**A V O R S**

**Agency for Higher Education**

**Of the Republic of Srpska**

**Report on the External Evaluation of the University of Banja Luka**

**AVORS Reference Number and Date:** 1/02‐04‐2‐271‐13/22, dated 28th February 2024

**Dates of Visit:** 26th and 27th February 2024

**Location:** Banja Luka

**External Evaluation Committee:**

* Husejin Keran, PhD, Expert of the Academic Community of BiH, Chairman
* Selma Corbo, PhD, Expert of the Academic Community of BiH, Member
* Enisa Omanovic‐Miklicanin, PhD, Expert of the Academic Community of BiH, Member
* Damir Magdic, PhD, International Expert, Member
* Dr Emina Boskailo, Expert from the Business Sector and Professional Practice, Member, and
* Omar Zerem, MA, Student, Member

**Coordinator:** Duska Radmanovic, MA

**Evaluation Criteria:**

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) – European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 2015, Accreditation Criteria for First and Second Cycle Study Programs in BiH, Regulations on the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programs of the Republic of Srpska

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**1.0 Application**

**1.1 Information on the Accreditation Process**

On 2nd June 2022, the University of Banja Luka (hereinafter referred to as: the University) submitted an application for the accreditation of a cluster of study programs in the field of engineering and technology, to the Agency of Higher Education of the Republic of Srpska (hereinafter referred to as: the Agency), filed under the Agency's reference number 01/02‐04‐2‐171/22 dated 2nd June 2022 and subsequently, at its 93rd session held on 25th May 2023, the University Senate adopted the Self-Evaluation Report of the University of Banja Luka, and on 22nd June 2023 the University submitted an application for the accreditation of the institution. To streamline the process, these procedures were merged.

On 27th January 2023, by the Document number 01/02‐04‐2‐271‐2/22, the Agency requested from the Ministry of Scientific and Technological Development, Higher Education and Information Society of the Republic of Srpska, being the competent administrative authority, to verify the legitimacy of work of the institution and its study programs. On the same day, by the Document number 01/02‐04‐2‐271‐3/22, the Agency also requested data from the Republic Administration for Inspection Affairs regarding the performing regulatory inspection of the University and its study programs.

The Ministry, in its correspondence No. 19.040/612‐22/23 dated 14th February 2023, informed the Agency that the University and its study programs have been issued Decisions and Licences for conducting higher education activities and implementing study programs and that there are no pending second-instance proceedings in which the University is an appellant.

The Republic Administration for Inspection Affairs, in its response No. 24.120/054‐114‐5/23 dated 21st March 2023, stated that the institution operates in compliance with legal regulations.

By Decision No. 01/02‐04‐2‐271‐1/22 dated 14th July 2022, the Agency appointed Mrs Duska Radmanovic, Assistant Director for Accreditation and International Cooperation in the Sector for Accreditation and International Cooperation, as the coordinator of the accreditation process for the University of Banja Luka and its cluster of study programs.

On 6th June 2023, the Agency and the University signed a Contract on Services of Accreditation and Cluster of Study Programs under the Agency's Ref. No. 01/02‐04‐2‐271‐6/22. The Agency will carry out the accreditation process based on:

* Analysis of the compliance of documentation with legal requirements (legitimacy of the application), completeness of the documentation in relation to the applicable legal regulations of Republic of Srpska and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the standards of European associations in this field.
* External evaluation for accreditation purposes, aimed at determining compliance with the requirements of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), the criteria for the accreditation of study programs and higher education institutions and the assessment of the alignment of the structure and content of study programs with the defined learning outcomes.

The Contract defines the obligations of both the University and the Agency, as well as the confidentiality of all information provided during the external evaluation process.

Subsequently, the Agency carried out the selection process for the members of the Expert Committee in accordance with the Regulations on the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programs and according to the Act on Higher Education of the Republic of Srpska and the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education of the Republic of Srpska and by the Document No. 01/02‐04‐2‐271‐5‐1/22 dated 31st March 2023, submitted a Proposal to the Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance of BiH for the appointment of a Committee of national and international experts responsible for assessing and reviewing the quality and providing accreditation recommendations for the University of Banja Luka and its cluster of study programs in the field of engineering and technology (hereinafter: Expert Committee). The appointed Expert Committee has consisted of the following members:

* Husejin Keran, PhD, Expert of the Academic Community of BiH, Chairman
* Selma Corbo, PhD, Expert of the Academic Community of BiH, Member
* Enisa Omanovic‐Miklicanin, PhD, Expert of the Academic Community of BiH, Member
* Damir Magdic, PhD, International Expert, Member
* Dr Emina Boskailo, Expert of the Business Sector and Professional Practice, Member
* Omar Zerem, MA, Student, Member

Following the appointment of the Committe of national and international experts by the Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance of BiH, by the Decisions No. 05‐33‐1‐158‐2/23 dated 12th April 2023 and No. 05‐33‐1‐158‐4/23 dated 10th October 2023, a detailed analysis of the documentation was conducted. Subsequently, preparations for the site visit to the higher education institution commenced.

**1.2 Data on the Higher Education Institution**

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| **Data on the Higher Education Institution** | | |
| Name, Address, and Email of the Institution | Univerzitet u Banjoj Luci  Bulevar vojvode Petra Bojovica 1A  78 000 Banja Luka  info@unibl.org |
| Internet address | <https://unibl.org> |
| Name, Number, and Date of the Document of Foundation | Self-Governing Agreement on the Foundation of the University of Banja Luka, 25th September 1975.  Presiding Body of Rectors and Vice-Rectors of All Yugoslav Universities, 7th November 1975 |
| Tax Identification Number (PIB) | PIB 401017720111 |
| Registry number given by the Republic Institute of Statistics | **01040251** |
| Name, Surname, and Address (Name and Headquarters) of the Founders | Faculty of Economics, Economic Institute, Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Institute for Testing Building Materials,  Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, OOUR Institute for Chemical Wood Processing "Incel", OOUR Research and Development Center "Jelsingrad", OOUR for Professional Electronics "Rudi Cajavec", Pedagogical Academy, Agricultural Institute, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Technology, Veterinary‐Livestock Center, Higher School of Economics and Commerce (in Banja Luka), Higher Technical School (in Bihac)Top of Form  Bottom of Form |
| Number and date of the Decision on the appointment of the person authorized for represention | 02/04‐3.2697‐1/21 dated 29th November 2021 |
| Number and date of the Licence of the higher education institution | 07.2‐9616/07 dated 28th December 2007 |
| Number and date of the Licence for operations outside the headquarters | 07.023/612‐625‐2/10 dated 12th November 2010 |
| Organizational units being visited and persons in charge | 1. Academy of Arts, Dragana Purkovic-Macan, MA, Associate Professor 2. Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering, and Geodesy, Sasa Cvoro, PhD, Associate Professor 3. Faculty of Economics, Milenko Krajisnik, PhD, Associate Professor 4. Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Zoran Djuric, PhD, Full Professor 5. Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Aleksandar Milasinovic, PhD, Full Professor 6. Faculty of Medicine, Ranko Skrbic, PhD, Full Professor 7. Faculty of Agriculture, Zlatan Kovacevic, PhD, Full Professor 8. Faculty of Law, Zeljko Mirjanic, PhD, Full Professor 9. Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Goran Trbic, PhD, Full Professor 10. Faculty of Mining, Vladimir Malbasic, PhD, Associate Professor 11. Faculty of Technology, Borislav Malinovic, PhD, Associate Professor 12. Faculty of Political Sciences, Ranka Peric-Romic, PhD, Associate Professor 13. Faculty of Physical Education and Sports, Borko Petrovic, PhD, Associate Professor 14. Faculty of Philosophy, Srdan Dusanic, PhD, Full Professor 15. Faculty of Philology, Biljana Babic, PhD, Full Professor 16. Faculty of Forestry, Marijana Kapovic-Solomun, PhD, Associate Professor 17. Faculty of Security Sciences, Predrag Ceranic, PhD, Assistant Professor |
| Contact person (for visit) | Vice-Rector for Teaching and Student Affairs, Strain Posavljak, PhD |
| Phone number | 051 321 181 |

**1.3 Details of the Application**

The University of Banja Luka submitted the Application for accreditation along with the completed application form, following the relevant standards and criteria, as well as the Self-evaluation report and supporting documentation, which is linked to the application form (including the Statute, Decision and Licences for Operations, Strategy, Regulations on Quality Assurance, etc.). Previously, the University applied for the Accreditation of a cluster of study programs, submitted completed application forms, self-evaluation reports and supporting documentation for the programs being applied for.

