



**THE AVALANCHE IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION:  
DOCTORAL STUDIES IN SOCIAL AND HUMANISTIC STUDIES  
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF PRISHTINA**

**Policy Paper**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The major objective of the research project “The Avalanche in the Higher Education: Doctoral Studies in the Social and Humanistic Studies in the University of Prishtina” is to encourage substantial debates and to bring change in the public policies on accountability, governance and quality of doctoral studies in social and humanistic studies in the University of Prishtina (UP).

The field of doctoral studies is among the most complex and debatable topics, and, until quite recently, among the ones most neglected by the UP, the Government, the Assembly, and respective governmental agencies. This project aims to put these studies at the focus of attention of these institutions and of the public opinion, through the impact of civil society in policy-making, and, more concretely, through: The analysis and the discovery of major problems and difficulties, as well as through recommendations for their solutions; The improvement of policies in the governance and administration of doctoral programs; The increase of institutional accountability; Building of mechanisms for controlling the quality and plagiarism, and; The involvement of key stakeholders in the debate on the need for substantial improvement of quality of higher education.

The title of the project has emanated from the idea that the improvement of quality and the increase of academic integrity in the doctoral studies can have the effect of avalanche in the improvement of quality in the lower levels of higher education as well, by establishing higher standards of studies, by increasing the level of knowledge and science which is produced in Kosovo, as well as through their internationalization.

The previous two papers published as parts of this research project have discussed doctoral studies in four faculties of the UP in which the social and humanistic sciences are studied: the Faculty of Economics; the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Education; and the Philosophic Faculty. In these papers efforts were made for identification of key problems in doctoral studies in respective academic units, and a number of relevant issues were discussed. Here we will remind some from the major issues from these previous two papers, which will be topics of

profound discussion in this Policy Paper on doctoral studies in social and humanistic sciences at the UP:

- Until now the Kosovar Agency for Accreditation has served much more as a mechanism for formal verification of the fulfillment of conditions for doctoral studies, without focusing on substantial dimensions, such as the quality of academic personnel and of curricula. Major objections which have emerged during our analyses, have to do with the competences of professors and mentors in doctoral studies in English, or in other world languages, as well as with their competences in scientific research;
- Actual criteria for admission in doctoral studies are insufficient and they provide opportunities for non-objective evaluation of applicants, which affects directly the opportunities for their progress in doctoral studies, as well as the quality of these studies;
- The major challenge of UP regarding the quality of doctoral studies is in the determining of adequate standards, which will enable doctorants to achieve genuine scientific researches. This would have halted in a large measure the trend of superficial researches without any genuine scientific results, or without results even in the practical level of the profession for which the students are being prepared;
- The creation of a ratio between research and teaching in which research is dominant would enable the increase of quality of doctoral studies, given that mentor professors would deepen their expertise for qualitative guidance in the preparation of theses of doctoral students. In the UP there is no institutional tendency to discharge professors who have affinity towards research from their teaching obligations, particularly in the lower levels of high education, in order to provide them with more time for focusing on their research and publishing activities.

In this Policy Paper, the above mentioned, as well as other problems, will be treated by discussing the criteria for admission criteria in the doctoral studies which are offered in the

social and humanistic studies at the UP, different aspects of the quality of doctoral studies, and by analyzing the resources of UP for research as well as their administration. At the end the conclusions and recommendations for increasing the quality of respective doctoral studies will be provided.

On this occasion we would like to express our gratitude for valuable contribution given to this research to participants in the interviews: to professors: Dr. Faton Berisha, Prorector of the UP; Dr. Blerim Rexha, former Head of the State Council on Quality; Dr. Driton Qehaja, Dr. Besnik Krasniqi, Dr. Gazmend Qorraaj, and the Dean of the Faculty of Economics, Dr. But Dedaj; Dr. Enver Hasani, Dr. Gjuljeta Mushkolaj, Dr. Qerim Qerimi and Dr. Remzije Istrefi; Dr. Blerim Saqipi, Dr. Demë Hoti, Dr. Eda Vula, Dr. Majlinda Gjelaj; Dr. Agim Hyseni, Dr. Arben Hajdari, the Dean of Philosophic Faculty, Dr. Bujar Dugolli, Dr. Muhamet Mala, and Dr. Linda Gusia; then, to Mr. Besnik Loxha, the Head of the Office for Academic Development; and to the doctoral students, Mr. Ismet Potera, Mr. Rajmonda Kurshumlia, Mr. Shqipe Gashi, Mr. Albert Mecini, Mr Gentry Berisha, Mr. Simeana Beshi, and Mr. Ruzhdi Berisha, as well as to two other doctoral students who have preferred to remain anonymous.

