a working group to prepare the Quality Assurance Strategy for the MBU. The working group conducted an in-depth analysis with the aim of identifying strengths and weaknesses of the University, as well as, possible future opportunities and threats in the external environment. Relevant existing documents were analyzed also, including: Self-evaluation Report, Recommendations from the team of experts provided by the ASCAL, the rules and procedures of the Ministry of Education and Sport of and the Statute of the University. The process concluded with the identification of 5 QA strategic objectives. The draft strategy was consulted with departments and other units involved in the objectives and then a final draft was sent to the Rectorate and Administrator of MBU. After all recommendations and suggestions the strategy was finalized.

The document follows with the SWOT Analysis and then with the objectives for improvement and the Action Plan of their implementation.

SWOT ANALYSIS – HEI MBU

a. Strengths

- MBU has its strategic plan and tends to work toward the achievements of the goals of the plan
- MBU study programs have all undergone licensing and accreditation process at least once, some of them have been accredited for the second time. Its programs are market oriented and in coherence with national developments, and in accordance with the Bologna curricula type which makes the academic offer compatible with national and international standards.
- MBU has been accredited twice institutionally. In 2009 from the national accreditation agency and in 2016-2017 from the national accreditation agency in collaboration with the prestigious Quality Assurance Agency, member of ENQA. The second accreditation was an excellent experience for MBU facing international accreditation expertise. The report of the experts evaluated MBU in the five fields of accreditation maximally and they gave no recommendation and identified no weaknesses. With a decision of the board of the national accreditation agency in Albania, MBU has been accredited for 6 years, the maximum period of accreditation.
- All study programs have been constructed in such a way that fits all national legislative regulations, are close to labor market requirements and have also flexibility through major and minor elements of the programs.

- The study programs respect academic standards. The teaching plan, the syllabies, teaching methods are according to academic standards.
- A considerable percentage of the actual full time and part time staff at MBU is qualified in other countries, a diversity feature that positively influences quality.
- Due to the small number of students, integration of students in research projects of department or individual projects of the staff creates practical possibilities to involve students in research and also to combine teaching with research knowledge and activities.
- The technological and it infrastructure is sufficient and easily accessible for students and staff. Even though more investments are needed to modernize the technology and other equipments for updated teaching methods and research.
- MBU has three research institutes and two affiliated NGO that implement research and service based projects. The research institutes play a crucial role in developing research projects, acquiring national and international funds. University staff benefits from the projects through trainings, collaborations, networking in national and international context.
- MBU has a strong and wide network of collaborators and partners that gives possibility for organizing activities, participating in projects, experience exchanges and also graduates employment.
- MBU has a well developed organizational structure, regulations and procedures that gives the institution the stability and also the flexibility that works best with the national and international context and environment. All documents and procedures are well organized and perfectly interconnected. Even though a small and young institution MBU has developed key structural components despite the academic organization, to fulfill the mos important activities: here including, students offices (orientation, career services, student union, students clubs etc) human resources and management offices (Human resources, finance offices, logistic offices, IT) secretary and coordinators for level of studies and for programs, quality assurance offices, marketing, law offices etc.
- Quality assurance units and procedures have been established since the very first years of the institution functioning and have been developed during the way with more staff, more qualifications, better procedures and activities.

- All information related to the students and staff are collected periodically and saved in a database that gives the institution to grow according to the analysis of its own needs.

b. Weaknesses

- Low number of students influences the long term decision making and also in some isolated cases its a concern for the stability of some of the degrees.
- The quality of the students, especially for some of the degrees is not at the expected level.
- The considerable number of degrees especially combined with the low number of students sometimes increases the competition among departments, which impacts the institution
- Even though MBU collects and saves considerable amount of data, the lack of an online system of data collection is necessary to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of data elaboration process.
- A better infrastructure, buildings updated technology and equipments, (online) data management systems, better online library would improve the quality in the University.

c. Opportunities

- MBU has gained a lot of experience through the participation in different projects and the collaboration with different partners. Not only staff but also students have benefited in new partnerships, experience exchange, new projects and more possibilities. Also this experience is attractive to new comers as staff or as students at MBU, so gives the MBU to attract some of the best staff and students.
- Being a small institution makes organizational change and flexibility easier and more efficient. Also the size have an impact in the inclusive decision making process, where all members of staff and students have the possibility to participate in different levels of decision making process.

d. Threats

- Frequent legislative changes impacts the development of the institution and constantly changing acts and decisions influences the functioning of the institutions.