The University of Banja Luka submitted the Application for the accreditation of 17 study programs (No. 01-2.1155/22 dated 2nd June 2022). According to the Regulations on the Determination of Fees for Services within the Competence of the Agency and the types and methods of distribution of the Agency's revenues, the norms for the work of the Expert Committee were prescribed, which for a cluster accreditation allows for the accreditation of a maximum of ten study programs in one cluster. Furthermore, the list of experts from which the Expert Committee for the accreditation of the University and its cluster of study programs is selected does not contain a sufficient number of experts from all the specialized scientific fields corresponding to the listed study programs. Analyzing all of the above, the Agency concluded that, in the first stage, the external evaluation process could be conducted for the following study programs:

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| **Study program applied for the accreditation** | | |
| **Name of the study program:** | **Level of study:** | **Name of the obtained qualification:** |
| Chemistry | 1st cycle | Bachelor of Chemistry – 240 ECTS Bachelor of Chemistry Education – 240 ECTS |
| Textile Engineering | 1st cycle | -Bachelor of Textile Engineering – 180 ECTS, Major: Design and Garment Manufacturing ‐ Bachelor of Textile Engineering – 240 ECTS, Major: Clothing Technology and Design ‐ Bachelor of Textile Engineering – 240 ECTS, Major: Footwear Technology and Design |
| Graphic Engineering | 1st cycle | -Bachelor of Graphic Technology – 240 ECTS, Major: General |
| Food Technologies and Industrial Biotechnologies, with the following majors:  ‐ Production ‐ Quality Control and Food Safety ‐ Nutritional Quality of Food | 1st cycle | -Bachelor of Food Technology – 240 ECTS, Major: Production  -Bachelor of Food Technology – 240 ECTS, Major: Quality Control and Food Safety  -Bachelor of Food Technology – 240 ECTS, Specialization: Nutritional Quality of Food |
| Chemistry | 2nd cycle | Master of Chemistry – 300 ECTS |
| Textile Engineering | 2nd cycle | Master of Textile Engineering – 300 ECTS, Major: Design and Clothing Technology  Master of Textile Engineering – 300 ECTS, Major: Clothing Technology  Master of Textile Engineering – 300 ECTS, Major: Footwear Technology |
| Graphic Engineering | 2nd cycle | -Master Engineer of Graphic Technology – 300 ECTS, Major: General |
| Food Engineering | 2nd cycle | -Master of Food Engineering – 300 ECTS |
| Chemical Engineering | 2nd cycle | Master of Chemical Engineering – 300 ECTS |

**2.0 External Evaluation**

The subject of external evaluation is the assessment of the quality of the University (evaluation and review of quality and providing recommendations for the accreditation of the University) and the quality of study programs and their outcomes (employment opportunities for graduates).

**2.1 Previous Activities**

After reviewing the submitted documentation for the accreditation of the University and the cluster of study programs, and after verifying the legitimacy of the higher education institution, preparations began for the work of the Expert Committee, consisting of:

* Husejin Keran, PhD, Expert of the Academic Community of BiH, Chairman
* Selma Corbo, PhD, Expert of the Academic Community of BiH, Member
* Enisa Omanovic-Miklicanin, PhD, Expert of the Academic Community of BiH, Member
* Damir Magdic, PhD, International Expert, Member
* Dr Emina Boskailo, Expert of the Business Sector and Practice, Member, and
* Omar Zerem, MA, Student, Member

The Committee received the documentation of the higher education institution and its study programs, completed application forms, a self-evaluation report and numerous accompanying documents, in order to be reviewed.

The Committee also received the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, the Criteria for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions, the Criteria for Accreditation of First- and Second-Cycle Study Programs in BiH, the Regulations on Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programs of the Republic of Srpska, Expert Committee checklist forms and report templates.

The Agency organized an online meeting via Google Meet with the Expert Committee on 16th January 2024, attended by the coordinator and four Committee members. Another online meeting was held on 19th January 2024, for the remaining two Committee members who were unable to attend the previous meeting. During the meetings, the Committee established the methodology of work and agreed that, in accordance with the Agency’s regulations and all relevant legal provisions in the Republic of Srpska and BiH, each Committee member is required to complete an individual checklist form based on the analyzed documentation of the higher education institution. This checklist serves as a reference for the Committee member, containing questions, observations, and requests for additional documents during the visit to the institution. The meeting finalized all work-related details and established a shared understanding of accreditation standards and criteria.

Via email, the coordinator and the Committee agreed on the proposed schedule, as well as the Plan and Program of the visit to the higher education institution. The visit includes a two-day on-site assessment of the University of Banja Luka and the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, with an additional visit to the Faculty of Technology.

Before the visit by the Comittee for external evaluation, the University’s management and department representatives were informed about the details and schedule of the upcoming visit. They were provided with the Plan and Program of the visit in advance, allowing them to supplement it with the names of participants for each scheduled meeting. The subject of the external evaluation is the University of Banja Luka and a cluster of study programs in the field of engineering and technology, assessed in relation to the fulfillment of the Accreditation Criteria for First- and Second-Cycle Study Programs in BiH and relevant European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, as outlined in the Accreditation Application.

During the meeting, the focus on specific topics was agreed upon, opinions were exchanged after reviewing the University’s and study programs’ applications, and the approach to conducting interviews was determined. Other key aspects necessary for the professional work of the Expert Committee were also discussed.

**2.2 Visit to the Higher Education Institution**

The visit to the higher education institution took place on 26th and 27th February 2023. The Plan and Program of the Visit (hereinafter referred to as: the Visit Plan) is available in the Agency's archive, attached to the University’s file. It was agreed upon with all members of the Expert Committee and was timely delivered to the University to ensure the necessary documentation was prepared for review, facilitating a well-organized evaluation process.

The Visit Plan included meetings between the Expert Committee and the following stakeholders:

* Faculty management,
* Quality Assurance Team and the Team in charge of preparing self-evaluation reports,
* Representatives of the legal department, accounting, and other administrative services,
* Representatives of the Office for International and Inter-University Cooperation and the Center for Research Development and Support,
* Representatives of academic staff,
* Representatives of students,
* Representatives of graduates/alumni, and
* Representatives of the labor market.

All meetings were conducted as planned.

On the first working day, 26th February 2024, the Expert Committee held its first meeting at the University Rectorate with the management of the University of Banja Luka. This was followed by a meeting with the Quality Assurance Team and the Team for preparing self-evaluation reports and public relations, as well as representatives of the legal department, accounting, and other general university services. After a break and an internal consultation of the Expert Committee, a meeting was held with representatives of the Office for International and Inter-University Cooperation and the Center for Research Development and Support. The Committe then moved to the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics at the University of Banja Luka, where meetings continued with the Faculty management, academic staff, student services representatives and the library staff. The Committee then toured the resources of the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics and continued with meetings with graduates of the Chemistry study program, followed by representatives of industry/labor market stakeholders.