## 2. DISCUSSION OF THE CRITERIA FOR THE ADMISSION IN DOCTORAL STUDIES

The criteria for registration in the doctoral studies at the UP include the success in previous studies, the interest for, and the experience in scientific research, the works published by the applicants, and recommendations of two professors in the respective scientific field. The criteria for determining the advantage in the selective placements are the average grade, the research and scientific activity, as well as the knowledge of English, or of some other major world language. The average grade in bachelor and master studies is evaluated with maximum value of 40 points, with 20 maximum points for average grade in bachelor studies, and 20 maximum points for average grade in master studies, where the the minimal required average grade for both these levels is 8.00.<sup>1</sup> Also, the scientific magisterium or specialization is evaluated with 5 points.<sup>2</sup> Scientific and research activity is evaluated with 35 points, and what is taken into the consideration here are the articles published in last five years indexed in *Current Contents*, the articles published during the last five years in other indexed international journals, the articles published during the last five years in domestic academic journals (from the UP, the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo, the Albanologic Institute and the Institute of History), university text-books published during the last five years, oral presentations of works during the last five years in international scientific meetings, as well as oral presentations in domestic scientific meetings.<sup>3</sup> Also, at the end, the knowledge of English language, or of some other major world language, is evaluated with up to 20 points.<sup>4</sup> In practice, these criteria are complemented with the criterion of admission exam, which is evaluated with up to 20 points.<sup>5</sup>

We consider that these criteria for admission in doctoral studies are insufficient, and that they create space for non-objective evaluation of applicants, which has direct implications in the

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation on Doctoral Studies of the University of Prishtina, nr. 1/775, of the date 9.9.2014, Article 7 (4) 1. and 2, and the Decision of the Senate of the UP of the date 02.9.2016, on amending and changing the Article 7, point 1, of the paragraph 4 of the Regulation on Doctoral Studies nr. 1/775, of the date 9.9.2014.

<sup>2</sup> Regulation on Doctoral Studies of the University of Prishtina, nr. 1/775, of the date 9.9.2014, Article 7 (4) 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 7 (4) 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 7 (4) 4.

<sup>5</sup> Interview, Bujar Dugolli, Prishtina, January 22nd, 2018.

quality of these studies. For this reason, in our previous two works we have proposed that the knowledge of English language should not be evaluative, but eliminative criterion for the admission in doctoral studies, and that the certification of the knowledge of English language should be done through the passing of TOEFL exam. This substantial deficiency in the criteria for admission in doctoral, as well as in master studies, was addressed in the meantime by the Government of Kosovo, with its Administrative Instruction on Foreign Languages in the Studying Programs of the Second and Third Cycles, of March 16 2018, which determines that the applicants for these studying levels should have knowledge in foreign languages (English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish), in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference on Languages (CEFR).<sup>6</sup> However, a deficiency of this Administrative Instruction is the fact that it leaves the level of language which is required as a criterion for admission in the studying programs of the second and third cycle in the discretion of the respective institutions of higher education.<sup>7</sup> For this reason, it is necessary that the Regulation on Doctoral Studies should be changed/amended, by introducing the equal language criterion for all the studying programs at the respective levels. According to the criteria of the CEFR, for ensuring qualitative doctoral studies it is necessary for all the applicants to have at least the C1 level of foreign language competence.<sup>8</sup>

Based on the analyses made in the previous two works of this research project and on their findings, we consider that the criteria of average grade and of scientific and research activities in the Regulation on Doctoral Studies are determined in a way which creates preconditions for appropriate quality of doctoral studies, and as such, these do not need to be changed/modified. On the other hand, despite of the fact that the admission exam appears to double, or to devalue, the criterion of the average grade, given the possibility that applicants might have finished their previous studies in different domestic or regional higher education institutions, this criterion should continue to be applied for the admission of the most qualitative doctoral candidates. Nevertheless, while applying it, it should be kept in mind that this criterion is not an

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<sup>6</sup> Administrative Instruction (QRK) NR.03/2018 on Foreign Languages in the Studying Programs of the Second and the Third Cycle, March 16th, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 2, Point 3.