- There have been different legal acts for private and public institutions which has created a competitive attitude between the private and public sector institutions which influences collaboration between the two sectors for the improvement of the whole system.
- The big number of private institutions operating in a small country as Albania (23 private compared to 12 public institutions)
- The students quota for public institutions have been rising every year, even though the infrastructure of public institutions is not changed much during the years to reflect the increased number of students.
- The one year contract for assistant professors, as decided in the law of higher education, increases risk of staff turn over which impacts the continuity and stability of each department.

OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES AND EXPECTED RESULTS

The working group identified 5 key objectives to work on the improvement of the quality at MBU. For each objective several activities were identified and the expected outcome for each of them.

1. Reorganization of quality assurance structures in institutional level.
 - Restructuring of Internal quality assurance unit
 - The permanent quality assurance commission
 - Creation of curricula office
 - Update and revise the internal evaluation policy in institutional level.
2. Track student's employability and evaluation of the efficacy of the study programs in relation to the labor market.
 - Creation of the stake holder's database and entering in contact with them in relation to their needs for qualified staff.
 - Prepare and initiate the alumnae survey to track the employability of the graduated students. The survey may be organized every 5 years.
 - Periodically evaluating study programs in collaboration with teachers, students, employers and other external partners
3. Improvement of the resources to support teaching and learning process
 - Creation of the physical archive of the University
 - Enrichment of the library with more titles and electronic books
 - Enrichment of the laboratories and opening of the new necessary laboratories
 - Improve the strategy of recruiting new staff at MBU
4. Improve teaching and learning process with contemporaneous teaching methods
 - Realization of workshops with key stakeholders to explore effective and contemporaneous teaching methods.
 - Training of the staff with the best teaching methods
5. Develop effective and transparent management of departments to improve quality assurance and promote quality culture.
 - Preparation of the self evaluation scheme of departments
 - Identification of key indicators in relation to teaching, research and administrative staks

Objective 1: Reorganization of quality assurance structures in institutional level.

Quality assurance office at MBU has been functioning in two separate offices, one for undergraduate programs and one for graduate programs. With the recent development in the institution and also with the experience gained through the years MBU will restructure its quality assurance office in one office with more staff engaged in different roles and responsibilities. With the requirements of the new law within the quality assurance structures there will be created the curricula office as a new office at MBU. Previously the curriculum has been a responsibility of departments and Quality assurance office. The revision of all the documents related to quality assurance office is also one of the duties related to this objective.

Activity 1.1	Creation of curricula office
Description	The responsibility on curricula and all related documentation has been shared until know between departments and quality assurance offices. It will be created another office within the quality assurance Unit that will be responsible for the curricula issues.
Expected results	Creation of the curricula office and its regulation
Activity 1.2	The permanent quality assurance commission
Description	The commission will evaluate periodically the results of teaching and research and will make the necessary proposals for improvements based on the national and international standards. Its organization and functioning will be regulated through an internal regulation approved by the senate of the University. The commission reports in the senate on the realized duties and on the quality of academic activities, research and administrative of the institution, its units and the realization of the study programs.
Expected results	Composition of the new commission Revision of roles and responsibilities. Preparation of the quality commission regulation in reliance with national legislative requirements and internal institutional statute and other regulations.
Activity 1.3	Restructuring of Internal quality assurance unit
Description	The main aim of this restructuring is to strengthen the role of QA unit not only in the previews duties but also to bring the standards to department level creating and impacting the quality culture in MBU. The role of the QA offices have been key in relation to four main processes. (1) Licensing of the new programs, (2) Accreditation of the programs; (3) Students survey on teaching (4) Monitoring and coordinating of teaching loads and teaching schedules according to the directives from the rectorate and their fit with the national standards.
Expected results	Definition of the roles and responsibilities of the quality assurance office Composition of the structure with the new staff members