The visit continued on the second working day, 27th February, covering the National and University Library and both university campuses. After visiting the National and University Library and the old campus—where the Committee visited the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Law—there was a tour of the new campus, including the Faculty of Dentistry and Dental Clinic, the Faculty of Philosophy, the Faculty of Political Sciences, the Faculty of Forestry, the Botanical Garden, and the Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy.

Following the meetings and discussions, the Expert Committee members held an internal meeting at the University Rectorate in Banja Luka, where they shared individual observations and impressions from various meetings, commented on the information received and analyzed the work of the Expert Committee. During the discussion, all members aligned their views. The visit concluded with an oral presentation of the report to the management of the University of Banja Luka. Specific recommendations based on these findings are provided in the following sections of the report.

**3.0 Opinion on the Outcome of the External Evaluation**

The external evaluation was conducted by assessing the level of compliance with the ESG standards and the Criteria for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions.

The criteria for assessing the level of compliance are as follows:

* **Level I** – There is no evidence, or only partial and unreliable evidence, of meeting the requirement (completely new or unfamiliar within the organization).
* **Level II** – The requirement is planned, exists only on paper, and/or is partially implemented.
* **Level III** – The requirement is planned, implemented, and its effects are monitored.
* **Level IV** – The requirement is planned, implemented, its effects are monitored, with or without continuous adjustments and improvements based on benchmarking against the best practices.

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| I | Higher education institution does not fulfill the requirements |
| II | Higher education institution fulfills the requirements partially |
| III | Higher education institution fulfills the requirements mostly |
| IV | Higher education institution fulfills the requirements completely |

**3.1 Quality Assessment by Individual Criteria**

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| **A.1 Quality Assurance Policy**  Requirements of ESG standard 1.1 and RS/BiH criteria T.1.1, T.1.2, T.1.3, T.1.4, T.1.5, T.1.6. | |
| 1. The higher education institution defines its vision and mission, which effectively guide its activities. The vision and mission are developed and revised in consultation with relevant stakeholders and are publicly available. 2. The higher education institution has an effective system and procedures for implementing, monitoring and further developing its strategy and action plans. The institution regularly develops and revises its strategy in consultation with all relevant stakeholders. The strategy is formally adopted and is publicly available. It covers the teaching process, research/artistic development and contributions to societal development, including specific and achievable strategic goals and activities. 3. The higher education institution has a formally defined and publicly available policy and procedures for internal quality assurance, which include clear responsibilities. These procedures align with the institution’s strategy. 4. Internal quality assurance takes into account the opinions of internal and external stakeholders, as well as data from information systems and monitoring and evaluation systems. 5. The internal quality assurance system is focused on the continuous improvement of the higher education institution and supports the enhancement of the teaching process, research/artistic development, societal contributions and managerial and administrative processes. 6. The higher education institution has a strategy for international aspects of its work, which aligns with the institution’s overall strategy. This strategy provides an overview of its international activities, such as international projects, bilateral agreements, joint programs, etc. | |
| **Strengths:**  The vision of the University of Banja Luka is to reach European standards and contribute to the overall development of knowledge, through science, research, internationalization and innovation, enhancing the teaching process and fostering economic development in society.  The mission of the University is to educate internationally competent human resources in all scientific fields, capable of professionally and effectively meeting the demands of the modern regional economy.  Through regular consultations with the economy and alumni associations, activities necessary for achieving these goals are revised and information is published on the University’s website.  The Development Strategy of the University of Banja Luka from 2017 to 2025 defines realistic goals and the document is published on the University’s website. The strategy was developed in accordance with the Act on Higher Education (Official Gazette of the Republic of Srpska, No. 73/10, 104/11, 84/12, 108/13, 44/15, and 90/16); Act on Scientific Research Activities and Technological Development (Official Gazette of the Republic of Srpska, No. 6/12); Strategy for Scientific and Technological Development of the Republic of Srpska; and Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Srpska. The document contains concrete and achievable strategic goals and planned activities of the higher education institution.  The Quality Policy, Regulations on the Organization and Work of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee and Regulations on the Organization and Work of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Board were adopted at the 90th session of the Senate, held on 23rd February 2023. These rules establish the formation and working procedures of the committee and board responsible for the quality domain at the University and its members. The new Statute of the University of Banja Luka (2022) and current documents are published on the University’s website. From discussions and the documents received by the Committee, it is obvious that the internal quality assurance system at all organizational units of the University utilizes information gathered through consultations with the economy, alumni associations and its own information system. The set goals and activities in quality assurance are realistic and achievable.  The Internationalization Strategy, described in 10 pages, outlines the areas of collaboration with strategic partners and opportunities for strategic cooperation. The Self-evaluation report prepared for the University's reaccreditation outlines five strategic goals with sub-goals for implementing planned activities. For more efficient preparation of exchange, a Catalog of courses in English is available for incoming students at all three levels of study, updated and revised at the beginning of each semester, along with the Guide for Student and Staff Exchange at the University of Banja Luka.  Students are represented in all bodies and boards of the Senate and in all scientific-teaching councils. The University’s Management Board consists of 11 members, of which 1 is a student representative; at least 15% of the members of the Senate are students, 6 of whom are newly enrolled from all study cycles, in accordance with the Act on Higher Education. Students are free to organize in structures formed by student associations and the Student Parliament, the highest representative body of students at the University. The University provides space for the Student Parliament, and faculties and the Academy of Arts provide space for their student associations. The Committee did not have the opportunity to talk to the President of the Student Parliament to gain a clearer picture of their involvement in governance.  In conversations with students, the impression was formed that students are not sufficiently involved in governance processes. Their involvement is mostly indirect, and they are not well organized. A positive example is the communication between teachers and students after graduation, especially with some alumni and their collaboration. However, it is important to more intensively and directly involve them in governance segments at the University level. | |
| **Weaknesses:**  The **Report on the Implementation of Follow-up Activities** for the previous accreditation indicates that not all planned activities were realized.  The quantity and quality of scientific research work, both domestic and international research projects, do not align with the number of institutions and researchers within the University. The revenue from these research project groups could be significantly higher than current 4-4.5 million BAM. Given that Bosnia and Herzegovina has recently become a candidate for EU membership and has opened negotiations, numerous opportunities for applying for scientific research projects and attracting significantly larger financial resources for scientific research work will emerge. | |
| **Recommendations for Improvement:**  It is recommended to make adjustments to the University’s information systems for more efficient recording and analysis of all activities related to the quality of education and scientific research work. Data analyses should enable quick identification of changing trends, the ability to define activities and monitor their implementation.  Numerous activities are carried out at the University, but they are insufficiently visible. Therefore, it is recommended to increase visibility, especially of those elements that serve as major promotions for the University. These include, primarily, the park and planned walking path within the University, the rich aquarium and terrarium, as well as the interesting areas of focus for the scientific research staff.  Given the initiation of pre-accession negotiations for Bosnia and Herzegovina’s EU membership, it is recommended that the University of Banja Luka form interest groups of scientists and collaborators from related fields and prepare them for applying for EU calls. Group members should be trained in application submission, administrative monitoring of project implementation and successfully closing EU-funded projects. Accounting and financial services also play a crucial role in the implementation of these projects, so it is necessary to educate and train this personnel.  To increase the competitiveness of the University’s scientific research staff when applying for EU funds, it is recommended to complete the planned activities for accreditation processes as soon as possible and release human resources for scientific research work.  Since international partners and industry entities are essential for intensified scientific research activities, it is recommended that the University increase collaborations that will enable this.  In particular, it is recommended to explore opportunities for access to scientific journal databases, thereby improving the quality of scientific research work. | |
| **CRITERION 1: Quality Assurance Policy** | |
| **ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE:** | **III** |