<sup>8</sup> The CEFR determines this level as the Advanced Level of the knowledge of language.



admission practice in doctoral studies in most of the prestigious universities, as well as in many from the universities in the region.

Yet another issue is the one that the proposals of the mentor and of the topic of the thesis, as determined in the Regulation on Doctoral Studies, are made during the first studying year,<sup>9</sup> meanwhile, the evaluation and the approval of these project-proposals for the doctorates of the students is made in the third semester.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, doctoral students can postpone the provision of the final forms of their project-proposals until the end of the second semester, which means that they can be admitted in doctoral studies even if at the beginning they don't have any clear idea on the research that they plan to conduct during these studies. This creates a situation in which, firstly, during the admission and the registration phase, the doctoral research is left aside, and, secondly, academic units do not have any possibility during this phase to evaluate its own mentorial capacities for guiding the development of doctoral researches of respective students. Therefore, for eliminating these problems, it is necessary to add as an additional criterion for admission and registration the provision of the concept-proposal of the doctoral research that the doctoral applicants plan to conduct during their studies. Also, the respective academic units should be obliged that in the competition for registration they should acknowledge the specific scientific fields in which they have (co-)mentorial capacities, as determined in the Article 9, Point 2, of the Regulation on Doctoral Studies.

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<sup>9</sup> Regulation on Doctoral Studies in the UP, Article 15, Point 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 8, Point 3.

### 3. DISCUSSION OF THE QUALITY OF DOCTORAL STUDIES

According to the Regulation on Doctoral Studies, the right to guide candidates for doctorate have professors who have regular job contract with the UP, and who hold the academic titles of regular professor and associated professor. Also, the assistant professors who have published at least three scientific works in the peer-reviewed international journals can be mentors as well.<sup>11</sup> However, a considerable number of professors who hold the respective academic titles do not fulfill the criteria determined by the Regulation on Selective Procedures on the Nomination, Renomination and Advancement of the Academic Personnel in the University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina,” given that they have acquired these titles before the approval of this Regulation. On the other hand, a paper published at the end of the previous year on the academic integrity of the professors of the UP, stresses the fact that, according to formal criteria and the norms that are actually in power, only 28% of professors at the UP fulfill the criteria determined for the titles they hold. Furthermore, this paper also stresses that these criteria are most often fulfilled by assistant professors, and most rarely by professors who are exactly the ones who are supposed to do the mentoring – the associated and the regular ones. This trend can be met as well in the faculties that were analyzed in our research, the Faculties of Law, of Economics, Philosophic Faculty and the Faculty of Education.<sup>12</sup>

In its very essence, as far as doctoral studies are concerned, this problem is even deeper, and particularly for the category of regular professors, who, even when they fulfill the criteria of the above mentioned Regulation on Selective Procedures, might not publish for a certain period of time after their (re-)election, thus getting out from the trends of scientific research, and, consequently, will not be capable for successful mentoring of doctoral candidates. Therefore, for the assurance of adequate quality of doctoral studies, the criteria for mentoring should be determined with the number of scientific publications published in indexed international journals, by focusing on the journals given in the Administrative Instruction of the MEST on the

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 9, Point 1, 2.

<sup>12</sup> ORCA, *Integriteti Akademik i Profesorëve në Universitetin e Prishtinës* [Academic Integrity of the Professors of the University of Prishtina], Prishtina, December 2017.