	Clear roles and responsibilities of the staff members
Activity 1.4	Update and revise the internal evaluation policy in institutional level.
Description	The evaluation policy document is a key document for the quality assurance system at MBU. The restructuring of the unit makes the revision of the evaluation policy document very necessary at this stage.
Expected results	Evaluation policy document revised Publication of the documents in the web page of MBU

Objective 2: Track student’s employability and evaluation of the efficacy of the study programs in relation to the labor market.

Student’s employability is a key challenge to creating qualitative programs. Students employability impact also the admission of the new students in terms of quantity but also quality. Tracking student’s employability is also a legal obligation in the new law of higher education and research in Albania (2015). Being a small University, MBU has been working progressively to reach this objective but more needs to be done. MBU aims to strengthen this component and have planned to take several measures such as (1) Creation of the stake holder’s database and entering in contact with them in relation to their needs for qualified staff; (2) Prepare and initiate the alumnae survey to track the employability of the graduated students. The survey may be organized every 5 years; (3) periodically evaluating study programs in collaboration with teachers, students, employers and other external partners.

Activity 2.1	Creation of the stake holder’s database and entering in contact with them in relation to their needs for qualified staff.
Description	In relation with the departments Alumnae Office will identify the main stakeholders for each study program and will create a database for future use for the activities of departments and or other offices. The next step will be creating a strategy of interaction with the stakeholders, such as joint activities, joint research studies or labor market studies, curricula update meetings with the aim of improving the quality of study programs in line with the identified needs.
Expected results	The database of the stakeholders Plan of activities to interact with the stakeholders.
Activity 2.2	Prepare and initiate the alumnae survey to track the employability of the graduated students. The survey may be organized every 5 years.
Description	Every five years is planned to be organized the alumnae survey to track students employability and the quality of the study programs. The survey will also be an important tool to enlarge the database of the stakeholders and future employers of the students

Expected results	Preparation for the survey, questionnaire, methodology, financial management
Activity 3.3	Periodically evaluating study programs in collaboration with teachers, students, employers and other external partners.
Description	Revision of the study program is very necessary for the quality improvement, especially in a changing and global market. The frequency of the changes is also very important in order to guarantee the sustainability of the study programs and also stay in line with the changes of the labor market.
Expected results	Revision of the curricula of all first accredited study programs.

Objective 3: Improvement of the resources to support teaching and learning process

Infrastructure and resources have increased progressively with the grow of MBU. In 2005, MBU started its activity with one building, few study programs and small number of staff and students. Since then MBU has been growing fast and also its needs for more space and more resources have been growing too. In 2010 MBU invested in a new building, initially working only for graduate programs, but with the growing of the number of students both buildings are used for bachelor and master programs all day. The working group have identified especially two activities that will improve the resources to support teaching and learning process. Creation of the physical and electronically Archive of the University
Enrichment of the library with more titles and electronic books

Activity 3.1	Creation of the archive of the University
Description	Database for all study programs through the years, licensing accreditation documents over the years, semiannual and annual reports, Institutional agreements, Projects reporting and documents etc.
Expected results	Improvement of data storage and elaboration in institutional level.
Activity 3.2	Enrichment of the library with more titles and electronic books
Description	MBU has one physical library located at campus one. But further improvements are necessary. We will buy more resources in hard and electronic copies according to the needs of the study programs.
Expected results	Opening of the new branch of the library at campus II Larger number of resources.

