

LAW No. 80/2015

**ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN INSTITUTIONS OF
HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA**

Based on articles 78 and 83, point 1, of the Constitution, with the proposal of the Council of Ministers,

THE ASSEMBLY

OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

DECIDED:

Chapter 1

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1

Mission of higher education

Higher education is a public good and responsibility and has the mission to:

- a) create, develop, transmit, and safeguard knowledge through teaching, scientific research, as well as to promote and develop the arts, physical education, and sports;
- b) train high-level specialists and prepare young scientists in accordance with the country's development priorities, contributing to the enhancement of democratic standards in the country;
- c) provide equal opportunities for access to higher education and lifelong learning;
- ç) contribute to national and regional economic, social, and cultural development, as well as to enhance public and national security;
- d) support the country's strategic priorities and development interests;
- dh) integrate teaching with scientific research;
- e) promote international cooperation in higher education.

Article 2

Purpose of the law

This law aims to:

- a) define the state's role in higher education; b) define the mission, main objectives of higher education and scientific research, rules of establishment, organization, direction, administration, financing, and closure of institutions of higher education;
- c) create a unified system of higher education, scientific research in institutions of higher education, contemporary and competitive innovation in the European space of higher education;

ç) create sustainable quality assurance mechanisms in institutions of higher education, in accordance with European standards;

d) place higher education on sustainable financial bases, creating the opportunity to use legal funding sources; dh) guarantee equal opportunities, based on merit, for all individuals who wish to pursue higher education;

e) base the higher education system on the principle of free competition among institutions of higher education, academic staff, and students.

Article 3

Academic freedom and autonomy of institutions of higher education

1. Institutions of higher education enjoy academic freedom, financial autonomy, organizational autonomy, and personnel selection rights, in accordance with the current legislation.

2. Academic freedom is guaranteed through the right to:

a) organize teaching, research, innovation, as well as creative activities;

b) develop and implement study programs and determine the areas of research activity;

c) organize the promotion process of academic staff.

3. Financial autonomy is guaranteed through the right to:

a) generate lawful income from teaching activities, research activities, intellectual property rights, trademarks and patents, services, artistic and sports activities, as well as other economic activities, used in accordance with current legislation;

b) obtain funds from the state and other organizations;

c) establish internal rules for funding, distribution, and use of income, according to the institution's activity and needs;

ç) determine tuition fees in accordance with this law;

d) administer movable and immovable property legally owned by the institutions, in accordance with their mission.

4. Organizational and personnel selection autonomy is guaranteed through the right to:

a) self-govern, choose governing bodies, organize structures, and regulate the ways of exercising their activities through their internal acts, drafted in accordance with this law and other legal and sub-legal acts in force;

b) establish criteria for the admission of students to study programs, in accordance with this law;

c) enter into agreements with legal entities, public and private, domestic or foreign, for the development of educational, research, qualification, innovative activities, as well as other lawful activities;

ç) independently determine the number of personnel, criteria and procedures for their selection, as well as determine the salaries of personnel, in accordance with the institution's form.

Article 4

Right to education

1. The right to pursue higher education is held by all individuals who have successfully completed secondary education and meet the admission criteria set by the current legal framework and institutions of higher education.
2. The state guarantees education for individuals who meet the admission criteria for a first-cycle study program, an integrated study program, or a professional study program but do not have the financial means to cover them.
3. Education is guaranteed in these study programs for individuals who are granted this right by special laws.
4. The Council of Ministers issues sub-legal acts to determine the categories of individuals benefiting from this right, according to point 2 of this article.

Article 5

The role of the state in higher education

1. The state exercises regulatory and creative functions of public institutions of higher education, as well as finances higher education and scientific research.
2. The state, through its responsible organs and structures, has responsibilities and duties as follows:
 - a) guarantees the autonomy and academic freedom of institutions of higher education;
 - b) is responsible for determining and monitoring standards in higher education for the opening and accreditation of institutions and study programs they offer;
 - c) evaluates the quality and functioning of institutions of higher education through its agencies, independent or foreign, making the process and results public;
 - ç) provides public funds to support study programs or specific fields of scientific research, in accordance with the country's development priorities and strategic interests;
 - d) provides public funds to ensure access to higher education, based on merit, regardless of individuals' financial capabilities;
 - dh) guarantees the inviolability of institutions of higher education and their territory. Public order authorities intervene in academic environments at the request or permission of the holder of the institution of higher education. Only in cases of the commission of a flagrant criminal offense, natural disasters, and emergencies, public order authorities have the right to intervene even without the permission of the holder of the institution of higher education. Violation of the inviolability of institutions of higher education is punished according to current legislation;

e) guarantees the secularism of public institutions of higher education and the non-use of religious symbols by them. Non-religious higher education and the specifics of the functioning of its institutions are regulated by the decision of the Council of Ministers.

3. Institutions of higher education maintain political neutrality.

Article 6

Definitions

In this law, the following terms have the following meanings:

1. "Accreditation" is the independent process of external quality assessment that determines whether higher education institutions and/or the study programs they offer meet specified quality standards in accordance with current laws and regulations.
2. "Higher Education" is education offered after secondary education by higher education institutions, according to the provisions of this law and other relevant regulations.
3. "Scholarship" is monetary funding provided to support the education of a student based on their academic achievements or other criteria, in accordance with current laws and regulations.
4. "Double or Multiple Diploma" is a diploma issued separately by two or more higher education institutions, with an agreement, demonstrating the successful completion of a joint study program.
5. "Joint Diploma" is a diploma jointly issued with an agreement by at least two higher education institutions, demonstrating the successful completion of a joint study program.
6. "Document of Priorities" is the document determining the structure of public fund spending for higher education and scientific research, in accordance with the country's priorities.
7. "ECTS - European Credit Transfer System" is the credit definition according to the European Credit Transfer System in higher education.
8. "Student Tracking" is the process of monitoring the student related to their further qualifications and employment, according to the pursued program.
9. "Higher Education Institutions" are legal entities that provide higher education or professional qualification after secondary education and, depending on the type of institution, also conduct scientific research, as part of the higher education system, established, and operating in accordance with current laws and regulations.
10. "Academic Career" is the teaching and research-scientific activity of the academic staff of the higher education institution.
11. "Basic Scientific Research" is research activity aimed at expanding, deepening, reconceptualizing, and reintegrating scientific knowledge about the phenomena studied and the theoretical understanding of the interaction between different actors and the process itself where they influence.
12. "Applied Scientific Research" is research activity aimed at finding practical and specific solutions with the main objective of applying theoretical knowledge in practice.

13. "Quality Code" is a compilation of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance in higher education.
14. "Opening Permit" is the decision of the Council of Ministers to open a higher education institution when it meets the criteria and standards specified in this law and sub-legal acts, granting a subject the right to establish a higher education institution.
15. "Permission to Start Academic Activity" is included in the order of the minister responsible for education to start the activity of a higher education institution.
16. "Closure of Institution's Activity" is the removal of the right to exercise the activity based on the obtained permits, in cases where the higher education institution does not meet the conditions and criteria for exercising its activity.
17. "In the category of 'Professors'" includes academic titles: "Professor," "Associate Professor," "Emeritus Professor," as well as the titles "Associate Academic" and "Academic," recognized according to the legal framework in force.
18. "Mid-term Budget Plan" is the specified forecast of the financial activity of a higher education institution expected to be carried out over a three-year period.
19. "Annual Budget Plan" is the specified forecast of the financial activity of a higher education institution expected to be carried out over a one-year period.
20. "Strategic Development Plan of the Institution" is the document specifying the objectives of the higher education institution or its constituent units, as well as the means and methods of their realization.
21. "Suspension of Institution's Activity" is the removal of the right to register students for a maximum period of two years, until the fulfillment of the conditions set by the ministry responsible for education to meet the criteria for the exercise of the higher education institution's activity.
22. "Study Program" is a set of academic and/or research activities, the successful completion of which entitles the student to be awarded a certificate, diploma, or scientific degree from the higher education institution offering it, depending on the type of study program.
23. "Reorganization of the Higher Education Institution" is the change in the structure and mode of functioning of the higher education institution.
24. "Internal Quality Assurance" is the continuous process of monitoring, evaluation, guaranteeing, preserving, and improving the quality of activities in higher education institutions, conducted by the institutions themselves.
25. "Full-time Study System" includes the organization of study programs with a normal academic workload of 60 ECTS credits in one academic year.
26. "Extended Study System" includes the organization of study programs with the same total academic workload as full-time study programs but with a longer duration that in no case exceeds twice the normal duration.
27. "Application Fee" is the monetary amount paid by the student for application to a study program.

28. "Competition Fee" is the monetary amount paid by the student to compete at a higher education institution to win a study program, in cases where the institution foresees the conduct of a competition.
29. "Registration Fee" is the monetary amount paid by the student to register for a study program.
30. "Tuition Fee" is the monetary amount paid by the student for pursuing a study program at a higher education institution.
31. "Study Fee" includes the registration fee and the tuition fee.
32. "Lifelong Learning" is the pursuit of activities and/or educational programs at different periods of life, aiming to expand knowledge to enhance study and/or professional skills.
33. "Comparative Evaluation" is the formal process of analyzing the results achieved by higher education institutions, based on which their ranking is conducted.

Chapter II

ORGANIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Article 7

Ministry Responsible for Education

1. The Ministry responsible for education is the institution that implements the government program in the field of higher education and scientific research.
2. The Ministry responsible for education has the following competencies:
 - a) Develops policies in the field of higher education and scientific research, and approves the strategic plan in this field;
 - b) Develops and proposes the legal basis in the field of higher education and scientific research;
 - c) Proposes to the Council of Ministers the funding model for the budget for higher education and scientific research, according to the provisions of this law and other legal and sub-legal acts in force;
 - ç) Proposes to the Council of Ministers the decision to open, merge a higher education institution with another institution, and close higher education institutions;
 - d) Grants permission to start the activity of higher education institutions;
 - dh) Approves the opening of new study programs, reorganization, suspension of academic activity, and closure thereof;
 - e) Checks the compliance of the activities of higher education institutions with current laws and sub-legal acts in force;
 - ë) Audits, at least once every three years, the use of public funds in higher education institutions;
 - f) Proposes to the Council of Ministers the maximum limit of the tuition fee for first-cycle study programs in public higher education institutions;

- g) Administers the state register of scientific degrees and academic titles;
- gj) Supports with the necessary infrastructure the research-scientific activities only in public higher education institutions;
- h) Supports innovation and development activities;
- i) Determines the official start and end date of the academic year for all higher education institutions;
- j) Verifies the legality of the conduct of elections in public higher education institutions and submits to the President of the Republic for appointment the winning candidate of the elections for rector in public universities;
- k) Sets conditions for the higher education institution and/or suspends its activity based on reports of legality, accreditation, or audit control;
- l) Proposes to the Council of Ministers the closure of the activity of the higher education institution based on reports of legality, accreditation, or audit control.

Article 8

Higher Education and Scientific Research Council

1. The Higher Education and Scientific Research Council (HESRC) is an advisory body for policies on higher education and scientific research, under the minister responsible for education.
2. Members of the HESRC are well-known personalities in academic fields and are appointed by the minister responsible for education.
3. The organization, functioning, tenure, and remuneration of HESRC members are determined by the decision of the Council of Ministers.

Article 9

Center for Educational Services

1. The Center for Educational Services (QSHA) is a public institution, under the Ministry responsible for education, with the mission of providing services in the field of higher education and ensuring public access to data on higher education.
2. QSHA has the object of providing services to citizens, higher education institutions, other institutions, and third parties. The provision of services to third parties is done by QSHA after approval by the Ministry responsible for education, against the fees determined by the decision of the Council of Ministers.
3. QSHA is financed by the State Budget and its own revenues, and has the right to manage the revenues created, to the extent of 90 percent of the budget year. Unutilized revenues pass to the next budget year.

4. The organization, functioning of QSHA, and student registration procedures are regulated by the minister responsible for education guidelines.

Article 10

Functions of the Center for Educational Services

1. The Center for Educational Services (QSHA) has the following functions:

a) Coordinates the application process to higher education institutions for pursuing studies in first-cycle programs, integrated programs, and professional programs.

b) Establishes and manages the national registry of students of all cycles and a database for higher education institutions, related to study programs, diplomas, or certificates they issue.

c) Provides each registered student in a higher education institution with a unique registration number, accompanying them until the receipt of the diploma for the respective study program, as per instructions given by the minister responsible for education.

ç) Organizes and administers the state exam for regulated professions, in collaboration with the relevant competent authorities.

d) Offers any other service entrusted by the minister responsible for education.

2. Every higher education institution reports to QSHA for all applicants registered in the second and third cycles of higher education studies, as well as for the list of graduates, according to the specified deadlines by the ministry responsible for education.