Principles of the Recognition of Platforms of International Peer Reviewed Journals,<sup>13</sup> and Administrative Instruction for Amending and Specifying of the previous Instruction.<sup>14</sup> For this reason, there is a need to change the Article 9 of the Regulation on Doctoral Studies, or to accomplish this with the process of accreditation of professors for mentoring by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency, and the criterion for mentoring that the potential mentors should fulfill should be the condition of publication of at least three scientific works during the last five years since the moment of accreditation of respective doctoral program, in order to create a situation in which the mentoring is not linked with the academic title of professors. Here, we should stress that the first option, the one of changing the criteria for mentoring in the Regulation on Doctoral Studies in the UP, preserves the monopoly of the UP on the provision of doctoral studies in Kosovo, and the second option, the one of accrediting professors for mentoring by KAA, creates conditions for liberalization of higher education in Kosovo in terms of the provision of doctoral studies.

One from the most important issues discussed during the research, which has a very high impact in the quality of doctoral studies, is the one of the workload of mentors of doctoral theses with teaching in the lower studying levels. Having in mind the fact that the possible application of the above-mentioned recommendations will further decrease the number of mentors, it is necessary that they should be discharged in a large measure from their teaching obligations at the bachelor and master levels, in order to enable them to use their time for more qualitative mentoring, which will include the consultation on the newest literature, the support of publication of doctoral candidates in international scientific journals, as well as their participation in scientific projects, as foreseen in the Regulation on Doctoral Studies at the UP.<sup>15</sup> The undertaking of these steps will enhance the academic integrity and the quality of doctoral

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<sup>13</sup> Administrative Instruction, MASHT Nr. 01/2018, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>14</sup> Administrative Instruction on Amending and Specifying (Anex –I- MASHT) the Administrative Instruction of the MEST on the Principles of the Recognition of Platforms of the International Peer-Reviewed Journals, 7/2018, May 23d, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Regulation on Doctoral Studies in the UP, Article 10, Point 1.

studies, given that mentors, among others, have both, ethical, and professional, responsibility for the quality of the positively evaluated research of the doctoral candidates.<sup>16</sup>

Also, as far as the co-mentoring is concerned, except of the fulfillment of the above-mentioned criterion for international scientific publications, for increasing the quality of doctoral studies it is necessary that co-mentors should be from the universities ranked higher than the University of Prishtina.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, taking into the consideration the fact that the University of Prishtina is ranked higher than all the universities in the region in which the study is provided in Albanian language, in principle, the co-mentoring with professors from these universities will not bring about any considerable increase of quality of doctoral studies.

One from the key preconditions for development of science in Kosovo, including here the doctoral studies as well, is an urgent need for internationalization of scientific activity that is being conducted in Kosovo. The criterion of the publication of at least one scientific work with a part of the results of the doctorate, in an indexed international journal,<sup>18</sup> which is foreseen in the Regulation on Doctoral Studies,<sup>19</sup> despite of all the complaints made for making the doctoral studies more difficult, has already made the first steps for a notable increase of the quality of doctoral works, for internationalization of science in Kosovo, and for the increase of capacities for international publications of doctoral candidates of the UP.

Nevertheless, the fulfillment of only this criterion is not sufficient for a complete internationalization of science in Kosovo. For this objective, it is necessary to adopt English as a language in which the doctoral studies should be delivered, and as a language in which the doctoral theses at the UP should be written.<sup>20</sup> The fulfillment of this criterion will enable, among other things, the elimination of the possibilities for plagiarism, with the application of the anti-plagiarism software in English language, which should be a normative precondition for allowing the defense of doctoral theses, then, the opening of doctoral works in the UP before

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<sup>16</sup> Interview, Blerim Rexha, Prishtina, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> The list of these journals is determined in the Administrative Instruction MEST Nr. 01/2018, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018, and the Administrative Instruction for Amending and Specifying the previous Administrative Instruction (Anex –I-MASHT) 7/2018, May 23<sup>d</sup>, 2018.

<sup>19</sup> Regulation on Doctoral Studies in the UP, Article 8, Point 4, paragraph 1.

<sup>20</sup> Interviews: Faton Berisha, Prishtina, May 23<sup>d</sup>, 2018; Blerim Rexha, Prishtina, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

the international scientific opinion, as well as the possibility for the increase of quality of doctoral studies through foreign co-mentoring with professors from Western higher-ranking universities.

We should stress again here that it is necessary for the MEST and/or UP to prescribe the mandatory use of anti-plagiarism software for testing the doctoral works (which should be written in English language), as well as to ensure the buying of this software, and the possibility of its use.<sup>21</sup> The undertaking of these steps will undoubtedly elevate the ranking of the UP in the ranking lists of the global evaluation of universities, and it will augment the sustainability of doctoral programs developed in cooperation with TEMPUS program, once after they are finished.