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| **A.2 Development and Approval of Programs** | |
| **Requirements of ESG Standard 1.2 and RS/BiH Criteria T.2.1, T.2.2** | |
| 1. The higher education institution has established procedures for creating and adopting study programs that align with the institution’s strategy. 2. The higher education institution has established procedures that ensure planned learning outcomes and the use of a credit system expressed through ECTS credits are in accordance with the applicable qualifications framework, applicable to all study programs and include opportunities for acquiring knowledge and skills outside the institution. | |
| **Strengths:**  Based on examination of available documents on the University of Banja Luka (UNIBL) website, the following documents define the framework for developing and adopting study programs:   * https://www.unibl.org/sr‐lat/univerzitet/propisi/zakoni * Official Gazette of RS, No. 67/2020 – Act on Higher Education of the Rep. of Srpska * Act on Ensuring Quality in Higher Education of the Republic of Srpska (Official Gazette of the Republic of Srpska, No. 67/20). Act on Amendments to the Act on Ensuring Quality in Higher Education of the Republic of Srpska, No. 02/1-021-102/23, 8th February 2023 * Act on Scientific Research Activities and Technological Development (Official Gazette of the Republic of Srpska, No. 6/12, 26th January 2012) * https://www.unibl.org/sr‐lat/univerzitet/propisi/pravilnici * Regulations on the Procedure for Determining Compliance with Conditions for Performing Higher Education Activities (October 2021) * Statute of the University of Banja Luka (July 2022) * https://unibl.org/uploads/files/strane/statut/Statut‐UNIBL‐2022\_1.pdf. * Study Rules for the First and Second Cycles of Academic Studies (October 2022) * Study Rules for the Third Cycle of Studies (September 2022) * Regulations on Changes and Amendments to the Rules for Studying at the Third Cycle (23rd February 2023) * Regulations on Part-Time Studies (22nd December 2022) * Rules on the Implementation of Combined Study Programs for the Second and Third Cycles of Studies (7th September 2017) * <https://www.unibl.org/sr‐lat/studije/pravila‐studiranja>   The list of accredited study programs that have undergone the approval and licensing process is available for future students on the UNIBL website:   * https://www.unibl.org/sr/studije/vrste‐i‐nivoi‐studija/licencirani‐studijski‐programi‐na‐prvom‐ciklusu‐ studija   When defining and developing new study programs, the organizational units generally consult interested parties, which has been confirmed in discussions with stakeholders.  The University of Banja Luka has established procedures to ensure that the planned learning outcomes and the use of the credit system, expressed through ECTS credits, align with the applicable qualification framework. Legal frameworks such as the Act on Higher Education, the Statute, and the Study Rules for all three study cycles apply to all study programs. | |
| **Weaknesses:**  In discussions with the UNIBL Management, faculty members, students, and industry representatives, it was noted that while study programs are being adopted, there is insufficient involvement of stakeholders in the creation and approval of new study programs.  Communication between the initiators of study programs and other key actors who could enhance learning outcomes and their practical applicability could be improved. Although the legal framework and procedures for the development and adoption of study programs are clearly defined, discussions with stakeholders reveal a lack of effective communication regarding the reasons and benefits of introducing new study programs.  The reviewed documentation outlining the creation, innovation and adoption of study programs does not clearly define how an ECTS credit is determined, particularly in terms of the specific activities and the number of working hours a student must complete for acquired knowledge to be realistically evaluated. | |
| **Recommendations for Improvement:**  It is recommendedn to work on maintaining existing study programs and introducing new ones across all the faculties of the University.  Within the University of Banja Luka, there are established procedures, aligned legal frameworks and good practices for creating, adopting and innovating study programs. To overcome the identified shortcomings, it is recommended that UNIBL legally defines and standardizes the involvement of all stakeholders in the creation and adoption of study programs, ensuring the participation of all relevant parties.  It is recommenden to establish procedures for the formal recognition and accreditation of non-formal education and acquired skills to facilitate their credit allocation.  It is recommended to standardize the methodology for calculating ECTS credits across study programs to ensure a balanced student workload through contact hours.  It is recommended to encourage students from all three study cycles to actively participate in governance and accreditation processes.  It is recommended to the University of Banja Luka to directly and more intensively involve all relevant student representatives by organizing meetings, keeping detailed records of agendas and plans, as well as integrating them into the study program development process. To improve communication with students through student bodies.  It is recommended additionally to maintain records of meetings, prepare annual and semi-annual action plans, track progress and transparently publish all updates on the UNIBL website.  It is recommended to include a student representative from vulnerable groups in governance processes to ensure their perspectives and needs are addressed. | |
| **CRITERION 2: Development and Approval of Programs** | |
| **ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE:** | **IV** |
| **A3: Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment**  **Requirements of ESG Standard 1.3 and RS/BiH Criteria T.3.1, T.3.2, T.3.3** | |
| 1) The higher education institution implements procedures that ensure fair, transparent, and consistent assessment of students and provide for the possibility of student appeals. These procedures are formalized and publicly available.  2) The higher education institution encourages active engagement of students in governance processes.  3) The higher education institution promotes and facilitates international mobility for students and staff and manages a system for sharing their experiences and best practices. | |
| **Strengths:**  The policies for examination and assessment are ensured through the Rules of Study for the First and Second Cycle and the Rules of Study for the Third Cycle, available at <www.unibl.org>. These regulations also cover student appeal procedures.  In general, syllabi are standardized, ensuring transparency on the University's website and its constituent faculties. Course syllabi contain sufficient information for students to understand the teaching plan, objectives, learning outcomes, assessment methods and grading criteria. During discussions with students, the Committee received confirmation that instructors inform students in a timely manner about the curriculum and study program. However, students indicated that learning outcomes and their alignment with exam questions are not always clearly conveyed.  Appeal procedures are consistent, clearly defined, and well-communicated to students. The Committee observed that student complaints are rare, with only one case reported in the past five years, which was resolved procedurally to the satisfaction of all parties involved.  Additionally, it was found that students in certain study programs have opportunities to acquire knowledge through engagement outside the institution, such as internships or other forms of practical training, as provided by their respective study programs https://www.unibl.org/sr/studije/pravila‐studiranja. | |
| **Weaknesses:**  According to the Committee, there is no structured approach to involve stakeholders (students and labor market representatives) in the management processes, as well as in the improvement and revision of study programs.  Most Faculties show insufficient development in terms of international engagement, scientific research activities and student participation in research projects.  There are no detailed analyses at the Faculty and scientific field levels regarding scientific research work, academic output, projects and student involvement.  Student mobility could be significantly increased. | |
| **Recommendations for Improvement:**  In order to enhance students' knowledge, skills and competencies, it is recommended to involve industry representatives in curriculum revisions to design content and practical examples.  It is advisable to engage students in scientific research and professional projects through final and thesis work or as part of professional internships.  Student mobility should be increased and legal regulations should be harmonized to facilitate both domestic and international horizontal and vertical mobility.  The University is encouraged to develop programs in English and to continue intensifying the promotion and implementation of mobility, with a particular focus on students. | |
| **CRITERION 3:** Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment | |
| **ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE:** | **IV** |
| **A.4 Student Enrollment, Progression, Recognition and Certification**  Requirements of ESG Standard 1.4 and RS/BiH Criteria T.4.1, T.4.2, T.4.3 | |
| 1. The higher education institution provides adequate conditions and provides support for students' academic progression, ensuring equal opportunities. 2. The higher education institution has an established system for the recognition of qualifications and study periods in accordance with the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications and prior learning. 3. The higher education institution provides students with timely certification of their graduation, including the diploma supplement. | |
| **Strengths:**  The enrollment procedure at the University of Banja Luka is transparent and clearly defined, providing information about the enrollment quota, deadlines for entrance exams and other enrollment-related data. After the public call for student enrollment is conducted, the final rankings are published and there is an opportunity for appeal. The University and its members publish the Rules of Study and provide guides for freshmen, offering all necessary information about study programs, enrollment quotas and exam obligations. Teaching staff timely inform students about the curriculum, while the exam procedures are public and there is an appeal procedure for students. The University has a unified information system for collecting data about students and provides support for students with disabilities. It also offers the possibility of international mobility through programs such as Erasmus+ and IAESTE. Enrollment data for all three study cycles can be found on the website, [www.unibl.org](http://www.unibl.org).  The academic calendar for each academic year is available. Teaching staff provide timely information to students about the curriculum, expected learning outcomes and the obligations that students need to fulfill in order to pass exams successfully. There is a procedure for student appeals at the University and its members. The University has a unified information system that facilitates various areas of work and collects all necessary data. When it comes to students, the data is gathered from the moment of enrollment, progress through studies, grades, success rates, data on dropping out and other related information.  The University of Banja Luka's Rules on Awarding Recognitions and Awards define the procedures and criteria for giving recognitions and awards to the most successful students (e.g., certificates, plaques, gold medals, monetary incentives, etc.). There is overall support for the advancement and development of students. The recognition of foreign higher education qualifications is governed by procedures and criteria in line with the Regulations for the recognition of foreign educational qualifications. All regulations are available on the University’s and its Faculties' websites, along with all necessary attachments/documents. The University of Banja Luka has a Regulation on the international exchange of students and staff, with attachments that facilitate the process of international exchange and improving the recognition of exchange periods.  The qualification recognition system and the study period recognition system at the University are in line with the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications. The University of Banja Luka ensures the timely issuance of a graduation certificate at the joint promotion when the diploma is awarded, along with a diploma supplement that is issued to all graduates.  The system for recognizing study periods completed outside the home institution is developed, operational and in accordance with the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications. This was confirmed by the Committee in discussions with students, the student office and teaching staff and the recognition process is carried out smoothly and relatively quickly.  UNIBL has established a Support Center for Students with Disabilities, which stands out as a significant initiative.  International mobility for staff and students is offered and implemented through various programs such as Erasmus+, IAESTE and CEEPUS, as evidenced on the university's website and regulated by the Regulations on International Exchange and Student Mobility. | |
| **Weaknesses:**  The Guide for Freshmen does not include available data from the Employment Bureau about the number of (un)employed individuals with various higher education qualifications obtained at the University.  There is a constant decline in the number of enrolled students across all study cycles.  Lack of accessibility for students with disabilities in the Rectorate building.  While students are actively involved in extracurricular activities where they gain certain knowledge and skills, the University of Banja Luka does not have legally or procedurally established documentation that outlines the evaluation and recognition of acquired knowledge and skills.  During discussions with the International Cooperation Office, the Committee received insufficient information about the existence of mechanisms and procedures for defending final/diploma/doctoral theses in the country of exchange (if requested by the student), the language of writing, double diplomas, mentorship and co-mentorship. It appears there has been no practice regarding this and it may not be currently possible at the University.  Legal documents do not describe the procedures and mechanisms for the defense of theses upon students' requests in the exchange country/university, or the possibility of obtaining a double diploma. | |
| **Recommendations for Improvement:**  It is recommended that the Freshman Guide include missing data from the Employment Bureau, as this information could serve as an additional motivator for students when choosing a Faculty and study program.  A deeper analysis should be conducted regarding the enrollment trends and appropriate measures should be implemented to reverse the ongoing decline in student enrollment across all study cycles at the University.  It is crucial to ensure that the Rectorate building is accessible for students with disabilities. Continuous investment in infrastructure and equipment is necessary to provide students with a barrier-free learning environment.  It is recommended that informal external education and acquired skills be properly formalized and procedurally recognized.  It is recommended to further clarify learning outcomes for students and establish a clearer connection between exam tasks and learning outcomes.  It is necessary to precisely define the possibilities and protocols for the preparation and defense of qualification theses abroad, including mentorship and recognition of such theses. | |
| **CRITERION 4: Student Enrollment, Progression, Recognition, and Certification** | |
| **ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE:** | **III** |