Article 11

National Agency for the Financing of Higher Education

1. The National Agency for the Financing of Higher Education (AKFAL) is a public institution under the responsibility of the ministry responsible for education, with the main duty of distributing public funds for:

a) Supporting the activities of public higher education institutions, including teaching, scientific research, and participation in academic and administrative management issues.

b) Providing scholarships for excellent students with the highest average grade from the upper secondary education system, students in study programs in priority fields, and students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

c) Guaranteeing the student loan scheme.

2. AKFAL proposes criteria for the distribution of public funds.

3. The ministry responsible for education approves the criteria and formulas for the distribution of public funds, as specified in point 1 of this article.

4. The ministry responsible for education approves and announces the annual document of priorities, according to the main directions.

5. The organization and functioning of AKFAL are regulated by the decision of the Council of Ministers.

Article 12

National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation

1. The National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation (AKKSHI) is a public institution under the responsibility of the ministry responsible for education and science, with the main duty of distributing funds for scientific research programs based on projects submitted by higher education institutions and research institutions in the fields of natural, engineering and technological sciences, medical sciences, agricultural sciences, social sciences, and humanities.
2. AKKSHI identifies priority areas for scientific research, technology, and innovation and evaluates nationally the programs and projects in the mentioned fields.
3. AKKSHI is responsible for disseminating information and coordinating the application processes for international scientific research projects in higher education.
4. AKKSHI organizes the evaluation process of the research-scientific activity of the basic units of higher education institutions every four years and ranks them based on this evaluation. AKKSHI communicates the evaluation to the National Agency for the Financing of Higher Education. The methodology of the evaluation process is regulated by the decision of the Council of Ministers.
5. AKKSHI approves, based on free competition among applicants, funds for doctoral study projects.
6. The agency also administers other funds for scientific research and innovation within the framework of national, international, and bilateral scientific research programs, which are distributed based on the applications of institutions.
7. AKKSHI presents its annual activity report to the ministry responsible for education and science. The results of its work are evaluated by the ministry responsible for education and science, based also on the funds obtained at the national level from international scientific research programs.
8. The composition, organization, and functioning of AKKSHI, the Administrative Board, as well as the remuneration of the board members, are determined by the decision of the Council of Ministers.

Article 13

National Database for Scientific Research

1. The national database for scientific research in the higher education system is administered and updated by AKKSHI and includes:
 - a) The list of defended doctoral dissertations and the corresponding abstracts in one of the five languages of the European Union: English, French, German, Spanish, Italian.
 - b) The updated list of second and third-cycle diploma theses, defended, and the corresponding abstracts in one of the five languages of the European Union: English, French, German, Spanish, Italian.
 - c) The updated list of the scientific contribution of academic and research personnel of higher education institutions and research institutions, as well as research personnel from other research and development institutes.

2. AKKSHI administers and makes public the database with all funded projects within national and international research and development programs.

Article 14

Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

1. The Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ASCAL) is a public legal entity responsible for ensuring quality in higher education. ASCAL, through quality assurance mechanisms, accreditation, and other processes, monitors and assesses the quality of the institution and the programs offered. ASCAL supports its activities based on its guidelines, in the Code of Higher Education Quality, which is updated with European quality standards in the European higher education area.

2. ASCAL carries out the assessment process for accrediting higher education institutions and the study programs they offer, as well as the ongoing monitoring of their quality.

3. ASCAL collaborates with higher education institutions to establish and operate an internal quality assurance system.

4. ASCAL enjoys independence in developing and approving its procedures, criteria, and assessment formats, selecting experts and special assessment commissions, as well as the content and results of academic quality assessment reports.

5. ASCAL also operates through selected and independent commissions, according to the main areas of higher education in natural, engineering and technological sciences, medical sciences, agricultural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. These commissions are temporary and consist of experts with academic qualifications, experience in higher education and scientific research, and knowledge of quality assurance processes.

6. The appointment of the Director of ASCAL is made by order of the Prime Minister, based on the proposal of the ministry responsible for education.

7. In the context of external quality assessment, ASCAL collaborates and coordinates its activities with the homologous agencies, members of the European Quality Assurance Network (ENQA) and/or the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR).

8. ASCAL publishes its annual activity report and the final assessment reports of higher education institutions and study programs.

9. ASCAL is funded in a balanced manner by the State Budget and the revenues generated from its activities. It has the right to use 90 percent of these revenues. Unused revenues during a fiscal year carry over to the following year.

10. The organization and functioning of ASCAL are regulated by the decision of the Council of Ministers.

Article 15

Accreditation Board

1. For the accreditation process of higher education institutions and study programs, the Accreditation Board is established at ASCAL, which is a collegial decision-making and independent body in its activities.

2. The Board makes the final decision on the accreditation of higher education institutions and programs they offer.
3. The Board approves, at the request of the higher education institution, the conduct of an external assessment by one of the ENQA member agencies.
4. The Accreditation Board consists of foreign and domestic experts, personalities in the field of higher education and quality assurance.
5. The mandate of Accreditation Board members is 4 years.
6. The appointment and dismissal of the Chairman and members of the Accreditation Board are made by order of the Prime Minister, based on the proposal of the ministry responsible for education.
7. The organization and functioning of the Accreditation Board, as well as the remuneration of its Chairman and members, are determined by the decision of the Council of Ministers.

Article 16

Conference of Rectors

1. The Conference of Rectors is a collegial, independent body composed of the heads of higher education institutions.
2. The Conference of Rectors carries out activities for the coordination and development of higher education and scientific research, as well as other functions determined by specific laws.
3. The Conference of Rectors provides recommendations on issues related to higher education of national interest.
4. The Conference of Rectors maintains connections with homologous associations to promote university exchanges that contribute to the advancement of higher education and scientific research.
5. The Conference of Rectors operates based on the statute approved by two-thirds of its members.

CHAPTER III

INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Section 1

Organization and Types of Higher Education Institutions

Article 17

Organization of Higher Education Institutions

1. Higher education institutions are organized into public, non-public, and independently public institutions, according to the provisions of this law. Higher education institutions are created, opened, organized, financed, accredited, evaluated, suspended, and closed in accordance with this law and the sub-legal acts issued for its implementation. They offer licensed study programs, for which they issue diplomas after the accreditation of the institution and the study program.

2. Public higher education institutions are public legal entities that self-finance, are financed by the State Budget, or other legal sources.
3. Non-public higher education institutions are private legal entities. Their activities may be for-profit or non-profit.
4. Independent public higher education institutions are public legal entities created by the decision of the Council of Ministers, according to the provisions of this law.
5. Higher education institutions that offer study programs in specific academic fields related to the organization and development of the educational process enjoy special status. This status is granted to the higher education institution by the decision of the Council of Ministers, based on the proposal of the ministry responsible for higher education.
6. Higher education institutions that enjoy special status, in cases where they are not subject to regulations determined by the decision of the Council of Ministers and the relevant guidance from the minister responsible for education, operate and are administered according to the principles and provisions of this law for higher education institutions.
7. Higher education institutions of the university or academy type, which for at least three academic years have no more than, respectively, six hundred and three hundred students, and which meet the conditions of the quality code of the educational process, may not meet the conditions of point 4, Article 25, in agreement with the ministry responsible for higher education.
8. The types of higher education institutions are: universities, university colleges, academies, and professional higher education colleges.

Article 18

University

1. A university is a higher education institution that operates in the fields of education, scientific research, creative and professional activities.
2. The university represents an integrated structure composed of core units, basic units, and other units, according to the provisions of the institution's statute. It has at least three faculties.
3. The university provides higher education, knowledge development, science, innovation, and professions.
4. The university conducts basic and applied scientific research, creative activities, offers services, and performs other activities, in accordance with the fields of study programs, this law, and its statute, as well as supports the professional development of academic personnel in line with its mission.
5. The university offers study programs at all levels of higher education, as well as professional study programs.

Article 19

Academy

1. An academy is a specialized higher education institution that operates in the fields of higher education and scientific research, creative and professional activities.
2. The academy represents a structure consisting of at least one faculty. In accordance with the respective competence area, the academy may offer study programs at all levels of study, as well as professional study programs.
3. The academy may conduct basic and applied scientific research, provide services, and perform other activities, based on this law and its statute.

Article 20

University College

1. A university college is a higher education institution that operates in the fields of education, scientific research, creative and professional activities.
2. The university college represents a structure composed of core units, basic units, and other units, according to the provisions of the institution's statute. It has at least two faculties.
3. The university college provides higher education, knowledge development, science, innovation, and professions.
4. The college may conduct scientific research, creative activities, offer services, and perform other activities, in accordance with the fields of study programs, this law, and its statute, as well as supports the professional development of academic personnel in line with its mission.
5. The university college offers study programs at the first and/or second cycle of studies and professional study programs.

Article 21

Professional Higher Education College

1. A professional higher education college is a higher education institution with a professional orientation that prepares professionals with practical skills.
2. The professional higher education college represents a structure consisting of at least two departments.
3. The professional higher education college offers teaching and training activities lasting one or two academic years with a corresponding workload of 60 or 120 ECTS credits and culminating in the issuance of a professional certificate or diploma.
4. The professional higher education college may be established within higher education institutions that have the status of universities and university colleges. In these cases, it is considered a core unit of the institution. In all other cases, the professional higher education college is considered a separate unit of higher education.

5. The organization and functioning of the professional higher education college are regulated by the decision of the Council of Ministers.

Section 2

Structure of Higher Education Institutions

Article 22

Constituent Units of Higher Education Institutions

1. Higher education institutions consist of core units, basic units, and other units, according to the provisions in the statute of the higher education institution.
2. Core units are faculties, research and scientific institutes, and professional higher education colleges, in cases when they are established within higher education institutions that have the status of universities and university colleges.
3. Basic units are departments and research and scientific centers.

Article 23

Faculty

1. A faculty is a core unit that coordinates teaching and scientific research in related or interconnected fields. The faculty offers study programs at various levels, in accordance with the type of higher education institution.
2. The faculty is organized into at least three basic units, at least two of which are departments.
3. The structure of the faculty, composition, functioning, and its management are defined in the statute and other acts of the higher education institution, in accordance with the provisions of this law.
4. The faculty approves the admission criteria for students for each study program, based on the proposals of the basic units, in accordance with the provisions of this law and sub-legal acts.

Article 24

Research and Scientific Institute

1. Higher education institutions may establish research and scientific institutes as integral parts of their structure. The institute conducts research and scientific activities, development, and innovation. It constitutes a core unit of the institution and may support the implementation of second and third-cycle programs when the programs are offered by other core units of the institution.
2. The structure of the research and scientific institute, composition, functioning, and its management are defined in the statute and other acts of the higher education institution.

Article 25

Department

1. A department is a basic unit for the development of teaching and research activities of the faculty, which includes related research areas and groups the respective teaching disciplines. It is responsible for the study programs it offers.
2. A department may be established by different faculties of a HEI for the organization and implementation of interdisciplinary study programs. In these cases, the functioning and dependency of this department are defined in the statute of the higher education institution. This department is not considered, for the purpose of meeting institutional standards, as a core unit.
3. The department encourages, plans, coordinates, develops, organizes, and administers teaching and research activities, depending on the type of institution.
4. The department has at least seven members, employed full-time, as academic staff, at least three of whom have scientific degrees or academic titles. The department may also include auxiliary academic staff.
5. The department may be organized into teaching and permanent or temporary interdisciplinary research groups, in accordance with the type and mission of the institution.
6. In public higher education institutions that have university health structures, departments consist of services formed based on the specialty.
7. The department proposes study programs, as well as the number of students for each program, in accordance with its academic and infrastructural capacities, according to quality standards.
8. The department proposes admission criteria for students for each study program, in accordance with the provisions of this law and sub-legal acts. The department selects the winning students, who are approved by the head of the core unit, according to the procedures defined in the statute and regulations of the higher education institution.
9. The department may provide third-party services and perform other activities, according to current legislation and rules defined in the statute and other acts of the higher education institution.
10. The department manages the basic funds of scientific research or other funds generated from legal, public, or non-public, national or international sources.
11. Other rules for the structure and functioning of the department are defined in the statute and regulations of the higher education institution.

Article 26

Research and Scientific Center

1. The research and scientific center of a faculty or institute is a basic unit that conducts research and scientific and development activities.
2. The center may support the implementation of Master's and Ph.D. programs offered by the departments of the respective faculty or other departments of other faculties.

3. The structure, composition, functioning, and management of the center are defined in the statute and other acts of the higher education institution.

4. When the center does not meet the standards of a core unit, it is not considered for the purpose of meeting institutional standards as a core unit of the core unit.

Article 27

Interdisciplinary Research Centers

1. For common academic, research, and development interests, the core units of a higher education institution may collaboratively establish interdisciplinary research centers.

2. The structure of interdisciplinary research centers, composition, functioning, and their management are determined in the statute and other acts of the higher education institution.

3. Interdisciplinary research centers are not included in the criteria for meeting institutional standards.

Article 28

University Health Structures

1. University health structures are units of the education and health systems that provide tertiary services, diagnostic and therapeutic functions, as well as teaching and research-scientific functions, as part of the higher education institution.