On the other hand, until now the University of Prishtina has not conducted any internal evaluation of the quality of doctoral studies and of the researches conducted at the level of dissertations, despite of the fact that this is determined by the Article 21 of the Regulation on Doctoral Studies.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, there is no internal debate within the UP for evaluation of how much is the work conducted at the level of dissertations a genuine scientific work.<sup>23</sup> Another concern that was stressed is the one that the mechanisms for quality observation and assurance at the UP exist only on paper, and that in reality they are dysfunctional. Also, an objection was made that a serious deficiency of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency is the lack of mechanisms for observation of the execution of the accredited doctoral programs according to the conditions under which they are accredited.<sup>24</sup> For all these reasons, it is necessary that the Councils of Doctoral Studies of Academic Units, and the Central Council of Doctoral Studies, should undertake, among other things, the evaluation of the quality of doctoral studies, including here the evaluation of doctoral students as well, which is also recommended by

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<sup>21</sup> Interview, Faton Berisha, Prishtina, May 23d, 2018.

<sup>22</sup> Interviews: Blerim Saqipi, Prishtina, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018; Blerim Rexha, Prishtina, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018; Besnik Loxha, Prishtina, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Interview, Blerim Saqipi, Prishtina, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Interview, Besnik Loxha, Prishtina, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

numerous teams of international experts that have participated in the accreditation of doctoral programs at the UP.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See, for instance, Final Report, June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014, on the accreditation of the Doctoral Program in Sociology, Philosophic Faculty, Point 8.4.6., pg. 12.

#### **4. DISCUSSION OF THE RESOURCES AND OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF RESEARCH**

As far as the character of studies is concerned, doctoral studies differ in their very essence from the bachelor and master studies. While the bachelor and master studies are completely, or in a large measure, oriented towards acquisition by students of the previous science, the doctoral studies should be oriented towards the creation of new science. Indeed, the acquisition of the previous science can happen, and happens in the doctoral studies as well, but the basic orientation of these studies should be towards the new scientific contributions. As such, qualitative doctoral studies are linked in their very core with the level of research capacities of the educational-scientific institutions that provide them. Consequently, a fundamental condition for the augmentation of the quality of doctoral studies at the University of Prishtina is the increase of its research capacities, which were until now limited to individual efforts of its academic personnel, and were without any institutional support.

From this aspect, despite of the fact that the University of Prishtina has the research and scientific work emphasized in its Mission, this is not reflected in its annual budget, which has the value 33,834,712 €, <sup>26</sup> and where the largest portion of these financial means is allocated for salaries and payments, as well as for capital expenditures. On the other hand, despite of the fact that the Strategic Plan of the University of Prishtina 2017-2019<sup>27</sup> aims at the financial means of over 200,000€ for supporting different aspects of research, these means are not foreseen in the budget of the University of Prishtina. Therefore, we come to the conclusion that there is a complete inconsistency between this Strategy and the budgetary planning of the UP, and that, as a consequence, the implementation of this Strategic Plan can fail very easily.

The requests of professors and students for scientific and research activities are covered through reallocations of the budget, with special decisions by the Directing Council of the University of Prishtina, given that there is no budgetary planning for research activities at the

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<sup>26</sup> The Law Nr. 06/L-020, on the Budget of the Republic of Kosovo for the year 2018, December 22d, 2017.

<sup>27</sup> Strategic Plan of the University of Prishtina, 2017-2019, 23.12.2016. <https://www.uni-pr.edu/inc/doc/PLANI-STRATEGJIK1.pdf>

UP.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the actual normative and legal framework of the UP is not favorable and stimulant for elementary scientific and research activities, given that from the pointview of the decision making it is focused in the Directing Council of the University, instead of having the requests for support of researches and of participation in international scientific conferences treated by the academic units and approved by Rectorate.<sup>29</sup>