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| **A5. Human Resources**  Requirements of ESG Standard 1.5 and RS/BiH Criteria T.5.1, T.5.2, T.5.3, T.5.4, T.5.5 | |
| 1) The higher education institution employs a sufficient number of academic staff, administrative workers and other personnel who support the teaching process.  2) The higher education institution has an employment plan and career development planning, in accordance with regularly conducted analyses.  3) The higher education institution applies fair and transparent processes and procedures in hiring and promoting employees. These procedures are pre-determined, publicly available and aligned with applicable legal regulations. Members of the selection committee for the appointment of academic staff are competent in the specific scientific/artistic field (disciplines and branches) in which the candidate seeks appointment.  4) The higher education institution provides opportunities for the professional development of employees and encourages them to take advantage of these opportunities.  5) The higher education institution offers adequate conditions to academic staff for active engagement in research, project work, and professional development, either within the institution or externally. | |
| **Strengths:**  Teaching is conducted by 811 full-time professors and associates. Additionally, the University employs 170 part-time professors, 168 visiting professors from abroad and 121 professional associates for clinical practice. Administrative and technical support is provided by 559 staff members.  The University of Banja Luka has clearly defined employment rules for academic staff, administrative personnel and other employees who support the teaching process. Information about all employees involved in teaching and research activities is available on the University's website, [www.unibl.org](http://www.unibl.org).  Each year, the University prepares an annual work plan, which includes activities such as academic promotions and related processes. An annual report is also compiled for each academic year, with the latest available report from 2023.  There are legal documents and regulations that define the selection and promotion of academic staff and teaching associates. The institution applies fair and transparent hiring and promotion processes, which are pre-established, publicly accessible and aligned with current legal regulations.  Members of the selection committee for academic appointments must be competent in the specific scientific/artistic field (disciplines and branches) in which the candidate is applying for a position, as defined by the Regulations on Conditions for Academic Appointments, dated 2nd August 2023.  With access to an information system, the University's management has a continuous overview of teaching staff and teaching workload. Although the University does not have a formally adopted human resource policy as a standalone document, it maintains comprehensive records of staffing potential and needs.  Discussions with various University groups and reviews of physical resources revealed different levels of development among University faculties. At the start of the 2021/22 academic year, the University of Banja Luka employed 1,370 individuals, with 796 in teaching positions and 575 in administrative and technical roles. As of March 2023, a total of 1,066 individuals were engaged in teaching. During the accreditation committee’s visit, 10,908 students were enrolled across all study levels, with 555 staff members holding academic teaching positions. The student-to-teacher ratio at that time was 10908/555=19.65.  However, access to relevant digital scientific databases is not available for all scientific fields, limiting research quality and the ability to publish in prestigious international journals.  The University of Banja Luka is actively working on improving its existing research staff and recruiting younger academic researchers. The goal is to maintain current study programs and introduce the new ones in alignment with study programs at other universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the region and EU countries. Efforts in this regard have intensified in recent years, particularly at the international level. The number of project applications under Horizon Europe increased from two in 2022 to four in 2023.  Teaching staff is not sufficiently familiar with all available training opportunities for improving teaching methodologies and skills.  Professional development for teaching staff plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of education and strengthening the academic community, ultimately ensuring that students acquire the necessary knowledge and competencies.  The University of Banja Luka participates in various scientific research projects at the levels of Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the region and through partnerships with higher education and research institutions across Europe.  Detailed information on these projects—including their status, timelines, types, participating University faculties, project leaders, teams, funding sources, budgets, and partners—is available on the University's website.  Regarding research and international projects, the Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Economics lead in participation.  Although access to digital research databases is adequate for some fields, it remains unavailable for others, limiting opportunities for publishing research in indexed academic journals.  The PHAIDRA (Permanent Hosting, Archiving and Indexing of Digital Resources and Assets) digital repository enables the systematic archiving, permanent storage and public accessibility of research outputs from the entire University. This system is available to all University employees, selected students and authorized external users. Users with appropriate privileges can store and manage objects, as well as determine access permissions.  The University of Banja Luka has also established a Digital Repository of Scientific Papers (<https://sova.unibl.org/>) as a central hub for storing various categories of digital academic papers.  A positive example of human resource development support is the Center for Development and Support, which offers training for writing project proposals. | |
| **Weaknesses:**  So far, there have been no significant advancements in hiring new staff, innovating, or implementing new study programs as outlined in the University Strategy (2017–2025).  The education and professional development of research staff remain insufficient, limiting the improvement of teaching competencies and the adoption of advanced teaching methods that contribute to higher-quality instruction.  There is a disparity in revenue generation among different Faculties of the University of Banja Luka.  The existing research staff lacks adequate training to enhance the quality of teaching.  Based on the provided documentation, there is no satisfactory collaboration among research groups in related fields within Republic of Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina when preparing applications for EU-funded projects. Given the number of institutions and researchers at the University, the quality of research output and the execution of national and international projects could be improved.  Inter-university cooperation within RS and FBiH should be at a higher level. Enhancing collaboration would create better opportunities to secure funding, ultimately improving the quality and quantity of academic and research work at universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.  The total number of projects at both national and international levels has stagnated over the past five years, decreasing from 45 projects in 2022 to 28 in 2023.  There is low interest and limited training among academic staff in applying for EU-funded research grants.  The total number of published research papers across all University Faculties has declined in the past three years: 2021: 1,594 published papers, 2022: 1,434 published papers, 2023: 713 published papers (across all categories).  There is no noticeable shortage of teaching staff, but there is a lack of teaching assistants. Due to the decreasing student population and a limited number of teaching hours, there are currently no opportunities to hire new assistants. | |
| **Recommendations for Improvement:**  Given the varying age of physical and spatial resources used for teaching and research, it is essential to plan for a more balanced development of the University by accelerating the growth of Faculties that currently lack market-generated revenue, have limited funding for intensified research and conduct fewer projects.  It is recommended to legally enable all University Faculties to generate revenue from third-party sources.  Efforts should focus on promoting the advancement of existing academic staff to higher ranks while actively recruiting and developing young research staff (assistants).  To increase the competitiveness of the academic staff at the University of Banja Luka, professional development should be encouraged, particularly improving teaching competencies, methods and skills to enhance instructional quality.  There should be continuous training for staff in applying for, administering and managing EU-funded projects.  The shortage of teaching assistants should be addressed through various projects to compensate for the lack of personnel in these roles.  It is recommended to standardize the continuous procurement of essential academic textbooks across all scientific fields studied at the University through legal or procedural measures.  It is recommended to intensify the implementation of projects equally, as much as possible, at other Faculties as well, to enhance the mobility of teachers, associates and administrative staff across all Faculties, and to adopt legal acts on the mechanisms for defending and recognizing specialist and doctoral theses of Banja Luka students abroad and foreign students in Banja Luka. | |
| **CRITERION 5: Human Resources** | |
| **ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE:** | **III** |