2. University health structures are approved and function as such by the decision of the Council of Ministers, after meeting specific standards and based on the criteria determined, upon the proposal of the minister responsible for education with the request of the minister responsible for health.

3. In public higher education institutions that have university health structures, departments consist of services formed based on the specialty. In these institutions, there may also be departments that do not include services in their composition, depending on the fields of teaching and scientific research they encompass.

4. The Council of Ministers determines the criteria and procedures for the establishment and organization of university health services and structures, as well as additional specific criteria and procedures for the selection and appointment of their leaders. The ministers responsible for education and health submit the respective proposal to the Council of Ministers after specifications made by the higher education institution.

5. Higher education institutions in the field of health may enter into agreements with health centers/institutions, public or private. The type of these health centers/institutions, public or private, as well as the criteria they must meet, are determined by the decision of the Council of Ministers.

6. In cases of creating a new service or new departments within existing university health structures, the head of the service is appointed by the minister responsible for health and the minister responsible for education for a term with an extension of up to 1 year, during which elections for the head of the main unit or the head of the service are held.

Article 29

Branches of Higher Education Institutions

1. A higher education institution, domestic or foreign, has the right to open branches in the Republic of Albania to offer study programs, in line with its competencies and field of activity. Depending on the type of institution, it may also engage in research, training activities, services, and other activities.
2. The branch of the domestic higher education institution is:
 - a) a separate unit in the structure of the higher education institution as a main unit or a base unit;
 - b) a constituent part of the main units of the institution's central office.
3. The criteria and procedures for opening branches of higher education institutions, both domestic and foreign, accredited in the country of origin, are determined by the decision of the Council of Ministers.
4. The branches of higher education institutions and the study programs offered in them are subject to the assessment and accreditation criteria and procedures, according to the provisions of this law.

CHAPTER IV

OPENING, REORGANIZATION, AND CLOSING OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Article 30

Opening, Closing, and Reorganization of a Higher Education Institution

1. The opening, closing, reorganization, division, or merger of a higher education institution is done by the decision of the Council of Ministers, upon the proposal of the minister responsible for education.
2. For public higher education institutions opened with the joint proposal of at least two ministries, reorganization, closing, or merger with another higher education institution is done upon the proposal of those ministries.
3. The opening of a higher education institution is done by meeting academic standards, ensuring the necessary financial means for the completion of studies started by each registered student, and fulfilling other criteria specified in this law or sub-legal acts necessary to ensure the quality of the planned study programs, as well as other activities of the institution. The standards, criteria, and procedures for opening, reorganization, division, merger, or closure of higher education institutions are approved by the decision of the Council of Ministers.

The documentation that the institution must include in its project for opening is determined by the minister responsible for education's guidelines.

In case of refusal of a submitted project, the ministry responsible for education informs the applicant of the decision and the reasons for it within a ninety-day period from the date of application.

4. For the closure, reorganization, division, or merger with another higher education institution, the prior proposal of the Academic Senate and the approval of the Administration Board are required. In cases where the initiative for closing the institution is taken by the minister responsible for education, the Academic Senate and the Administration Board express their opinion within one month.

5. The opening, reorganization, or closure of main units of higher education institutions is done by the order of the minister responsible for education, based on the proposal of the higher education institution, after the approval of the Academic Senate and the Administration Board.

6. The opening, reorganization, or closure of basic units of higher education institutions is done by the decision of the Academic Senate, at the end of the academic year, after the approval of the Administration Board. The institution informs the ministry responsible for education of its decision within a thirty-day period.

7. Procedures for opening, closing, reorganizing, and starting the activity of a higher education institution are determined by the relevant guidelines of the minister responsible for education.

Article 31

Opening and Commencement of the Activity of a Higher Education Institution

1. The opening of a higher education institution is done by the decision of the Council of Ministers, upon the proposal of the minister responsible for education, according to the provisions of Article 30 of this law.

2. The permission to open a higher education institution also includes the obligation that, in the event that the institution interrupts its activity, it provides the necessary financial means and opportunities for the completion of studies for all students registered in that institution.

3. A foreign higher education institution accredited in another state, in the request for opening, is obliged to submit to the ministry responsible for education an official document certifying accreditation.

4. After the decision of the Council of Ministers to open the institution, the institution starts its activity only after the issuance of the order by the minister responsible for education for the commencement of the activity.

5. The permission granted for opening becomes invalid in cases where the higher education institution does not start its activity within twenty-four months from its issuance.

6. A higher education institution concludes its academic activity, as defined in its mission, only at the end of the academic year.

Article 32

Reporting

1. Higher education institutions submit annual reports on their activities, financial status, forecasts for the engagement of academic staff, tuition fees for the following year, information on tracking students who have completed their studies for each study program they offer, and other elements specified by the minister responsible for education, to the responsible ministry for each academic year.

2. Deadlines for reporting are determined by the guidelines of the minister responsible for education.

Article 33

Statute and Regulation of Higher Education Institutions

1. The statute of a higher education institution contains the basic rules that regulate its activity.
2. The statute is drafted and amended in accordance with the provisions of this law, as well as the sub-legal acts in force. It is approved by the Academic Senate of the higher education institution and the Administration Board. The statute is sent to the minister responsible for education, who, within two months, checks its legality. When discrepancies with the law are found, the minister returns the statute for revision to the higher education institution. When the minister has no objections to the legality of the statute or does not express within the above-mentioned period, the statute is considered approved. Changes to the statute are approved by the same procedures.
3. Higher education institutions and their constituent units regulate their activities in their internal regulations, which are drafted and approved in accordance with this law and as specified in the statute of the higher education institution.
4. In the statute, in accordance with this law and the decision to open the higher education institution, the following are precisely determined: its organization, constituent structures, the activities of authorities and governing bodies, their election or appointment, the levels of delegation of competencies by the governing and administrative authorities, the periods of conducting internal assessments of structures or study programs, the duties and rights of academic, assistant-academic, administrative personnel, and students, as well as other issues that regulate the institution's activities.

Article 34

Name and emblem of higher education institutions

1. Higher education institutions have an official name and emblem determined by the decision of the institution's opening.
2. The designations of the type of higher education institution such as "university," "university college," "academy," and "higher professional college" cannot be used and cannot be part of the unique name of the higher education institution.
3. The higher education institution informs the ministry of changes to the name or emblem of the institution. The above changes are approved by the decision of the Academic Senate.
4. If the name and emblem of the institution are the same as another institution or are in conflict with public morality or the provisions of this law, the minister requests their change. The ministry responsible for education keeps the relevant register for this purpose.

Article 35

Opening, closing, and reorganization of study programs in higher education institutions

1. The opening of study programs, closure, as well as their reorganization exceeding 20 percent of their content expressed in credits, after a complete study cycle, is approved by the minister responsible for education, based on the request of the higher education institution, considering the assessment of needs in the labor market and in accordance with the provisions of this law.

2. The opening of a new study program in a public higher education institution is subject to prior approval by AKFAL in all cases where funding is required from the State Budget. In cases where the program is opened without AKFAL approval, the higher education institution takes responsibility for covering the expenses of the study program permanently.
3. The minister responsible for education rejects the request in cases where the higher education institution does not meet the conditions for opening the study program or fails to prove that it is able to provide the necessary financial guarantees and infrastructure for the required activity.
4. Higher education institutions, before the start of the academic year, officially notify the ministry responsible for education of changes made to study programs, after their opening and accreditation, accompanied by the relevant justification, one year before the implementation start date.
5. Foreign higher education institutions from the European Union, United States, Canada, and Australia may offer study programs or higher professional training. These programs must be accredited in the country of origin and offered in accredited Albanian higher education institutions after their approval by the minister responsible for education. The implementation of the program follows the same standards, modalities, and academic personnel as in the country of origin of the foreign institution. The Albanian higher education institution is responsible for meeting the standards and implementing the academic process. The opening of these programs is subject to the preliminary assessment and recognition process by ASCAL and the Accreditation Board, in accordance with the Quality Code, as well as other legal obligations.
6. The minister responsible for education determines by instruction the criteria and documentation that the request for opening new study programs must contain, as well as the procedures followed for their opening.
7. The permission granted for the opening of a new study program is invalidated in cases where the higher education institution does not activate the program within twenty-four months from the issuance of the opening order.
8. Based on non-compliance with the criteria of legality and/or accreditation of a study program, the minister responsible for education orders the closure of the respective program.
9. The higher education institution for accredited study programs may make profiling changes up to 20 percent and reflect them on the diploma issued by it. The approval of changes is made by the Academic Senate and is notified to the ministry responsible for higher education no later than six months before the start of the academic year.

CHAPTER V

ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Article 36

Governing bodies and authorities in higher education institutions

1. The highest academic governing body is the Academic Senate. Other academic bodies include the assembly of academic staff and permanent committees.
2. Academic governing authorities are the rector, head of the main unit, and head of the base unit.

3. The highest administrative governing body is the Administration Board.
4. Administrative governing authorities include the institution's administrator and the main unit's administrator. Administrative authority is the base unit administrator.
5. Other collegiate bodies include the rectorate, deanship, ethics council.
6. Higher education institutions have the right to create authorities and other bodies within their structure, in accordance with the mission and activities of the institution, according to the provisions of their statute.
7. In public higher education institutions, members of the Academic Senate and academic governing authorities are elected through a general election process held every four years. Members of the Administration Board are elected according to the provisions of this law. Administrative authorities are selected in accordance with the provisions of this law.
8. In non-public higher education institutions, members of the Academic Senate, academic governing authorities, members of the Administration Board, and administrative authorities are selected/appointed and dismissed according to the provisions of this law and the institution's statute.

Section 1

Academic Organization

Article 37

Academic Senate

1. The Senate is the highest academic collegiate body of the higher education institution, responsible for fulfilling its mission.
2. The Senate is chaired by the rector and meets periodically.
3. Members of the Academic Senate of higher education institutions are elected by the assemblies of academic staff of the main units through a general vote for a four-year term, with the right to be re-elected, among full-time academic staff who are self-nominated.
4. Senate members in higher education institutions belong to the category of "Professor" or have a "Doctor" scientific degree (Ph.D.), obtained from universities in OECD or EU member countries. In the absence of leading authorities with this title, their category may be lowered, as determined in the institution's statute. Students are represented in the Academic Senate in public institutions, in a ten percent proportion, while in non-public institutions, they are represented as determined in the institution's statute.
5. The number of members, the functioning, and the representation of main units in the Senate are determined in the statute of the higher education institution.

Article 38

Functions of the Academic Senate

1. The functions of the Academic Senate are:

- a) Ensuring the autonomy of the higher education institution, academic freedom, and the rights of students;
 - b) Proposing the strategic development plan of the higher education institution;
 - c) Approving the statute of the higher education institution with two-thirds of its members' votes, after obtaining the prior approval of the Administration Board;
 - d) Drafting the general structure of the higher education institution and proposing to the Administration Board the number of institution staff at all levels;
 - e) Approving the institution's regulations and other acts, according to the provisions made in the statute;
 - f) Approving new study programs, research, changes, and their closure. New study programs must be supported by the institution's annual budget;
 - g) Proposing the closure and reorganization of the higher education institution, as well as the division or merger of the higher education institution with another. In these cases, a preliminary assessment is obtained from the Administration Board;
 - h) Approving the opening, reorganization, or closure of the higher education institution's units based on proposals from main and base units. In these cases, a preliminary evaluation is obtained from the Administration Board;
 - i) Approving the annual plan of academic and research activities;
 - j) Approving the detailed annual report of the institution's activities, prepared by the rectorate, and submitting it to the ministry responsible for education;
 - k) Electing its representatives on the Administration Board;
 - l) Preliminarily approving the annual and medium-term budget plan of the institution;
 - m) Establishing the Permanent Commission for the Promotion of Academic Staff, for granting the academic titles of "Associate Professor" and "Professor," when the institution meets the legal criteria, as well as other commissions specified in the institution's statute;
 - n) Ensuring internal quality assurance in the higher education institution;
 - o) Creating mechanisms for evaluating the teaching and research-scientific activities of academic staff;
 - p) Organizing a joint meeting, in collaboration with the Administration Board, at the end of each academic year to discuss teaching, research, and financial activities.
2. The competence to exercise the functions specified in subparagraphs "b," "c," "e," "h," and "i" of paragraph 1 of this article in non-public higher education institutions is determined in their statutes.
3. Other functions of the Academic Senate are determined in the statute of the higher education institution.