However, the fundamental problem of the stumble of scientific research in the UP is actually the absence of planning of the researches by both, the academic units, and by the University itself.<sup>30</sup> For treating and solving this problem it is necessary for the budget of the UP to have a particular budgetary line for research. Here, the academic units should prepare scientific projects and respective budgets on annual basis, and these should then be approved by the Senate and the Directing Council of the UP, and, after that, they should further proceed to the MEST and the Ministry of Finance. Such a planning would enable, the establishemt and the functionalization of the scientific institutes, the creation of which is foreseen with the respective Regulation on Scientific Institutes within the UP.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, for long-term improvement and development of scientific research within the UP, it is necessary for the academic units to prepare long-term strategies of research, and that a general research strategy should be prepared at the level of the UP as well, in order for the UP to fulfill its Mission for scientific research. Indeed, these research strategies should have sufficient financial support, which must necessarily be reflected in the particular budgetary line of the UP for enabling their implementation.

In such a situation, in which the portion of the budget of the UP which is reallocated for scientific research is less then 0.1% of the UP's total budget,<sup>32</sup> the research activities of

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<sup>28</sup> Interview, Faton Berisha, Prishtina, May 23d, 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Interview, Blerim Rexha, Prishtina, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Interviews: Faton Berisha, Prishtina, May 23d, 2018; Blerim Rexha, Prishtina, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Regulation on the Establishment and the Principles of Functioning of Institutes in the University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina", 25.10.2013.

<https://fxm.uni-pr.edu/getattachment/7ae84808-73e0-40ed-911f-0e644f2306dd/Rregullore-per-themelimin-dhe-parimet-e-funksionim.aspx>

<sup>32</sup> Interview But Dedaj, Prishtina, August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017.



professors of the UP remain a product of their individual enthusiasm, rather than a result of researches that are developed within the University of Prishtina and with its support.<sup>33</sup>

Here we should stress that the *White Document*<sup>34</sup> on sustainable financing of public institutions of higher education in Kosovo, for the category of regular professors foresees that the ratio between teaching and research activities should lean towards intensive research, with the values of 10% of time for teaching, 70% for research, and 20% for other services. Meanwhile, for the category of associated professors this ratio should be 20% for teaching, 60% for research, and 20% for other services. The creation of such a ratio between teaching and research will undoubtedly enable the increase of the volume and quality of research work, and, consequently, it will augment the quality of doctoral studies, given that the professors will expand their expertise that is necessary for qualitative guidance of the preparation of theses of doctoral students. For this reason, it is necessary that the eventual formulation of research strategies of academic units, and of the general research strategy of the UP, should reflect this ratio between research, teaching and other services.

The development of capacities and of research strategies within the UP would enable its involvement in international research projects offered by the European Union Framework for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020, where Kosovo participates in the quality of the International Cooperation Partner Country. The first step in this direction is undertaken by MEST, through its Regulation for Definition and Functionalization of the National Contact Points of Kosovo for Horizon 2020.<sup>35</sup>

In general, the University of Prishtina has regulated the access to electronic libraries, despite of the fact that the payment for access, in the value of 45.000€, was ensured with a reallocation of financial means from other budgetary lines.<sup>36</sup> However, while determining the electronic

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<sup>33</sup> Interview, Besnik Krasniqi, Prishtina, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>34</sup> *Dokumenti i bardhë: Modeli financiar për Sistemin e Arsimit të Lartë Publik në Kosovë [White Document: Financial Model for the System of Public Higher Education in Kosovo* (FAITH: Rritja e autonomisë financiare dhe llogaridhënies së institucioneve publike të arsimit të lartë në Kosovë [FAITH: The increase of financial autonomy and accountability of public institutions of higher education in Kosovo]), 544142-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-AT-TEMPUS-SMGR.