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| **A.6 Learning Resources and Student Support**  Requirements of ESG Standard 1.6 and RS/BiH Criteria T.6.1, T.6.2, T.6.3, T.6.4, T.6.5 | |
| 1. The higher education institution has got sufficient resources, including classrooms, laboratories, computers, learning spaces, as well as appropriate conditions for all staff and students. 2. The higher education institution has got a library equipped with an adequate number of library resources in both printed and electronic formats, with appropriate space and equipment for using library services, both for academic staff and students. 3. The institution must systematically and effectively plan, use and review its resources in accordance with the strategic plan. 4. The institution employs a sufficient number of administrative and support staff. 5. The institution has adequate procedures and resources for the implementation of its strategy regarding international aspects of its work. | |
| **Strengths:**  The University of Banja Luka has sufficient spatial capacities for both teaching and non-teaching staff. Professors, associates and administrative-technical staff have access to modern equipped offices and a suitable working environment, as well as designated spaces for student learning and relaxation. For the purposes of scientific research by teaching staff and students, well-equipped laboratories are available, featuring modern spaces, equipment and instruments that meet European standards (this is particularly relevant for the Faculty of Law, which has a virtual courtroom for students' practical and scientific work, Dental Clinic, operating within the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Banja Luka, which, in addition to its educational function, also provides services to the public), Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Philosophy, Faculty of Political Sciences and the AGGF (Faculty of Architecture, Geodesy and Civil Engineering), also benefit from these resources.  The academic staff structure in 2023 included 29% full professors, 24% associate professors, 17% assistant professors, 22% senior assistants, 6% assistants.  It is significant to mention that the University has the Center for Student Support for Students with Disabilities, which supported 60 students in the 2022/2023 academic year, integrating them into University activities.  Most classrooms are equipped with video projectors and computers, allowing for digital teaching materials.  Through donor funding, the University has successfully equipped computer classrooms, libraries with relevant literature aligned with curricula, a planetarium and an aquarium, instrumental laboratories, synthesis and distillation laboratories, conference halls, a STEM laboratory and a training center for material innovation at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, a lecture hall and an amphitheater with a capacity of 140 students.  The equipping of libraries falls under the jurisdiction of individual Faculties, which, within their capabilities, invest in the improvement and development of library resources. The primary task of the member libraries is to collect and process an adequate library collection, provide scientific materials that facilitate better education, support scientific research processes and offer users information related to library resources.  The library is intended for students, teaching staff and academic associates. Libraries have appropriate reading spaces, including student reading rooms and one scientific reading room, as well as four foreign centers (French, German, American and Russian), equipped with the necessary resources for accessing library content. The library's collection includes fundamental and specialized works from all scientific fields, as well as required and supplementary literature prescribed by study programs, containing essential information for acquiring and deepening knowledge.  The literature is available through the university’s internal website and e-editions. The library collection includes monographic publications (books), serial publications (journals), master's theses, doctoral dissertations, undergraduate theses, specialist papers and conference proceedings.  Within the National and University Library (NUB), there is a Remembrance Room (a multimedia presentation) dedicated to the life of Petar Kocic, which serves as an attractive and interesting feature for students and various visitors beyond the student and faculty community.  The University Library has implemented the COBISS library-information system, which is available to all Faculties within the University of Banja Luka. There are 34 full-time employees across 18 libraries and the total number of books in all libraries exceeds 225,000.  The existing libraries are located in designated and separate spaces. The level of digitalization is unbalanced, as some Faculties have only partially digitalized their library resources.  In recent years, scientific papers have been published in journals with an impact factor (Q1-Q4, WoS, ESCI) for the period from 2017 to 2020, providing information on the total number of patents/innovations as well as defended dissertations at the University level.  The cooperation between students and library staff at the University Library and across individual faculties is at an excellent level.  The University also hosts the Austrian Library, which contains over 5,000 books on Austrian literature and history, linguistics, sociology, political sciences, economics and law. The purpose of this library is to organize cultural events and other activities.  The University of Banja Luka has established a Digital Repository for doctoral dissertations, master’s theses, implemented through the Phaidra system as part of the Tempus Project “New Services at Universities in the Western Balkans” (Permanent Hosting, Archiving and Indexing of Digital Resources and Assets), with support from the University Library ‘Svetozar Markovic’ in Belgrade.  The digital storage of doctoral and master’s theses complies with the Regulations on the Content, Format and Digital Repository of Doctoral Dissertations and the Regulations on the Content, Format and Digital Repository of Master’s Theses.  The University of Banja Luka’s publishing plan aligns with the Regulations on Publishing Activities. An overview of the Publishing Activity Plans by the University of Banja Luka's faculties shows, in accordance with the Regulations on Publishing Activities, a significant increase in the publication of teaching materials (textbooks) across all Faculties/Academies of the University of Banja Luka.  The University of Banja Luka currently employs a sufficient number of administrative and support staff. Since the University is integrated, this implies a higher degree of centralization in administrative and technical support, and a lower degree of centralization in research. With the centralization of administrative and technical support, the aim is to reduce costs through better oversight and planning of overall needs. According to the most recent data, approximately 575 non-teaching staff are employed at the Faculties. They are assigned to Faculty secretariats, professional services, libraries, computer centers, maintenance departments and security services. The University of Banja Luka meets the standards in terms of the number of employees in student services, including secretaries for the University's members, employees handling financial tasks (graduates in economics), maintaining the information system, and the number of employees with higher education working as librarians in relation to the number of students at the University and its Faculties. The information system is continuously being improved.  Higher education institutions ensure the provision of mandatory and supplementary literature for each course. Libraries have didactic-methodical cabinets and reading rooms. The coverage of the syllabus with professional literature is about 90%. The collaboration between students and library staff is at an appropriate level. | |
| **Weaknesses:**  From the previous report, it can be seen that some of the planned activities have not been fully realized. There are insufficient financial resources for the further renewal and development of laboratory and technical equipment in certain areas. Significant funds have not been planned for the purchase of laboratory equipment, and it appears that such equipment is mainly acquired through academic staff projects. | |
| **Recommendations for Improvement:**  It is recommended to work continuously on improving the conditions for enhancing the research work of Faculty and students (modern analytical equipment, air conditioning, insulation, teaching aids, etc.), all aimed at ensuring and realizing better and higher-quality teaching in all areas for which individual Faculties at the University of Banja Luka are responsible.  It is recommended to focus on improving existing resources, i.e., renewing physical resources intended for teaching and scientific-research work through the realization of various international and domestic projects, as well as improving library collaboration at the University of Banja Luka with other universities in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and neighboring countries (literature exchange for students of the first, second and third cycles of study).  It is recommended to monitor and adopt the latest trends in information technology.  The University of Banja Luka should facilitate the uniform development and increase in the number of activities at all levels of scientific-research work, enabling smooth revenue generation on the market in order to improve technical conditions for better work at all Faculties. This will foster better collaboration with the economy for the realization of scientific and professional projects, so that through the obtained financial resources, equipment for seamless access to digital databases necessary for improving the quality of research work can be secured.  It is recommended to increase collaboration among the members of the University (teaching staff and students) at both the national and international levels, which was not visible in the previous report. | |
| **CRITERION 6: Learning Resources and Student Support** | |
| **ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE:** | **III** |