Article 39

Rector

1. The rector is the highest academic authority of the higher education institution, as well as its legal representative for academic and protocol matters, according to the provisions of this law.
2. In public higher education institutions, the rector is elected by the members of the assemblies of the academic staff of the main units and students. Student votes in the rector's election count for ten percent of the total votes. Candidates for the rectorship are self-nominated.
3. The rector in higher education institutions holds the title of "Professor" and may come from the ranks of the institution's academic staff or from outside. Specific selection criteria for competing candidates are determined in the respective institution's statute.
4. The rector chairs the Academic Senate and reports to it.
5. The rector signs employment contracts for academic and academic support staff in higher education institutions.
6. The rector presents to the senate the strategic development plan of the institution.
7. The rector's mandate lasts four years. He/she serves only one term, with the right to be re-elected once. After the end of the mandate, he/she continues to be a member of the base unit staff, where he/she carries out his/her academic activities.
8. The President of the Republic decrees the rectors of higher education institutions, according to the provisions of this law.
9. In cases of creating a public university, the President of the Republic appoints its rector for an extended one-year term, tasked with organizing and conducting the general elections of that institution within this mandate. In the event of the rector's departure for legal reasons or failure to fulfill his duties, the minister responsible for education appoints one of the vice-rectors temporarily for a period of up to six months, with the aim of organizing elections in the institution.
10. In cases of committing flagrant criminal offenses or serious violations of the law, inability to perform duties, and for cases provided for in the Code of Ethics of the higher education institution, the minister suspends the rector and proposes his dismissal to the President of the Republic, who expresses his opinion within one month. If the President of the Republic does not express his opinion within this period, the minister's proposal is considered approved in silence. After the decree of dismissal, the minister announces early elections within six months from the date of dismissal.
11. The rector proposes to the minister responsible for education the dismissal of the leading authority of the main unit of the public institution, in cases of committing flagrant criminal offenses or serious violations of the law, inability to perform duties, and for cases provided for in the Code of Ethics of the higher education institution. The minister expresses his opinion within one month. The rector appoints one of the deputies of the authority until the election of the new authority within two months from the date of dismissal. Immediately after dismissal, the rector announces early elections within six months from the date of dismissal.
12. Other functions of the rector are determined in the statute of the institution.

Article 40

Rectorate

1. The rectorate in higher education institutions is a collegiate body led by the rector and consists of:

- a) The rector;
- b) The vice-rector/s;
- c) The institution's administrator;
- d) The heads of the main units;
- e) Other authorities, as specified in the statute of the higher education institution.

2. Higher education institutions specify in their statute the number of vice-rectors who belong to the category "Professor" or have a scientific degree "Doctor" (Ph.D.) obtained from universities in OECD or EU member countries. They are full-time academic staff, appointed and dismissed by the rector, after approval by the Academic Senate.

3. The rectorate prepares the strategic development plan of the institution, based on proposals from main and base units and administrators.

4. The functions of the rectorate are determined in the statute of the higher education institution.

Article 41

Assembly of Academic Staff

1. The Assembly of Academic Staff consists of full-time academic staff of the main units.

2. The Assembly of Academic Staff of the main unit in higher education institutions has the following functions:

- a) Elects the rector of the institution in public higher education institutions;
- b) Elects members of the Academic Senate in public higher education institutions;
- c) Elects the head of the main unit in public higher education institutions;
- ç) Establishes and elects members of the permanent commissions of the main unit.

3. The Assembly of Academic Staff may also exercise other competencies as defined in the statute of the higher education institution.

Article 42

Head of the Main Unit

1. The Head of the Main Unit is the dean of the faculty, director of the research-scientific institute when it meets the standards as a main unit, and director of the higher professional college, in cases when the latter is created within higher education institutions of the university or university college type.

2. The Head is the highest academic authority of the main unit and its representative. They coordinate the activities of the basic units and collegial bodies of the main unit and resolve disputes between them.
3. In public higher education institutions, the Head is elected by the Assembly of Academic Staff of the main unit and the students. Student votes in the election of the Head account for ten percent of the total votes. The candidate for the Head is a faculty member of the "Professor" category and may come from the ranks of academic staff within or outside the institution. Specific selection criteria for competing candidates are determined in the relevant statute of the institution.
4. The term of the Head's mandate is four years. They serve in office for one term, with the right to re-election only once. After the mandate expires, they continue to be a member of the basic unit where they carry out their academic activities.
5. In public higher education institutions, the rector appoints the Head of the Main Unit from the winning candidate of the elections.
6. In cases of creating a new main unit in public higher education institutions, or in cases of creating a new higher education institution, its Head is appointed by the rector for a one-year extension mandate, with the task of organizing and conducting elections for the Head of the main unit and constituent units within the mandate extension period.
7. The Head of the Main Unit submits proposals to the Academic Senate from the basic units, accompanied by their opinions.
8. Other functions of this managerial authority are determined in the statute and regulations of higher education institutions.
9. The Head of the Main Unit proposes to the institution's administrator the removal of the Head of the basic unit in public higher education institutions in cases of committing flagrant criminal offenses or serious violations of the law, inability to perform duties, and for cases stipulated in the Code of Ethics of higher education institutions. The rector expresses their opinion within one month. The substitute for the Head of the basic unit is appointed by the rector, upon the proposal of the Head of the Main Unit. The rector announces early elections within six months from the date of dismissal.
10. The Head of the Main Unit proposes to the institution's administrator the removal of the administrator of the main unit.

Article 43

Dean's Office

1. The Dean's Office in higher education institutions is a collegial body led by the dean and consists of:
 - a) The dean;
 - b) Vice-deans;
 - c) Administrator of the main unit;
 - ç) Heads of basic units;
 - d) Other authorities specified in the statute of the higher education institution.

2. Vice-deans are full-time members of the academic staff. They are appointed and dismissed by the dean, according to the provisions made in the statute of the higher education institution.
3. The Dean's Office develops the strategic development plan of the main unit, based on the proposals of its basic units, as well as those of the administrator of the main unit.
4. The Dean's Office coordinates the activities of the basic units.
5. The functions of the Dean's Office are determined in the statute and regulations of the higher education institution.

Article 44

Institutional Ethics Council

1. The Institutional Ethics Council is established in higher education institutions. It promotes and examines issues related to ethics in teaching and research activities, as well as other institutional activities.
2. The rules of organization and functioning of the ethics council are determined in the statutes of higher education institutions, as well as in their internal regulations.

Article 45

Head of the Basic Unit

1. The Head of the Basic Unit is the head of the department or research-scientific center. They are the academic leader of that unit and represent it. In public higher education institutions, they are elected by the Assembly of Academic Staff of the basic unit. In non-public higher education institutions, they are elected or appointed according to the provisions in the institution's statute.
2. In public higher education institutions, the Head of the Main Unit appoints the Head of the Basic Unit from the winning candidate of the elections. In cases of creating a new basic unit in public higher education institutions or creating a new higher education institution, its Head is appointed by the dean for a mandate extension until the organization of elections for the Head of the basic unit.
3. The candidate for the Head position is self-nominated and is an academic staff member in the "Professor" category or holds a "Doctor" ("PhD") degree obtained from universities of OECD or EU member countries. In cases where there are no candidates of this category, a lecturer, holding a "Doctor" degree, can also run for the Head position. Other selective criteria for competing candidates are determined in the relevant statute of the institution.
4. The Head can serve for one four-year term, with the right to be re-elected only once. After the mandate, they continue to be a member of the basic unit staff where they carry out their academic activities, except when the conditions specified in paragraph 3 of this article are not met.
5. The Head proposes to the institution's administrator the removal of the administrator of the basic unit.
6. The functions of the Head of the Basic Unit are regulated in the statute and regulations of the higher education institution.

Article 46

Permanent Commissions

1. Permanent Commissions are collegial bodies that perform functions specified in the statute, mainly related to academic qualification and promotion, guaranteeing the quality standards of the institution and study programs, managing its activities, and relations with students, in line with the mission and policies of the institution.
2. Permanent Commissions are created at the institutional and main unit levels, consisting of no fewer than five members.
3. Members of the permanent commissions of the higher education institution self-nominate and are elected by the Academic Senate for a two-year term, with the right to be re-elected. Members of the permanent commissions of the main units in higher education institutions self-nominate and are elected by the Assembly of Academic Staff of the main unit among its members, for a two-year term, with the right to be re-elected.
4. In cases where the higher education institution offers the award of the "Doctor" academic degree, the Assembly of Academic Staff of the main unit re-elects from the academic staff of the main unit the members of the permanent commission monitoring the process for awarding the academic degree. They hold the title of "Professor" or "Associate Professor." Members of this commission have a two-year term, with the right to be re-elected.
5. In cases where the higher education institution meets the conditions for awarding the academic titles "Professor" and "Associate Professor," the Academic Senate selects from the academic staff of the main units the members of the Commission for the Promotion of Academic Staff. They hold the title "Professor." Members of this commission have a two-year term, with the right to be re-elected.
6. Students are represented in the composition of the permanent commissions according to the provisions of the higher education institution's statute, except for the Commission for Awarding the "Doctor" Academic Degree and the Commission for the Promotion of Academic Staff. The maximum number of commission members, as well as the functions and organization, is determined in the statute and regulations of the higher education institution.

Section 2

Administrative Organization

Article 47

Administration Board

The Administration Board is the highest collegial administrative body that ensures the fulfillment of the mission of the higher education institution and its financial and administrative performance.

Article 48

Composition and Establishment of the Administration Board

1. The Administration Board in public higher education institutions consists of seven part-time members. The members, representatives of the higher education institution, are selected by the Academic Senate

of the higher education institution for a five-year term, with the right to be re-elected, from the lists proposed by the higher education institution. The list of candidates includes data on individuals who self-nominate or are proposed by the basic units of the higher education institution or the relevant institutions. Members representing the ministry responsible for education and the local government unit are recognized experts in academic, managerial, economic, and legal fields and are appointed by the minister responsible for education and the head of the local government unit, respectively, according to the provisions of this law.

2. The composition of the Administration Board is determined based on the medium-term budget plan of the public higher education institution, approved by the Administration Board.

If the institution provides fifty percent or more of the medium-term budget, four of the members are representatives of the higher education institution and three are representatives of the ministry responsible for education.

In cases where the institution provides less than fifty percent of the medium-term budget, three of the members are representatives of the higher education institution, and four are representatives of the ministry responsible for education.

In cases where the local government unit, in whose territory the higher education institution operates, financially contributes at least ten percent of the medium-term budget of the higher education institution, then one of the representatives, belonging to the ministry responsible for education, is determined by the local government unit.

3. The level of financial contribution of the ministry, the local government, and the institution itself is based on the medium-term budget plan of the institution, with agreements between them. This plan is updated annually, and at the end of the third financial year, a reassessment of funding and determination of the contributors' participation in the Administration Board is made.

4. For higher education institutions enjoying a special status, one of the members, a representative of the ministry responsible for education, is appointed by the line minister.

5. The rectors, heads of main units, heads of basic units, and administrators cannot be members of the Administration Board, but they may be invited to participate in its meetings.

Article 49

Functions of the Administration Board in Higher Education Institutions

1. The Administration Board has the following main functions:

a) Ensures the financial sustainability of the higher education institution and the fulfillment of its mission;

b) With the proposal of the Academic Senate, approves the strategic development plan of the institution and supervises its implementation;

c) With the proposal of the Academic Senate, approves the annual and medium-term budget of the institution and supervises their implementation;

ç) With the proposal of the Academic Senate, approves the number of staff at all levels;

d) Preliminarily evaluates the closure and reorganization of the higher education institution, as well as the division or merger of the higher education institution with another higher education institution;

dh) Preliminarily approves the opening, reorganization, or closure of constituent units of the higher education institution;

e) Provides input on the draft regulations of the institution and approves its financial regulations; è) Determines the rules for the distribution of revenues generated by the institution's activities and supervises the use of funding resources;

f) Is responsible for establishing criteria and procedures for the employment of administrators and administrative staff, based on the acts of the higher education institution;

g) Appoints and dismisses the administrator of the institution;

gj) Preliminarily approves the statute of the higher education institution before submitting it to the Academic Senate;

h) Approves the detailed annual report of the institution's activities prepared by the rector.

2. In public higher education institutions, decisions of the Administration Board, regarding the determination made in subparagraph "g" of paragraph 1 of this article, require no less than three-fifths of the votes of the members.

3. Competences for the exercise of the functions specified in sub-letters "b," "c," "ç," "d," and "dh" of paragraph 1 of this article, in non-public higher education institutions, are determined in their statutes.

4. Other functions of the Administration Board are determined in the statute of the higher education institution.

Article 50

Premature Termination of the Mandate of Leading Authorities and Elected Members of the Governing Bodies of Public Higher Education Institutions

1. The mandate of the authority or elected member terminates prematurely in cases:

a) When convicted by final court decision for committing a criminal offense;

b) When the member of the body or authority resigns;

c) Inability to perform duties;

ç) Serious violations of the law;

d) Other conditions specified in the statute of the higher education institution;

dh) Change in representation relations in the governing body.

2. Dismissal of members of the Administration Board is done by the minister responsible for education, upon the proposal of the body that elects or appoints them.

3. Dismissal for each authority or member is carried out according to the procedures specified in the statute of the higher education institution, in accordance with the provisions of this law.

4. In case of premature termination of the mandate of authorities and elected members of the bodies, the mandate of the newly elected member of the governing body is complementary.