Objective 4: Improve teaching and learning process with contemporaneous teaching methods

Through the years several activities have been initiated and organized from MBU to improve teaching and learning process. Lectoriums, open lectures of most experienced professors, have been one of these best initiatives that have influenced the improvement of teaching methods. Update and train the staff with the best teaching methods have been identified as an important objective to improve the service offered to the students.

Activity 4.1	Realization of workshops with key stakeholders to explore effective and contemporaneous teaching methods.
Description	Most important stakeholders in the area, in national and international context will be identified and there will be organized several workshops on exploring best teaching methods.
Expected results	Staff will be participating in the workshops and have the opportunity to share their experiences and learn from other professionals experiences.
Activity 4.2	Training of the staff with the best teaching methods
Description	According to the needs of each of the MBU staff and the level of qualification several trainings will be organized to master their teaching methods and integrate best practices in their teaching process.
Expected results	Improved teaching, students satisfied with the teaching process.

Objective 5: Develop effective and transparent management of departments to improve quality assurance and promote quality culture.

Departments are the most vital and important unit at the University. Their best functioning impact the whole functioning of the University. MBU has been working to improve their capacity and professionalism. Defining the indicators for self evaluation and building up a system of self evaluation is important and will impact departments work. Also the results from self evaluation based on common indicators will make easier evaluating institutional performance and and measure department and institutional growth.

Activity 5.1	Identification of key indicators in relation to teaching, research and administrative staks
Description	The work of department members is divided into three main components at MBU teaching, research and administrative tasks. In each individual contract there are specified the details and percentages of each component. Based on that there will be identified department and individual indicators to measure and compare the improvement of the unit.
Expected results	Indicators identified for each component for individuals and for departments.

Activity 5.2	Preparation of the self evaluation scheme of departments
Description	Several focus groups and meetings will be organized with departments members on the components of the self evaluation scheme
Expected results	Preparation of the self evaluation scheme and the frequency of evaluation.

ACTION PLAN

					Budget in EURO			
Code	Activity	Implementing period	Responsible	Measuring instrument	2018	2019	2020	Total
Objective 1: Reorganization of quality assurance structures in institutional level								5500
1.1 Restructuring of Internal quality assurance unit								
1.1.1	Revision of the responsibilities of the quality assurance office	T ¹ 2	Human resource management, Quality assurance office, Rector	Definition of the roles and responsibilities of the quality assurance office	x			
1.1.2	Appointment of three new staff members at QAO	T2	Human resource management, Quality assurance office, Rector	Composition of the structure with the new staff members	1500	1500	1500	4500
1.1.3	Description of the duties and responsibilities	T3	Quality assurance office, Rector	Clear roles and responsibilities of the staff members	x			
1.2 The permanent quality assurance commission								
1.2.1	Composition of the new quality assurance commission	T3	Senate	Composition of the structure with the new staff members	x			
1.2.2	Description of the roles and responsibilities of the commission	T3	Senate	Definition of the roles and responsibilities of the quality assurance office	x			
1.2.3	Creating the regulation of the Quality assurance commission	T1	The commission	Regulation of the commission drafted		x		
1.2.4	Approval of the regulation of the quality assurance commission	T1	Senate	Regulation of the commission approved		x		
1.3 Creation of curricula office								