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| **A.7 Information Management**  Requirements of the ESG Standard 1.7 and RS/BiH Criterion T.7.1 | |
| 1. The higher education institution uses information systems to collect, analyze and utilize information for the effectiveness and improvement of the teaching process, research work/art development, contribution to society and managerial and administrative activities. 2. The higher education institution regularly collects and analyzes data on the progress of students through their studies, success rates, dropout rates, student-to-teacher ratios, etc. 3. The higher education institution regularly collects and analyzes data on the work, age structure and qualifications of academic staff, including the ratio of permanent and visiting staff. | |
| **Strengths:**  The University of Banja Luka has a Faculty Information System (FIS), which helps both teachers and students to organize teaching processes more efficiently. The FIS includes a web portal for students (eStudent), allowing them to access the Faculty Information System (FIS) online. The main purpose of the portal is to transfer administrative tasks that students usually complete at the Student Services counter into the digital environment.  Besides the student portal, FIS also includes a portal for all employees (eEmployee), which consolidates functionalities needed for administrative and work-related obligations, providing necessary information to staff. Both portals are accessible via the University’s website ([www.unibl.org](http://www.unibl.org)).  During the visit, the Committee confirmed how students and staff use the information system, noting a good practice of frequent communication regarding data and updates.  Students can access information related to the teaching process, exams, teaching materials, exam registration and more through the student web portal.  The University has an Alumni portal, accessible through the University’s website (<https://alumni.unibl.org/>), which provides information about Alumni Center meetings and job advertisements.  The portal provides information on Alumni Center coordinators' meetings and job advertisements. The university is working on the development and improvement of scientific research activities, as evidenced, among other things, by the acquisition of plagiarism detection software (iThenticate).  The University’s self-evaluation report (pages 62-65), available on the University’s website, provides insight into the analysis of student enrollment in all three study cycles over the past three years, as well as the employment data of permanent and adjunct staff and guest professors over the last four years. It also includes a chart with the ratio of permanent to guest teaching staff.  The Committee confirmed that the University regularly collects information about students, including basic details, exam recognition records for students transferring from other institutions, success rates and records of exam and pre-exam obligations.  The University regularly collects and analyzes data on the age structure and qualifications of its academic staff. | |
| **Weaknesses:**  The information system provides insufficient data on research activities, areas and collaboration opportunities.  The information systems of the University’s Faculties lack open calls, areas, available equipment and conditions for possible collaborations in research work.  Scientific work by individual staff members is not adequately highlighted, making it difficult to find potential partners for project applications.  Information systems are susceptible to various security risks, such as technical failures, hacking, data theft, viruses and other threats. Based on the plans and quality assurance policies, it was not possible to determine the security policies for data protection or the integrity of the entire information system. | |
| **Recommendations for Improvement:**  It is recommended to continue investing in the University’s information system and improve the monitoring and analysis of all performance indicators related to student progress across courses and study cycles, study duration, dropout rates and other relevant indicators.  It is particularly important to adjust data collection, input, analysis and tracking of subsequent activities to improve the quality of studies and study programs.  It is recommended to make the work of individual staff members at the University of Banja Luka and its organizational units more visible. | |
| **CRITERION 7: Information Management** | |
| **ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE:** | **III** |