Article 51

Administrator of the Higher Education Institution

1. The administrator is the highest administrative authority responsible for the financial functioning of the institution. They are the legal representative of the higher education institution for financial and administrative matters, according to the provisions of this law.

2. In public higher education institutions, the administrator is selected through an open competition, based on criteria determined by the Administration Board. The list of candidates meeting the criteria is approved by the Academic Senate. The appointment of the administrator is made by the Administration Board. In non-public higher education institutions, the administrator is appointed and dismissed according to the provisions in the statute of the institution.

3. The administrator of the public higher education institution is dismissed by the Administration Board with two-thirds of the votes of its members.

4. The administrator must have a higher education, at least a "Master of Science" degree in law or economics, and at least seven years of work experience in these fields.

5. The administrator cannot hold any other academic or administrative position.

6. The administrator reports on their activities to the Administration Board and the Academic Senate, according to the provisions of the statute of the higher education institution.

Article 52

Functions of the Administrator

1. The administrator performs the following functions:

a) Develops the annual budget project, based on the proposals of the main units and basic units, supported by the strategic development plan of the institution and its medium-term budget plan;

b) Proposes criteria for the administration of financial and material resources, which are submitted to the Administration Board for approval, and oversees their distribution and implementation;

c) Monitors and controls the implementation of the annual budget of the higher education institution in its dependent structures;

ç) Implements all decisions of the Administration Board and the Academic Senate with financial and administrative character;

d) Presents to the Administration Board and the Academic Senate a report on the financial activities of the higher education institution at the end of the academic year;

dh) Collaborates with other structures and authorities of the higher education institution on daily administrative issues;

e) Appoints and dismisses administrators of the main units and basic units after the approval of the Administration Board;

ë) Fulfills the requests of the rector, aiming to meet academic, administrative, and financial needs.

2. Other functions of the administrator are determined in the statute and regulations of the institution.

Article 53

Administrator of the Main Unit

1. The administrator of the main unit is responsible for the financial and administrative functioning of the unit.

2. In public higher education institutions, they are selected through a competition, following the procedures and criteria determined by the Administration Board. In non-public higher education institutions, the administrator is appointed according to the criteria specified in the statute of the institution.

3. The administrator of the main unit must have university education, at least a "Master of Science" degree in law or economics, and at least five years of work experience in these fields.

4. The administrator of the main unit cannot hold any other academic or administrative position.

5. The administrator of the main unit reports on their activities to the administrator of the higher education institution and informs the head of the main unit, according to the provisions in the acts of the higher education institution.

6. The administrator of the main unit proposes the dismissal of administrators of the basic units.

Article 54

Functions of the Administrator of the Main Unit in Higher Education Institutions

1. The functions of the administrator of the main unit are:

a) Manages the daily financial administration of the main unit;

b) Monitors and controls the financial activities of the main unit;

c) Fulfills the requests of the head of the main unit, aiming to meet academic, administrative, and financial needs;

ç) Collaborates with the authorities and governing bodies of the main unit on fundamental issues of its administration.

2. Other functions of the administrator of the main unit are determined in the statute and regulations of the institution.

Article 55

Administrator of the Basic Unit in Higher Education Institutions

1. The administrator of the basic unit is responsible for the financial functioning of the unit. They carry out supportive activities in fulfilling the mission of one or more basic units. The Administration Board, at the request of the basic unit, proposes the inclusion or exclusion of this authority in the structure of the institution. In cases where the existence of this authority is provided, the Administration Board may determine, depending on the size and financial capacity of the institution, the number of units that can be administered by one administrator.
2. In public higher education institutions, they are selected by the administrator of the institution, following the procedures and criteria determined by the Administration Board. In non-public higher education institutions, the administrator is appointed according to the criteria specified in the statute of the institution.
3. The administrator of the basic unit must have university education, at least a "Master of Science" degree in law or economics, and at least three years of work experience in these fields.
4. The administrator of the basic unit cannot hold any other academic or administrative position.
5. The administrator of the basic unit reports on their activities to the administrator of the main unit and the head of the basic unit, according to the provisions in the acts of the higher education institution.

Article 56

Functions of the Administrator of the Basic Unit in Higher Education Institutions

1. The functions of the administrator of the basic unit are:
 - a) Administers the funds of the basic unit/units;
 - b) Implements the decisions of the administrator of the main unit on the manner of distribution of revenues created by the basic unit/units;
 - c) Fulfills the requests of the head of the basic unit, aiming to meet academic, administrative, and financial needs.
2. Other functions of the administrator of the basic unit are determined in the statute and regulations of the higher education institution.

CHAPTER VI

STAFF OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Article 57

Staff of Higher Education Institutions

1. The staff of higher education institutions consists of academic staff, assistant academic staff, and administrative staff.

2. The staff of higher education institutions may be employed on contracts, for unspecified or specified periods, as well as on full-time or part-time engagements.

3. The rights and obligations of the staff of higher education institutions are determined by their statutes and internal regulations, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

Article 58

Status of Academic Staff

1. Academic staff enjoys special status and treatment. The special status and treatment are proposed by the Minister responsible for education, after receiving the opinion of KALKSH, and approved by the Council of Ministers.

2. Public institutions of higher education may contribute to the special financial treatment of academic staff, in addition to benefits from the State Budget.

3. Aspects of special treatment, as well as other benefits for academic staff of higher education institutions, are determined by the Administration Board.

Article 59

Categories of Academic Staff

1. Academic staff in higher education institutions performs teaching, scientific research, services for the support and development of the higher education institution, counseling for students, and other activities.

2. Academic staff may be focused on teaching and/or research-scientific orientation. Academic staff in higher education institutions, based on their roles and activities, is categorized as:

a) Professors;

b) Lecturers;

c) Assistant Lecturers.

3. The category "Professors" includes members of academic staff, titular in subjects or modules, and leaders of research-scientific activities. Members of academic staff in this category hold the academic titles "Professor" or "Associate Professor." This category is employed on contracts with unspecified durations.

4. In the category "Lecturers," members of academic staff who conduct teaching and research-scientific activities are included. This category includes members of academic staff holding the academic degree of "Doctor," having at least three years of teaching experience before or after obtaining this degree, and meeting the criteria specified in the statute of the higher education institution. This category is employed on contracts with unspecified durations.

5. In the category "Assistant Lecturers," members of academic staff conducting teaching-research activities are included. Assistant Lecturers must have at least a "Master of Science" degree and meet the criteria specified in the statute of the higher education institution. Assistant Lecturers are employed on contracts with specified durations.

6. Academic staff engaged in teaching must have at least a successor cycle qualification. In higher professional colleges, academic staff must have obtained at least a "Professional Master" diploma.

7. Relationships between various activities for academic staff, specified in paragraph 1 of this article, are determined by the higher education institution.

8. The full teaching load for academic staff in public higher education institutions is determined by the institution, in accordance with the relevant guidelines of the minister responsible for education. In non-public institutions, the minimum load is determined by the institution itself.

Article 60

Academic Titles

1. The academic titles "Professor" and "Associate Professor" are awarded by higher education institutions of the "university" type that:

a) Exercise academic and research-scientific activities continuously for at least ten years;

b) Are accredited institutions;

c) Have employed at least eighteen members of academic staff holding the title "Professor," full-time, on contracts with unspecified durations. In any case, the university must have at least five full-time lecturers holding the title of professor in each faculty;

d) Offer doctoral studies or long-term specializations;

e) Fulfill additional criteria specified by the decision of the Council of Ministers.

2. The list of higher education institutions that meet the criteria for awarding academic titles is officially published every academic year by the responsible ministry.

3. State standards for obtaining the titles "Professor" and "Associate Professor" are determined by the decision of the Council of Ministers.

4. Higher education institutions with special status, engaged in the fields of arts, sports, order, and defense, may confer other titles, in addition to those specified in paragraph 1 of this article, equivalent to them, according to the provisions of the relevant decision of the Council of Ministers.

Article 61

Acquisition of Academic Titles

1. To acquire the title "Associate Professor," academic staff holding the academic degree "Doctor" for at least five years, being academic staff of the "Lecturer" category, and meeting state standards for obtaining the title, may apply. To acquire the title "Professor," academic staff holding the title "Associate Professor" for at least five years and meeting state standards for obtaining the title may apply.

2. Academic staff of higher education institutions that do not meet the criteria for awarding academic titles, as well as individuals who are not academic staff at any institution but meet the standards for obtaining titles, submit their applications to an institution that meets the criteria for awarding titles.

3. The candidate for the title "Associate Professor" or "Professor" submits the dossier to the head of the main unit. The candidate's dossier is forwarded to the academic senate, after presentation and evaluation in the base unit. The senate passes the dossier to the Permanent Commission for the Promotion of Academic Staff, which makes the final decision after the committee's decision on meeting the standards. The title is registered in the state register of scientific degrees and academic titles at the ministry responsible for education. The academic title is issued by the institution and signed by the rector.

4. In case of a negative evaluation of the application for obtaining academic titles by the Permanent Commission for the Promotion of Academic Staff, the candidate has the right to reapply after a period not shorter than two years.

5. Academic staff holding the title "Professor," after retirement, is granted the title "Professor Emeritus" based on the assessment of outstanding academic performance, with a proposal from the base unit where they have developed their career and with the decision of the Academic Senate.

Article 62

Invited Academic Staff

1. Base units of higher education institutions have the right to seek employment on a contract basis for short-term periods for researchers, local or foreign personalities, or artists.

2. In selecting invited academic staff, their qualifications intersect with the needs of the base unit for teaching or research-scientific activities.

3. Invited staff is employed according to the provisions in the statute and regulations of the higher education institution.

4. Expenses for invited academic staff are covered by the institution's revenues.

Article 63

Sabbatical Academic Year

Academic staff of the "Lecturer" and "Professor" categories, with the approval of the base unit where they carry out academic activities, have the right to be released from the institution's commitments once every seven years, for periods up to one year, to work for their academic advancement. The method of legal regulation between the parties for this period is determined in the statute of the higher education institution.

The legal provisions you provided seem to be in Albanian, and here's a translation into English:

Article 64

Employment of Academic Staff

1. The criteria for the full-time employment of academic staff are determined by the base unit, based on its needs, and approved by the rector. The competition in public higher education institutions is directed by an ad hoc commission, mostly composed of representatives from the relevant base unit. The rules and procedures for selecting members of the ad hoc commission, as well as the selection of academic staff, are specified in the statute of the higher education institution. In non-public institutions, the

criteria, rules, and procedures for the employment of academic staff are determined in the institution's statute.

2. Full-time academic staff in one higher education institution cannot be employed as full-time academic staff in another higher education institution, both within and outside the country. They can only be engaged part-time in another higher education institution with the approval of the head of the base unit and the rector, as well as in agreements between institutions. The participation of academic staff in projects, conferences, publications, and services conducted in the higher education institution where they are employed full-time is not considered dual employment within the institution.

Article 65

Duration of Employment for Academic Staff

1. Academic staff holding the title of "Professor" serve in duty until the age of 68, except when, at their request, they retire from duty. Based on the needs of the higher education institution and with its approval, they may also serve beyond the mentioned age through contracts with extensions of up to one year, repeatable, according to the provisions in the statute of the higher education institution.

2. Academic staff holding the title of "Associate Professor" serve in duty until the age of 65. Based on the needs of the higher education institution and with its approval, they may also serve beyond the mentioned age through contracts with extensions of up to one year, repeatable, according to the provisions in the statute of the higher education institution.

3. Academic staff in the "Professor" category may be temporarily detached from the higher education institution for a maximum period of five years to engage in important state and political duties. During the detachment period, they can be replaced by academic staff employed on fixed-term contracts. After completing the duty, upon their request, the academic staff member returns to their previous position or to an equivalent position.

Article 66

Assistant Academic Staff

1. Assistant academic staff is divided into academic staff with teaching duties and academic staff with administrative duties.

2. Academic staff with teaching duties assists in the realization and support of teaching and/or research activities. They are part of the base unit and serve to support its activities. This category includes laboratory assistants and technicians, as well as other personnel, according to the provisions made in the institution's internal acts.

3. Academic staff with administrative duties assists in the realization and support of teaching and/or research activities and/or the development of the higher education institution at the base unit level, main unit level, or institutional level. This category includes personnel defined in the institution's internal acts.

4. The criteria for the full-time employment of academic support staff are proposed by the unit to which this staff serves, based on its needs. The competition in higher education institutions is directed by an ad hoc commission, mostly composed of representatives from the relevant unit. The rules and procedures

for selecting members of the ad hoc commission, as well as the selection of academic support staff, are specified in the internal acts of the higher education institution.

Article 67

Administrative Staff

1. Categories of administrative staff and salary levels are approved by the Board of Administration of the higher education institution, according to the current legislation.
2. Higher education institutions determine in their statutes and regulations the procedures for evaluating the work of administrative staff, motivation policies, rewards, development, and training, as well as procedures for disciplinary measures.
3. The recruitment of administrative staff in public higher education institutions is done through public competition. The criteria for employment are specified in the statutes and internal regulations of the institutions.