¹ Tremester

1.3.1	Description of the responsibilities of the office	T2	Human resource management, Quality assurance office, Rector	Definition of the roles and responsibilities of the quality assurance office		x		
1.3.2	Recruitment of new staff members working for the curricula	T1	Human resource management, Quality assurance office, Rector	Composition of the structure with the new staff members		1000		1000
1.4 Update and revise the internal evaluation policy in institutional level.								
1.4.1	Composition of the group working for the revision of the evaluation policy document	T3	Rectorate, Quality assurance unit	Decision of the rector for the creation of the group		x		
1.4.2	Revision of the document	T3	The working group	Evaluation policy document revised		x		
Objective 2: Track students employability and evaluation of the efficacy of the study programs in relation to the labor market.								5000
2.1 Creation of the stake holder's database and entering in contact with them in relation to their needs for qualified staff.								
2.1.1	Identification of the key stakeholders	T1	Alumnae Office, Student's dean, Departments	List of stakeholders		x	x	
2.1.2	Creation of the system	T1	IT Department	IT system		1500		1500
2.1.3	Preparation of a plan of activities to get in contact with the stakeholders.	T2	Alumnae Office, Student's dean, Departments	Plan of activities		x	x	
2.2 Prepare and initiate the alumnae survey to track the employability of the graduated students.								
2.2.1	Drafting the methodology of the alumnae survey	T1	Alumnae office, Quality assurance office	The methodology and the instruments		500		500
2.2.2	Creating the working group for the survey	T2	Senate, Rector	Composition of the working group		x		
2.2.3	Realization of the survey	T3&T1	Alumnae office, Quality assurance office	The results of the survey		1500	1500	3000
2.2 Periodically evaluating study programs in collaboration with teachers, students, employers and other external partners.								

2.2.1	Revise the evaluation procedures of the study programs	T2	Departments, Quality Assurance office	Revised procedures for evaluating study programs		x		
2.2.2	Define the indicators for the evaluation of the study programs	T3	Departments, Quality Assurance office	Identification of new indicators for the evaluation of the study programs.		x		
Objective 3: Improvement of the resources tu support teaching an learning process								9000
3.1 Creation of the physical archive of the University								
3.1.1	Preparation of the proper environment for the archive	T2	Administrator	The setting for the archive	2500			2500
3.1.2	Drafting a regulation of the documents that will be stored in the Archive	T3	Senate	The regulation	x			
3.1.3	Recruiting new staff for the archive	T2	Human resource management	The new appointed staff	500			500
3.2 Enrichment of the library with more titles and electronic books								
3.2.1	Preparation of the list of necessary books for each department	T1	Departments, Librarian	List of books from each department	x	x	x	
3.2.2	Approval of the list of books to be bought	T1	Rector Administrator	Final total list of books approved	x	x	x	
3.2.3	Buying new books.	T3	Administrator, Librarian	The bills of the bought books	2000	2000	2000	6000
Objective 4: Improve teaching and learning process with contemporaneous teaching methods								1900
4.1 Realisation of workshops with key stakeholders to explore effective and contemporaneous teaching methods.								
4.1.1	Preparation of a plan of the necessary workshops to be organized for the improvement of the study programs	T1	Departments, Quality Assurance office	Plan of workshops		x		
4.1.2	Identification of the key stakeholders	T2	Departments, Quality Assurance office	List of stakeholders		x		

4.1.3	Realization of the workshops	T3	Quality assurance office, "Barleti" Institute of Education	Number of workshops organized per department. All documents related to workshop (bills, photos, reports, presentations)		900		900
4.1.4	Preparation of a report for each workshop to be incorporated in the training materials for staff	T1	Quality assurance office	Report		x		
4.2 Training of the staff with the best teaching methods								
	Evaluation of the teaching methods in MBU staff, and the needs for training	T1	Departments, performance coordinator, Quality assurance	Report on training needs			x	
	Staff training on new contemporaneous teaching methods	T2	External experts	All documents related to trainings (bills, fee's photos, reports, presentations)			1000	1000
Objective 5: Promoting internal evaluation of departments								200
5.1 Identification of key indicators in relation to teaching, research and administrative tasks								
5.1.1	Identification of the key indicators of the self evaluating scheme	T1	Quality assurance office, performance coordinator	Indicators		x		
5.2 Preparation of the self evaluation scheme of departments								
5.2.1	Realization of a focus group with department members on the components of the self evaluation scheme and the frequency of evaluation	T2	Quality assurance office, performance coordinator	All documents related to the focus group (list of participants, photos, reports, presentations)		200		200
5.1.3	Finalization of self evaluation scheme	T3	Quality assurance office, performance coordinator	The self evaluation scheme		x		
Total								21600