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| **A.8 Informing the Public**  Requirements of ESG Standard 1.8 and RS/BiH Criteria T.8.1, T.8.2, T.8.3 | |
| 1. The higher education institution publishes relevant information about its activities on its website, including information about study programs and qualifications offered, ensuring that they are clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and easily accessible. The information is published in one of the official languages of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in English. 2. The higher education institution provides information on its website about its research activities and the work of its academic staff (publications, projects, conferences, etc.). 3. The higher education institution ensures systematic communication with external stakeholders. | |
| **Strengths:**  The University informs the interested public about its activities through numerous events. Most of the University’s and its members’ activities are presented via website, promotional material and science and higher education popularization activities.  Interested parties can find information on studies and studying, academic mobility, recognition of study periods and foreign qualifications, research work, projects, alumni associations and many other topics.  The University of Banja Luka publishes all relevant information about its activities on its official website – <https://www.unibl.org/> and the information is also available on the English version of the site – <https://www.unibl.org/en>.  The University has active profiles on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Viber, which are updated with information related to the University and useful information for staff and students. The University has been publishing a Newsletter periodically since 2016 in electronic form, offering a brief overview of significant events at the University for the current month. It can be accessed at https://www.unibl.org/sr/novosti/arhiva‐biltena/2022.  Detailed information packages containing all key data about each study program, its objectives, competencies, learning outcomes, course plans and the number of ECTS credits for each course are regularly created and printed (annually) by the Faculties for their programs. Their electronic versions can be seen on the websites of the individual faculties and the University. Central links to the faculties’ websites are available on the University’s website – <https://unibl.org/sr/clanice/fakulteti> | |
| **Weaknesses:**  Information about the review of study programs was not accessible to all interested representatives of the business sector. During discussions with their representatives, the Committee concluded that some of them would like to participate and could contribute significantly.  Some good practices and quality resources (aquarium, terrarium, library, park, amphitheaters) could be made more visible and accessible to the broader community.  Some practical information, which could be of interest to institutions and individuals outside the University and Bosnia and Herzegovina, is not sufficiently visible or clearly described. | |
| **Recommendations for Improvement:**  It is recommended that the Public Relations Office periodically updates the news about the University’s activities, particularly those that may be of interest to the public, scientists, secondary schools, and prospective students at all levels of study.  Many positive examples of work at the University’s Faculties exist, and it is recommended that these be made visible to all interested parties.  Data on research activities and collaboration opportunities with the academic community and the industry should be made more visible.  Information about opportunities for hosting foreign researchers and students, as well as the procedures for facilitating these, should be made visible.  Content potentially of interest to foreign audiences should be regularly published in English. | |
| **CRITERION 8: Informing the Public** | |
| **ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE:** | **IV** |

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| **A.9 Continuous Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programs**  Requirements of ESG Standard 1.9 and RS/BiH Criteria T.9.1, T.9.2, T.9.3 | |
| 1. The higher education institution regularly monitors and further develops its study programs with the involvement of internal and external stakeholders. 2. The higher education institution has defined and adopted procedures for regularly monitoring the implementation of study programs. 3. The higher education institution analyzes how information collection procedures and undertaken activities have influenced the improvement of study programs, and based on this, creates a path for further development. | |
| **Strengths:**  The initiation and development of study programs are defined by the Statute of the University of Banja Luka (July 2022), Articles 103, 104, 105, and 106: https://unibl.org/uploads/files/strane/statut/Statut‐UNIBL‐2022\_1.pdf.  Each Faculty plans the introduction of new study programs as part of their work plan for the University. For example, the Landscape Architecture program: https://unibl.org/uploads/files/strane/programi/6.Programa.rada.2023.godina.pdf  The University regularly publishes its annual work plans and reports on the website of UNIBL. These documents include plans for developing and approving new study programs: https://www.unibl.org/uploads/files/strane/programi/Program%20rada\_UNIBL\_2024%20.pdf, No. 03/04-3.207-17-1/24 dated 5th February 2024, approved by the University’s Management Board.  Recently, a new study program in Romance Studies was launched at the Faculty of Philology (2022/2023), which has undergone the approval and licensing procedures and is now listed among the licensed programs: https://www.unibl.org/sr‐lat/studije/vrste‐i‐nivoi‐studija/licencirani‐studijski‐ programi‐na‐prvom‐ciklusu‐studija .  The University continuously innovates study content and develops new programs. | |
| **Weaknesses:**  There is still insufficient involvement of the business sector and other external stakeholders in the innovation of study program content. | |
| **Recommendations for Improvement:**  It is recommended to continue innovating study programs and aligning them with other University units in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the region, and the EU countries to provide more effective education that meets the needs of the Bosnian economy, primarily.  It is recommended to include a greater variety of external stakeholders in the innovation and creation of the teaching content. | |
| **CRITERION 9: Continuous Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programs** | |
| **ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE:** | **III** |

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| **A.10 Periodic External Quality Assurance**  Requirements of ESG Standard 1.10 and RS/BiH Criteria T.10.1 | |
| 1) Higher education institutions should undergo periodic external quality assurance procedures. | |
| **Strengths:**  The first Accreditation Decision for the University of Banja Luka was issued by the Agency for Higher Education of the Republic of Srpska on 15th August 2013. The latest Accreditation Decision was received on 26th March 2019.  The procedure of reaccreditation for the University of Banja Luka was initiated in 2022, with a request for external evaluation of the University and external evaluation of clusters of study programs.  In accordance with the annual Accreditation Plan for study programs for 2022 by the Agency for Higher Education of the Republic of Srpska, a cluster accreditation is currently in process for 22 study programs (10 at the first cycle and 12 at the second cycle) at the University of Banja Luka.  The self-evaluation report was created in March 2023, reflecting the situation from the 2021/2022 academic year.  Development Strategy of the University of Banja Luka (2017–2025), Internationalization Strategy, Action Plan, Regulations on the Organization and Work of the Committee for Quality Assurance and Improvement, Regulations on the Organization and Work of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee, Regulations on Student Surveys on the Quality of the Teaching Process and other numerous legal documents demonstrate the University's commitment to ensuring and improving the quality of higher education.  To speed up and rationalize the reaccreditation process, some study programs have been grouped into clusters, and both internal and external independent periodic evaluations are being carried out simultaneously to extend accreditations. | |
| **Weaknesses:**  The work with the information system is constantly improving, but it is not yet a complete tool for entering, analyzing data and identifying trends in all areas of operation.  Activities based on recommendations from accreditation committees and the Agency are not sufficiently structured, which makes their analysis and the creation of quality action plans more difficult.  The process of reaccreditation for many study programs is initiated simultaneously, creating a heavy workload and pressure on staff responsible for collecting and analyzing documentation, preparing self-evaluation reports, and reporting to management. | |
| **Recommendations for Improvement:**  The information system should be further adjusted to become a tool for entering, analyzing data, identifying trends in all areas of operation and supporting new action plans and innovations in study programs.  The University of Banja Luka is recommended until the next accreditation procedure, to involve all relevant stakeholders, especially from the business sector in the next accreditation process to align educational goals and learning outcomes.  The structure of information required for the University's operations and accreditation processes should be designed to facilitate internal activities prior to the next accreditation.  All individuals involved in these processes should work according to a unified methodology and present data consistently across all University units and study programs. | |
| **CRITERION 10: Periodic External Quality Assurance** | |
| **ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE:** | **IV** |

**3.2 Recommendation for Accreditation**

After reviewing the entire submitted documentation, visiting the higher education institution and analyzing all documents, procedures, functioning of the institution, as well as conducting the evaluation procedure, the following level of compliance with the standards and criteria has been determined:

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| **CRITERIA** | **LEVEL OF COMPLIANCE** |
| A1 Quality Assurance Policy | III |
| A2 Development and Approval of Programs | IV |
| A3 Student-Centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment | IV |
| A4 Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification | III |
| A5 Human Resources | III |
| A6 Learning Resources and Student Support | III |
| A7 Information Management | III |
| A8 Informing the Public | IV |
| A9 Continuous Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programs | III |
| A10 Periodic External Quality Assurance | IV |

**Based on the overall quality assessment, the Expert Committee recommends the Agency for Higher Education of the Republic of Srpska**, in accordance with the Regulations on the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programs, Official Gazette of the Republic of Srpska, No. 01/1.5.500/21 dated 30th December 2021, **to issue an Accreditation Decision to the University of Banja Luka for a period of five years.**

**Committee Members:**

Husejin Keran, PhD  
Expert of the academic community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chairman

Selma Corbo, PhD  
Expert of the academic community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Member

Enisa Omanovic-Miklicanin, PhD  
Expert of the academic community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Member

Damir Magdic, PhD  
International Expert, Member

Emina Boskailo  
Expert of the business sector and professional practice, Member

Omar Zerem  
Student