Article 68

Disciplinary Measures for Academic Staff

1. Disciplinary measures are determined in accordance with the statute and other acts of the higher education institution.
2. Dismissal of academic staff from the duty is done by the rector of the institution, upon the proposal of the head of the base unit where the academic staff member conducts their activities and after the approval of the ad hoc commission, set up by the Academic Senate, in cases of serious and repeated violations of the law, according to the provisions in the statute and other acts of the higher education institution.

CHAPTER VII

ORGANIZATION OF STUDIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Article 69

Study Formats and Admission to Higher Education Institutions

1. The study formats in higher education institutions are:
 - a) Full-time studies;
 - b) Extended-time studies.
2. Extended-time studies may be offered in one to two-year professional study programs, second-cycle programs "Professional Master," and third-cycle programs "Executive Master." Study programs that provide the right to practice a regulated profession are only organized in the form of full-time studies.
3. Admission of students to higher education institutions in all study programs is made by the decisions of the institutions, in accordance with state standards, academic and infrastructural capacities. These

standards are verified and certified by the ministry responsible for education, before the declaration of admission quotas by all higher education institutions.

Article 70

Study Cycles and Programs

1. Higher education institutions offer study programs organized in modules and evaluated in credits, in accordance with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).
2. The normal amount of credits accumulated during an academic year by a student is 60 ECTS credits.
3. Study programs are developed by the base units of higher education institutions and approved by their academic senates.
4. Study programs in higher education institutions are organized in three consecutive cycles: the first cycle, the second cycle, and the third cycle, referring to levels 6-8 of the Albanian Qualifications Framework. Higher education institutions also offer professional diplomas, referring to level 5 of the Albanian Qualifications Framework.
5. Higher education institutions publicly announce open and accredited study programs before the start of student admissions.

Article 71

Study Programs in Higher Education Institutions

1. Higher education institutions offer study programs in various cycles depending on the type of institution, as well as high professional character programs and continuous training programs in fields where they meet criteria and fulfill state standards.
2. The elements that study programs offered by higher education institutions should contain are specified by the decision of the Council of Ministers.
3. Higher education institutions specify in their statutes and regulations detailed elements for the study programs they offer.

Article 72

Professional Character Study Programs

1. Higher education institutions may offer professional character study programs after secondary education, with 60 or 120 training credits, referring to level 5 of the Albanian Qualifications Framework. Their normal duration is one or two academic years, and upon completion, they issue either a "Professional Certificate" or a "Professional Diploma" in the field studied.
2. Credits earned during higher professional studies can be transferred to the first-cycle studies, referring to level 6 of the Albanian Qualifications Framework, according to criteria specified by higher education institutions.

Article 73

First-Cycle Study Programs

1. First-cycle study programs, referring to level 6 of the Albanian Qualifications Framework, are organized with no fewer than 180 European Credits (ECTS), and their normal duration is three academic years.
2. Students in first-cycle study programs graduate with a final general exam or diploma thesis. Higher education institutions specify in their regulations the average grade threshold that allows a first-cycle student to graduate by preparing and defending a diploma thesis.
3. At the end of first-cycle programs, a "Bachelor" diploma is issued in the field of completed education.

Article 74

Admission to First-Cycle Studies

1. Admission to first-cycle study programs is possible for any candidate who has successfully completed secondary education and meets the average grade criterion specified annually by the Council of Ministers.
2. Higher education institutions may also set additional admission criteria for candidate selection, which are announced by the higher education institution and made available to the Center for Educational Services and the ministry responsible for education.
3. At the beginning of the academic year, higher education institutions submit a list of registered students to the Center for Educational Services.

Article 75

Second-Cycle Study Programs

1. The second cycle of studies includes study programs "Master of Science," "Master of Arts," and "Professional Master," referring to level 7 of the Albanian Qualifications Framework.
2. All criteria and modalities for obtaining the "Master of Arts" diploma are the same as those for obtaining the "Master of Science" diploma, with the difference that the "Master of Arts" diploma is issued by higher education institutions that offer programs in the field of arts.
3. "Master of Science" study programs equip graduates with in-depth theoretical knowledge and the ability to conduct scientific research in a specific field. These programs are organized in:
 - a) programs carried out with no fewer than 120 training credits following the first cycle and with a normal duration of two academic years;
 - b) integrated second-cycle study programs, carried out with 300 and 360 credits and with normal durations of five and six academic years, respectively. Integrated second-cycle study programs are offered in the fields of law, medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, veterinary medicine, and architecture. The Council of Ministers specifies other fields in which integrated second-cycle study programs may be offered.

4. "Master of Science" study programs are completed with a thesis, and at the end of the program, a "Master of Science" diploma is issued in the field of completed education.
5. "Master of Arts" study programs equip graduates with in-depth theoretical and practical knowledge in the field of arts. These programs are carried out with no fewer than 120 training credits following the first cycle and with a normal duration of two academic years.
6. Second-cycle studies "Master of Science" are completed with a diploma thesis, and at the end of the program, a "Master of Science" diploma is issued in the field of completed education.
7. "Professional Master" study programs equip graduates with advanced professional knowledge in a specific field. These programs are organized with 60 or 120 credits, and their normal duration is one or two academic years. Second-cycle studies "Professional Master" are completed with a final training exam or diploma thesis, and at the end of the program, a "Professional Master" diploma is issued in the field of completed education.

Article 76

Admission to Second-Cycle Study Programs

1. Admission to second-cycle study programs is possible for candidates who have completed a first-cycle study program and meet the admission criteria of the higher education institution where they apply.
2. Admission to integrated study programs is possible for candidates who meet the criteria specified in point 1 of Article 74 of this law.
3. The admission criteria for candidates in second-cycle study programs are determined by the base unit offering the program. Integrated study programs are exempt from this rule. The criteria are made public by the main unit and the Quality Assurance Agency (QSHA) and are approved according to the provisions in the statute of the higher education institution.
4. The admission criterion for a second-cycle "Master of Science" study program is the candidate's recognition of one of the five foreign languages of the European Union: English, French, German, Italian, Spanish. If the individual has obtained a diploma from a program conducted in one of these languages, the diploma serves as evidence of meeting this criterion. The level of proficiency in the foreign language is determined by a sub-legal act of the ministry responsible for higher education.
5. Higher education institutions may recognize credits earned in second-cycle "Professional Master" study programs for transfer to "Master of Science" study programs.
6. At the beginning of the academic year, higher education institutions submit a list of registered students to the QSHA.

Article 77

Third-Cycle Study Programs

1. The third cycle of studies includes "Executive Master" study programs, long-term specialized study programs, and doctoral studies, referring to level 8 of the Albanian Qualifications Framework.
2. "Executive Master" study programs offer education at a high scientific and professional level. They have a normal duration of one or two academic years and are organized with 60 or 120 credits,

respectively. They are completed with a thesis, and upon completion, an "Executive Master" diploma is issued in the field of completed education.

3. Long-term specialized study programs are professional training programs that offer knowledge in specific professions. They last for no less than two academic years and are organized with no less than 120 credits. They are completed with a training exam or a diploma thesis, and upon completion, a "Specialization Diploma" is issued in the respective field of the study program.

4. Doctoral studies are based on individual programs for the independent development of candidates in scientific research in fields specified by the base unit or the main unit. They are rooted in scientific research and creative activities. Doctoral studies last for no less than three academic years and no more than five academic years. Upon completion of doctoral studies, a "Doctor" scientific degree is awarded. Higher education institutions establish criteria for the annual assessment of candidates' progress and the continuation of work on the research project.

5. The Council of Ministers approves the criteria that a candidate must meet to obtain the "Doctor" scientific degree, according to the provisions of this law, as well as the standards for obtaining the academic titles "Professor" and "Associate Professor."

Article 78

Admission to Third-Cycle Study Programs

1. Admission to third-cycle study programs is possible for candidates who have obtained the "Master of Science" or "Master of Arts" diploma and meet the admission criteria specified by the higher education institution.

2. The admission criteria for third-cycle programs are determined by the base units, in accordance with quality standards. These criteria are made public by the QSHA and communicated to the ministry responsible for education.

3. The admission criterion for a third-cycle study program is the candidate's recognition of one of the five foreign languages of the European Union: English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, verified through internationally recognized tests, in accordance with the relevant guideline of the minister responsible for education. If the individual has obtained a diploma from a program conducted in one of these languages, the diploma serves as evidence of meeting this criterion.

4. The list of winning students is sent to the QSHA, in accordance with the provisions of this law.

5. The list of graduates from third-cycle programs is conveyed by the higher education institution to the ministry responsible for reflection in the state register of scientific degrees and academic titles.

Article 79

Doctoral Studies

1. Higher education institutions offering doctoral studies develop research and development projects for these studies. They apply for funding from AKKSHI or other financing institutions.

2. Doctoral studies are conducted on a full-time basis at the base unit or on an extended basis in cases where the doctoral candidate is employed as academic staff at another higher education institution or as a research staff at a basic or applied research institution.

3. When doctoral studies are conducted in collaboration between higher education institutions, parts of the research process may be carried out at the cooperating institutions.

4. The number of doctoral students is determined by the base unit, and the research project of each doctoral student is determined based on the research projects of the latter.

5. For the completion of doctoral studies, the student may also receive funding from other subjects or self-finance.

6. Supervisors of doctoral candidates must hold the titles "Professor" or "Associate Professor" and may lead, respectively, a certain number of doctoral candidates at the same time. This number includes all supervisions that academic staff of the "Professor" category pursues in all higher education institutions where they are engaged and is determined in the Quality Code in Higher Education.

In cases where part of the doctoral studies is carried out at a higher education institution in EU member states, the USA, and Canada, the co-supervisor at the host institution may hold the "Doctor" scientific degree.

7. The Council of Ministers approves the criteria that the candidate must meet to obtain the "Doctor" scientific degree, according to the provisions of this law, as well as the standards for obtaining the academic titles "Professor" and "Associate Professor."

Article 80

Joint Study Programs

1. Joint study programs are carried out by a higher education institution or its main unit, in collaboration with one or more other higher education institutions, public or private, within or outside the country.

2. The process of implementing joint study programs can be carried out in one or in the participating institutions, in accordance with the cooperation agreement.

3. Upon completion of the studies, a joint diploma or double or multiple diplomas are issued by the participating institutions.

4. In the conditions of implementing joint study programs with foreign higher education institutions, different standards may be applied than those at the state level.

5. The opening of joint study programs is subject to the approval of the ministry responsible for education.

Article 81

Continuing Education Study Programs

1. Higher education institutions may offer continuing education study programs as a form of lifelong learning. These programs serve to complement, deepen, and consolidate knowledge and may be offered

as qualification and requalification courses, summer schools, and similar activities. Continuing education study programs help individuals increase their qualifications and professional skills.

2. The structure, duration, and credits of these programs are determined independently by each responsible base unit, in collaboration with relevant ministries, if they have competence, according to the legal framework for regulated professions, and are made public by the main unit.

3. Upon completion of continuing education study programs, higher education institutions issue the relevant certificates, which are registered in accordance with this law.

4. Higher education institutions may also offer preparatory courses for the study programs they organize.

Article 82

Study Programs in the Field of Justice

1. Integrated second-cycle study programs in the field of justice are conducted with 300 credits, for a duration of no less than 5 academic years.

2. Individuals who have completed integrated studies in law or in a second-cycle study program equivalent to them may compete to qualify as judges, prosecutors, lawyers, notaries, state or private enforcement agents, as well as legal professionals in state, central, and local administration, after passing the state examination in law.

3. The state examination is organized by the ministry responsible for education and the Ministry of Justice, according to the rules and procedures stipulated in the current legislation.

Article 83

Study Programs in the Field of Education

1. Study programs in the field of education for pre-school and primary education are organized in two cycles:

a) first-cycle program, "Bachelor," which trains pre-school education teachers;

b) second-cycle program "Professional Master," which trains primary education teachers.

2. Study programs for the training of teachers for upper secondary and higher education are organized as second-cycle "Master" study programs, with 120 credits, according to the respective fields of training.

3. Second-cycle study programs in the field of education must contain 25% of credits in general psycho-pedagogical training.

4. Second-cycle study programs that train teachers in the same field of education must have at least 80% of the curriculum with similar content.

Article 84

Study Programs in Higher Education Institutions with Special Status

The organization of study forms, student admission, and funding in higher education institutions with special status are carried out in accordance with this law and the specific regulations determined by the ministry responsible for education.

Article 85

Pursuing a Second Study Program in Public Higher Education Institutions

1. Individuals who have completed a study program have the right to pursue a second study program of the same cycle. In this case, candidates bear the full cost of studies. Exception from this rule applies to outstanding students.
2. The criteria that must be met for admission to a second study program are specified in the statutes of higher education institutions.