<sup>35</sup> MEST, Regulation Nr. 01/2018 on Determining and Functionalization of National Contact Points of Kosovo on the European Union Framework on Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020, 12.03.2018, <http://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2018/03/rregullore-horizon-2020-ncp-masht-01-2018-x-copyy.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Interview, Faton Berisha, Prishtina, May 23d, 2018.

libraries, the Rectorate has encountered the disagreement of academic units in social sciences, which were requesting access to the EBSCO platform. For enabling a comprehensive access, according to actual needs of particular academic units, it is necessary for the UP to ensure access based on the requests of these units, and that the access to electronic libraries should be extended to additional platforms which would fulfill the research requests of all the studying fields in the UP, instead of being limited to a single platform. Indeed, by providing doctoral students with a broad overview of the relevant scientific journals, the provision of such an access to electronic libraries would enable the increase of the quality of doctoral studies.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the recent years, the University of Prishtina, MEST and the Government of Kosovo have undertaken several important steps that have had an impact in the improvement of the quality of doctoral studies, such as: the adoption of the criterion for publication in the international indexed journals of a part of the results of doctoral researches by doctoral candidates, the normative determination of the platforms of international journals for publication, as well as the normative determination in the recent months, of the criterion of knowledge of foreign language in accordance with Common European Reference of Languages for admission in doctoral studies. Nevertheless, these steps are not sufficient for ensuring the quality of doctoral studies in the UP that is required for producing scientific products that are usable by the domestic and international scientific community, at the same time when the research within the UP remains individualized and uninstitutionalized.

The internationalization of science that can be produced in the UP would undoubtedly have an impact in the improvement of ranking of the UP in the evaluative rank-lists of the world universities, and would make it more attractive for doctoral students from other countries. For fulfilling these goals, we recommend the undertaking of the following measures:

1. The request for submission of the concept-proposal of doctoral research that the applicants plan to conduct in their doctoral works, should be added as a particular criterion for admission in doctoral studies;
2. Respective academic units should be obliged to acknowledge in the competitions for registration in doctoral studies the narrow scientific fields in which they have (co-)mentorial capacities, as determined by the Article 9, Point 2, of the Regulation on Doctoral Studies;
3. The Regulation on Doctoral Studies should be amended by adding the equal language criterion for all the studying programs of the respective levels. Based on the criteria of the CEFRL, for ensuring the qualitative doctoral studies, the requirement should be

introduced for having at least the C1 level of language proficiency, certified by a credible institution, such as the TOEFL test for English language;

4. The criterion for mentoring that should be fulfilled by potential mentors should be the one of the publication of at least three scientific works in the international indexed journals during the last five years since the moment of the accreditation of the respective doctoral program, and the mentoring should not be connected with academic titles of professors. This can be achieved with respective changes in the Article 9 of the Regulation on Doctoral Studies at the UP, or with the accreditation of professors for mentoring by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency;
5. The Statute of the UP should be amended to discharge in a large measure the mentor professors from the obligations of teaching at the bachelor and master levels, which will enable them to use their time for qualitative mentoring, by including here the review of the newest literature, the provision of the support for publication of the doctoral candidates in international journals, as well as for their participation in scientific projects, as foreseen by the Regulation on Doctoral Studies at the UP;
6. For the aim of increasing the quality of doctoral studies, it is necessary that co-mentors should be from universities that are ranked considerably higher than the University of Prishtina;
7. By amending the Statute of the UP, and with respective changes in the Regulation on Doctoral Studies at the UP, English should be determined as language in which the doctoral studies will be conducted, as well as the language in which the doctoral theses will be written;
8. MEST and the UP should determine the use of the anti-plagiarism software as mandatory for testing the doctoral works (which should be written in English), and they should ensure the buying and the possibility of the use of this software. The passing of the anti-plagiarism test should be a necessary condition for allowing the defense of the doctoral works, and this criterion should be included as mandatory in the Regulation on Doctoral Studies in the UP;

9. The Councils of Doctoral Studies of the Academic Units, as well as the Central Council of Doctoral Studies, should be engaged, among other things, with the evaluation of the quality of respective doctoral studies, by including here the evaluation of doctoral students;
10. The Budget of the UP should have a particular line for research which should be projected in cooperation with academic units, based on their scientific projects and budgetary planning. The planning of scientific projects would enable both, the establishment, and the functionalization, of scientific institutes within academic units;
11. For long-term augmenting and development of scientific research within the UP, the academic units should necessarily prepare long-term strategies of research, and a general research strategy should be prepared at the level of the UP as well;
12. For enabling a comprehensive access to electronic libraries, based on the actual needs of particular academic units, it is necessary for the UP to ensure access according to the requests of academic units, and that the access to electronic libraries should not be limited to a single platform.



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