Article 86

Codification of Study Programs

1. Study programs are organized and grouped into codes that identify similar study areas at the national level. The codification of study programs is done by the ministry responsible for education.
2. Study programs offered in the same field of study, cycle, and with the same designation must have similar content, at least 70%.
3. The opening of a new study program is accompanied by the determination of the code, according to the field of study and classifications made public by the ministry responsible for education.
4. Specifications and content for the codification of study programs are determined by the decision of the Council of Ministers.

Article 87

Academic Year and Organization of Teaching

1. Studies in higher education institutions are conducted in academic years. The official start date of the academic year is announced by the minister responsible for education.
2. The academic year is organized in semesters.
3. Attendance of the teaching process, according to the type of teaching activities in the auditorium, and the study cycle, is mandatory to a certain extent, which is determined based on the Quality Code and the minister's guidelines responsible for education.
4. The organization of studies in higher education institutions is carried out according to the provisions of this law or another model when offered by a higher education institution, which issues a joint or double diploma with a foreign institution.

Article 88

Language of Studies

1. Study programs in higher education institutions in the Republic of Albania are normally offered in the Albanian language. These programs may also be offered in one of the official languages of the European Union, as approved in the relevant act of opening the study program. Programs of study offered in collaboration with foreign higher education institutions and language-learning programs are exempt from this rule.
2. In the case of study programs offered in a foreign language, students must demonstrate proficiency in the respective foreign language at the necessary level to pursue higher education studies, as determined by the higher education institution offering the study program.

Article 89

Transfer of Studies Recognition and Equivalence

1. Higher education institutions provide opportunities for credit recognition and the transfer of studies between programs of the same study cycle, within the same institution or different higher education institutions.
2. Study periods and program requirements completed in other domestic or foreign institutions are recognized and equated, concerning the right to continue education in a similar or the same study program.
3. Recognition is carried out by the higher education institution to which the application for the continuation of studies is submitted.
4. Transfers are allowed within the same study cycle and in related or similar study fields, only at the beginning of the academic year.
5. Criteria and procedures for credit recognition and study transfer are defined in the base unit's regulations, in accordance with this law and other subordinate legislation.
6. The decision to recognize full or partial credits earned by a transferring student, with the aim of continuing studies at the receiving higher education institution, is the responsibility of the respective commission established by the base unit of the higher education institution.

Article 90

Duration of Studies

1. The maximum duration of studies in a study program cannot exceed twice the normal duration specified by the program, excluding the period when the student has suspended their studies.
2. A student who fails to complete the studies within the maximum duration of the program has the right to apply to resume studies in the same study program or another program. They are subject to the criteria and procedures specified for enrollment in the receiving institution's study program. Credits earned by the student during the previous study period may be transferred, with the decision of the receiving institution's base unit, according to its regulations.

Article 91

Issuance of Diplomas, Certificates, and Diploma Supplement

1. At the end of the study program, the student is awarded the respective diploma or certificate. The components, form of the diploma, and registration procedures are determined by the ministry responsible for education.
2. Diplomas issued upon completion of first-cycle, second-cycle, and "Executive Master" third-cycle study programs are accompanied by the diploma supplement.
3. Before being issued by the higher education institution, every diploma and certificate is registered in the state register of diplomas and the state register of certificates for higher education and research, held by the Education Services Center.
4. Higher education institutions cannot issue duplicate diplomas, but they may issue an equivalent document with the diploma in the form of certification, which must include the name of the institution that issued the diploma, the original diploma number, the date of issuance, the study cycle, and the program.
5. The Diploma Supplement is prepared in accordance with the requirements of the European Higher Education Area. It describes, in particular, the nature, level, content, and results of the studies completed by the diploma holder, as well as the employment field. The content and form of the Diploma Supplement are determined in the statutes of higher education institutions, in accordance with the guidelines of the ministry responsible for education.

Article 92

Recognition of Diplomas, Certificates, and Degrees Obtained Abroad, and Recognition of Titles Issued by a Foreign Higher Education Institution

1. Diplomas, certificates, and degrees obtained upon completion of studies abroad, belonging to levels 5 to 8 of the Albanian Qualifications Framework, are recognized and equated through the issuance of an official document equivalent from the perspective of the right to continue education, employment, or academic career in Albania, following the official recognition procedure.
2. A qualification or study program completed abroad, for which a certificate, diploma, or degree has been issued by the foreign institution authorized in the respective country to issue them, verifying the completion of the qualification or study program, is evaluated, recognized, and equated based on the European Qualifications Framework, the Qualifications Framework of the country of origin, and the Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Albania, according to the principles and international standards for qualification recognition set out in international documents, agreements, and conventions involving our country.
3. The institution responsible for the official recognition and equivalence in the Republic of Albania of certificates, diplomas, and degrees obtained abroad is the ministry responsible for education. This process is carried out by the responsible unit of the diploma recognition.
4. Titles issued abroad by a foreign higher education institution are recognized in the Republic of Albania, equivalent from the perspective of the right to continue employment or an academic career in Albania, through the official recognition procedure.

5. The institution responsible for the official recognition in the Republic of Albania of academic titles issued abroad is the ministry responsible for education.

6. Procedures and criteria for the recognition and equivalence of diplomas, certificates, and degrees obtained upon completion of studies abroad, as well as the recognition of academic titles issued by foreign higher education institutions, are determined by the minister responsible for education, respecting international agreements signed by our country for this purpose. The ministry responsible for education may also determine the validity of the recognized diploma, according to the employment field.

7. The ministry responsible for education maintains the national database of diplomas, certificates, degrees, and titles recognized or acknowledged in the Republic of Albania.

CHAPTER VIII

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Article 93

Research and Scientific Activity

1. Higher education institutions carry out basic or applied research activities, studies, development projects, and other creative activities as defined in their statutes, according to the nature and specific objectives of the institution. They ensure the integration of research activities into teaching.

2. Scientific research activities carried out in higher education institutions aim to support the country's development and increase the quality of education.

3. Through research and scientific activities, academic staff and students acquire skills for independent research, contributing to sustainable professional development and academic careers.

4. Research and creative activities are regulated according to this law, current laws and subordinate legislation, as well as the institution's statutes.

Article 94

Structure of Scientific Research

1. Scientific research activities are conducted, according to the provisions of this law, in:

- a) higher education institutions;
- b) interinstitutional research and development institutes and centers;
- c) research and development institutes within ministries.

2. The above-mentioned structures of scientific research carry out their activities in accordance with their mission, competence areas, and are subject to criteria for funding their research activities, according to this law and current laws and subordinate legislation. They are obligated to make their activities public, except for specific cases regulated by laws or subordinate legislation.

3. Scientific research can also be developed and organized in other institutions, the activities of which are regulated by a specific law.

Article 95

Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions

1. Scientific research activities in higher education institutions are carried out based on approved programs and projects by competent bodies within these institutions, in accordance with the institution's statutes and regulations.
2. Areas, directions, workload, and deadlines for research activities are determined by higher education institutions based on priority areas of national development and the programs offered.
3. The research activity of academic staff in higher education institutions is evaluated according to the provisions in the institution's statutes or other acts.
4. Higher education institutions have the right to develop research programs and projects in collaboration with other public or private institutions, both within and outside the country.
5. Higher education institutions, through research and creative activities, offer services for the third parties. The revenue from these activities is managed by the basic or main unit that carries out the activity, according to the provisions of this law and other legal acts and subordinate legislation in force.

Article 96

Research and Development Interinstitutional Institutes and Centers

1. Research and development interinstitutional institutes and centers are created by two or more higher education institutions or by a higher education institution with research and scientific, cultural, and economic institutions, both public and private, through agreements between them.
2. The structure, organization, research areas, and the object of their activity are proposed by the founding institutions and approved by the Council of Ministers. Their functioning is determined by their regulations, in accordance with the statutes of founding institutions.

CHAPTER IX

STUDENTS AND STUDENT DATA

Article 97

Acquisition, Suspension, and Loss of Student Status

1. Student status is acquired by registering at a higher education institution. This status is lost upon obtaining the respective diploma or certificate, as well as in the case of deregistration of the student from that institution.
2. Students may suspend their studies and resume them, in accordance with the rules specified by the higher education institution.

3. A student cannot register simultaneously in more than one study program. Exceptions to this rule include exceptional students.

Article 98

Rights and Obligations of Students

1. Students have the right to:

- a) attend all teaching activities held within the program of study they are enrolled in;
- b) use the infrastructure provided by the higher education institution for the educational process, as well as benefit from support services offered by that institution;
- c) participate in the decision-making processes of the higher education institution, in accordance with the provisions of this law and the institution's statutes;
- ç) express their assessment of the quality of teaching and the work of staff in the higher education institution;
- d) sign a service contract at the time of registration at non-public higher education institutions. The elements of the contract and its form are determined by the minister responsible for education's guidelines;
- dh) be insured by the higher education institution, in an insurance company, for the entire expected duration of studies, for the risk of interrupting activities or other risks, according to the provisions in the minister responsible for education's guidelines and the Ministry of Finance.

2. Students are obliged to:

- a) follow the rules specified by the higher education institution;
- b) respect the rights of staff and other students;
- c) pay the fees specified in this law and by higher education institutions, as well as fees for services provided by higher education institutions;
- ç) respect the Code of Ethics of the higher education institution.

3. Repeat students lose support from public funds, except in cases of force majeure.

4. The institution's statutes may specify other rights and duties of students.

Article 99

Student Councils

1. Students have the right to organize into student councils at the main unit, the higher education institution, as well as at the national level.

2. Student councils are independent student organizations in higher education institutions that do not engage in political or economic activities. These councils promote student participation and coordinate their representation in the governing bodies of higher education institutions.

3. Student councils are elected every two years through student votes and are based on the legislation in force. In cases where a selected individual in student councils completes university studies, they are replaced by the successor candidate in terms of the number of votes collected in the last elections until the end of the initiated mandate.

4. Student councils cannot organize with other political or non-political structures outside the respective higher education institutions. Modalities and procedures for their creation, organization, and functioning are determined in the statutes and regulations of higher education institutions, in accordance with this law, also supported by proposals presented by students.

5. Student councils express opinions and proposals on all issues of general interest to higher education institutions, such as plans and study programs, regulations for educational activities, the right to study, service quality, the determination of tuition fees, and other financial contributions for students, preliminary annual budgets of expenses or the distribution of financial resources, the development of various cultural, artistic, and sports activities, etc.

6. Higher education institutions support student councils and finance their activities.

Article 100

Student Card

1. Students of public and private higher education institutions are issued a student card, which is a unique document. Through it, students benefit from services at reduced prices.

2. The ministry responsible for education determines the criteria and procedures for the preparation and issuance of the student card.

3. The benefits of students using the student card are covered by funds provided in the State Budget of the ministry that covers the higher education institution or local government units that cover the services offered to students.

4. The categories of services offered by state entities are decided by the Council of Ministers and by agreement with organizations that have their interests, and by private legal entities that offer various services.

Article 101

Documentation of the Instructional Process

1. Every higher education institution is obligated to maintain in written form:

- a) the foundational student registry;
- b) the registry of academic achievements;
- c) the registry of diploma and certificate issuance.

2. The registries are distributed by the ministry responsible for education at the respective tariff determined by the Council of Ministers.

3. The foundational student registry is the document that verifies the registration of students at a higher education institution. Each student is issued a unique registration number, kept until the receipt of the diploma or certificate, which is reflected in this registry. The foundational registry is deposited in the state archives, according to the current legal framework for archives, while the copy attached to the original is kept for the entire period of the existence of the higher education institution. It is also supplemented in electronic form.

4. The registry of academic achievements is the document that verifies the results achieved by each registered student at the higher education institution, according to the study programs. The registry of academic achievements is deposited in the state archives, according to the current legal framework for archives, while the copy attached to the original is kept for the entire period of the existence of the higher education institution. It is also supplemented in electronic form.

5. The registry of diploma and certificate issuance is the document that verifies their issuance by the higher education institution. Higher education institutions document the withdrawal of the diploma and the diploma supplement from each student who has successfully completed academic and other institutional obligations. The registry of diploma and certificate issuance is deposited in the state archives, according to the current legal framework for archives, while the copy attached to the original is kept for the entire period of the existence of the higher education institution. It is also supplemented in electronic form.

6. Every higher education institution must complete the elements of the registries specified in paragraph 1 of this article, in accordance with the sub-legal acts of the ministry responsible for education. The documentation, after its final completion, is deposited in the state archives, according to the current legal framework for archives, while the copy attached to the original is kept in the archive of the higher education institution, in accordance with the current legislation and the institution's regulations. In the event of the closure of the higher education institution's activities, its registries, as specified in paragraph 1 of this article, and any other documents are deposited in the state archives, according to the current legal framework for archives.

Article 102

Student Database in Higher Education Institutions

1. Higher education institutions maintain the personal data of students.
2. All processes of storing and processing the personal data of students by higher education institutions are carried out based on the principle of confidentiality and in accordance with the requirements of legislation for the protection of personal data.

Chapter X

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Article 103

Internal Quality Assurance

1. Higher education institutions are responsible for developing policies and procedures for internal quality assurance. The structure and functioning of the internal quality assurance unit are determined in the statute of the higher education institution.

2. The internal quality assurance unit periodically evaluates the results of teaching and research activities.
3. At the end of each semester or before the exam season, it organizes the student survey on the quality of teaching for the subjects of each study program.
4. The internal quality assurance unit conducts tracking studies to assess the employment trends of students and the effectiveness of programs offered by the higher education institution.
5. Standards for quality assurance are developed by higher education institutions, in accordance with the Quality Code.
6. Evaluation reports conducted by the internal quality assurance units of higher education institutions are used as a source for external evaluation and continuous improvement of quality.

Article 104

External Quality Assurance

1. External quality assurance in higher education is carried out through external assessment processes of accreditation, analytical and comparative assessments, and other processes that promote and improve quality.
2. All higher education institutions and the study programs they offer are subject to initial assessment, periodic assessment, and comparative assessment. The results of these assessments are made public by ASCAL.
3. Initial institutional assessment and program assessment are carried out before the issuance of the first diplomas by a higher education institution. Institutional accreditation precedes the accreditation of study programs.
4. Periodic assessment is carried out for higher education institutions and study programs that have obtained initial accreditation within the validity period.
5. Higher education institutions are subject to the teaching assessment process every three years by ASCAL and are continuously monitored through the National Student Survey.
6. External quality assessment is carried out in accordance with the Quality Code in Higher Education. The responsible ministry and ASCAL may cooperate with foreign quality assurance agencies that are members of the ENQA network.

Article 105

Quality Code for Higher Education

1. The Quality Code for Higher Education is the key document for all processes and procedures of quality assurance in higher education. It establishes state standards of quality mandatory for implementation by higher education institutions.
2. The Quality Code for Higher Education is developed by ASCAL and the ministry responsible for education and is approved by the Council of Ministers.

Article 106

Accreditation

1. Institutional accreditation is the process of certifying the quality of the activities of higher education institutions, in accordance with the Quality Code for Higher Education.
2. Accreditation of study programs is the process of certifying their quality, in accordance with state standards of quality.
3. Initial institutional accreditation and accreditation of programs are carried out before the issuance of the first diplomas by a higher education institution. Institutional accreditation precedes that of study programs.
4. The validity of any institutional accreditation and of study programs related to it may not exceed 6 years.
5. The decision on accreditation is positive or negative. If a higher education institution is not institutionally accredited or for a study program, it cannot issue diplomas for the respective study programs it has offered.
6. The standards on which accreditation is granted must be met for the entire period of the validity of accreditation. If the ministry responsible for education detects deviations from these standards, it sets conditions and deadlines for their fulfillment.
7. For higher education institutions that conduct joint study programs with foreign higher education institutions, as well as branches of foreign higher education institutions operating in the Republic of Albania, their assessment and accreditation are carried out taking into account their assessment and accreditation in the country of origin.
8. Expenses for external quality assessment and accreditation are borne by the higher education institutions themselves, according to the tariffs determined by the Council of Ministers.

Chapter XI

PROPERTIES AND FINANCING OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Article 107

Basic Principles of Financing Higher Education Institutions from the State Budget

The basic principles of financing higher education institutions from the State Budget are:

- a) free competition among institutions enjoying the same status, according to the provisions of Article 17 of this law;
- b) equal opportunities for higher education institutions, depending on the status they have;
- c) support for the country's priority and strategic interests;
- ç) distribution of funds based on the quality indicators of institutions for teaching, research, creative activities, and innovation development.

Article 108

Financial Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions

1. Higher education institutions operate on the principle of financial autonomy.
2. The higher education institution develops a medium-term budget plan, which is part of the strategic development plan of the institution. This plan is updated annually.
3. All revenues generated by public higher education institutions are used by them, and the unused portion of the revenues is carried over to the following year.
4. The use of public funds from the State Budget for higher education institutions is done in accordance with the conditions and purposes of the granted grant.

Article 109

Sources of Financing for Public Higher Education Institutions

1. Public higher education institutions are financed by:
 - a) the State Budget;
 - b) student fees for education;
 - c) income from services provided;
 - ç) income generated from relations with third parties;
 - d) donations and other legal sources of financing;
 - dh) research and scientific activities;
2. Revenues earned from services, research-scientific activities, consultations, as well as any income generated from activities involving academic staff, are distributed between academic staff and the higher education institution, according to the regulations approved by the Administration Board.
3. Public higher education institutions regulate in their internal acts the manner of using the funds created by the revenues specified in this article, with the exception of revenues from the State Budget.

Article 110

Distribution of Funds from the State Budget

1. Funds from the State Budget are distributed in the form of grants, according to the following categories:
 - a) grant for development policies for public higher education institutions;
 - b) teaching grant;
 - c) research-scientific work grant and creative activities grant.

2. The Council of Ministers approves by decision the financing model for the budget for higher education and scientific research.

3. The implementation of the financing scheme, according to this law, for public higher education institutions is carried out according to the joint guidance of the Minister of Finance and the minister responsible for education.

Article 111

Grant for Development Policies for Public Higher Education Institutions

1. The grant for development policies for public higher education institutions includes:

- a) a fund to support the institution and academic infrastructure;
- b) a fund for competitive projects for the development of higher education institutions.

2. The fund for supporting the institution and academic infrastructure is distributed based on the ranking of public higher education institutions, performed by the National Agency for Scientific Research.

3. The fund for competitive projects for the development of higher education institutions is distributed based on the projects submitted by them, according to the criteria specified in sectoral strategies and in the annual budget law.

4. The ministry responsible for education approves with instructions the priorities, distribution terms, the form of application for the grant, as well as approves the grant for the development policies of public higher education institutions, based on the application or the strategic development priorities of the country.

Article 112

Teaching Grant

1. The teaching grant includes:

- a) the fund for public higher education institutions;
- b) the student support fund.

2. The institutional fund is distributed to public higher education institutions according to a formula that guarantees equal opportunities, fairness, and transparency.

3. The student support fund includes three categories of funding:

- a) study scholarships for outstanding students;
- b) study scholarships for students in study programs that constitute a national priority;
- c) study scholarships for students belonging to socially needy groups.

4. Study scholarships for outstanding students are awarded to students with the highest average grade upon admission, nationally ranked, regardless of the study program and institution they have chosen.

The student continues to benefit from this grant if their performance remains excellent throughout their years of study.

5. Study scholarships for students who have chosen to pursue study programs in public higher education institutions that constitute a national priority are awarded to students studying in specified fields as determined by the Council of Ministers.

6. Study scholarships for students belonging to socially needy groups are awarded to students declared winners in public higher education institutions who meet the criteria for being considered students in need, as determined by the Council of Ministers.

7. This grant is distributed by AKFAL.

Article 113

Research-Scientific Work Grant

1. The research-scientific work grant includes funds for scientific research.

2. Part of this grant includes funds for doctoral studies, which are awarded to higher education institutions based on their application. Funding for the workload of teachers for supervising doctoral studies is excluded from this fund.

3. This grant is open to all accredited higher education institutions conducting scientific research.

4. The distribution of funds in this category is done by AKKSHI, based on projects submitted by institutions, according to criteria specified in sectoral strategies and the annual budget law.

5. The assessment of the quality of scientific research constitutes the basic criterion for ranking research institutions by AKKSHI and determining the amount of funding obtained from AKFAL for public research institutions. Research institutions take measures for internal quality assessment and assurance through a dedicated unit, the composition and functioning of which are defined in the institution's statute or regulations.

Article 114

Student Loans

1. The ministry responsible for education intermediates the lending of student loans to provide financial support for covering the cost of studies.

2. Student loans are open for application to all students who qualify for studies in higher education programs.

3. The student loan scheme is determined by decision of the Council of Ministers.

Article 115

Loans for Public Higher Education Institutions

1. Public higher education institutions have the right to obtain loans for their institutional and infrastructural development.

2. The conditions for loan application are determined by decision of the Council of Ministers.

Article 116

Control and Auditing

1. Internal control and auditing in higher education institutions and their constituent units are carried out by the internal audit units of the institution. The establishment and functioning of internal audit units are in accordance with the internal acts of the higher education institution.
2. External control and auditing in higher education institutions are carried out by internal or external auditors selected by the ministry responsible for education from the updated list provided annually by the Ministry of Finance.

Article 117

Properties of Public Higher Education Institutions

1. Immoveable properties, where public higher education institutions carry out their activities, serving the institution to ensure the fulfillment of its mission, pass into the administration of the institutions, by decision of the Council of Ministers, upon the proposal of the minister responsible for education.
2. Institutions are obliged to preserve and maintain the properties under administration and cannot change their destination. Institutions may develop properties with the prior approval of the entity that transferred the property under administration.

CHAPTER XII

INDEPENDENT PUBLIC INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Article 118

Independent Public Institutions of Higher Education

1. Independent public institutions of higher education (IALPP) are public legal entities, created by decision of the Council of Ministers, at the request of non-profit organizations of the foundation type created for this purpose.
2. IALPPs have a legal personality separate from that of the founder.
3. IALs are transformed into IALPPs by decision of the Council of Ministers. Institutions seeking transformation into IALPPs must meet the criteria specified in this law beforehand.
4. The Administration Board of IAL is the authority that decides on the transformation of the institution, after obtaining the opinion of the Academic Senate.
5. IALPPs do not have a profit-making purpose, and the income derived from their activities and assets is used to fulfill the mission of the institution.
6. Regardless of the origin of the founding, IALPPs apply the same organizational rules as other higher education institutions. In all cases, unless otherwise specified in this chapter, the provisions for public higher education institutions apply.

7. For the purposes of this law, the right of the founder to IALPP is recognized.

Article 119

Criteria for the Creation of IALPP

Institutions of higher education that meet the following criteria may apply for transformation into IALPPs:

- a) the existing institution of higher education must be institutionally accredited and have accredited study programs it offers, in accordance with the provisions of this law;
- b) the founder of the existing institution of higher education must provide adequate financial guarantees for the operation of IALPP, for at least the first three years of activity;
- c) the founder undertakes to transfer irrevocably the right to use all tangible and intangible assets, where the existing IAL carries out its activities, as well as other necessary assets for the operation of IALPP. Assets must be free of any encumbrance, and the founder must not have obligations to third parties;
- d) the founder must not be convicted by final decision for committing a criminal offense;
- e) the founder must not be a party to ongoing judicial proceedings involving fundamental issues related to the activities and functioning of the existing IAL;
- f) higher education institutions seeking transformation must have established academic structures beforehand and operate in accordance with the provisions of this law for public higher education institutions.

Article 120

Procedure for the Creation of IALPPs

1. The Administration Board of IAL decides on the transformation of the institution with three-fourths of the votes of its members. Prior to this, the opinion of the Academic Senate, which approves with the majority of its members, is required.
2. The application for the establishment or transformation of IAL into IALPP, together with the required documentation, is submitted to the Council of Ministers through the ministry responsible for education.
3. The founder is subject to an independent financial audit before the proposal to the Council of Ministers, according to point 2 of Article 116 of this law.
4. The Council of Ministers approves the establishment of IALPP after verifying the fulfillment of the criteria specified in this law.
5. In the case of the establishment of IALPP from the transformation of a public IAL, the Council of Ministers also decides on the transfer of ownership rights over moveable and immoveable properties, in favor of the founding foundation of IALPP.
6. In case of refusal of the request, the responsible ministry presents the reasoned decision to the applicant within a ninety-day period from the date of submission of the request. The applicant has the

right to reapply after meeting the criteria but no earlier than one academic year from the date of refusal.

7. The Council of Ministers determines the procedure, documentation, and other rules to be applied for the creation of IALPPs.

Article 121

Administration Board

1. The Administration Board of IALPP consists of 11 members, for a 4-year term, with the right of re-election.

2. The founder of the institution is represented on this body by 6 members. The ministry, as the state regulatory institution, is represented on the Administration Board by 1 member. The Academic Senate is represented on the Administration Board by 4 members, one of whom is the rector of the institution, by virtue of their function.

3. The representation of the founder on the Administration Board may change in relation to funding from other legal entities, public or private. The representation of the ministry responsible for education and the Academic Senate, as specified in point 2 of this article, cannot change.

4. Board members are employed full-time. Members proposed by the academic senate, who perform functions or activities in the higher education institution, are treated according to the provisions in the statute. Board members must not have a conflict of interest, according to existing legislation and the provisions of the institution's statute.

Article 122

Administration of Funds

The funds obtained by IALPP are administered in accordance with the rules specified in the internal acts of the institution, as well as the specific conditions specified for the funds obtained. The rules for the direct distribution of revenue, according to budgetary programming standards and public financial management, as well as public procurement, do not apply directly to them.

Article 123

Inspection of Activities and Measures against IALPP

If it is found through inspections and/or monitoring by the ministry responsible for education that IALPP does not meet the legal criteria according to Article 119 of this law for this form of institution, the Minister responsible for education sets conditions for the continuation of activities under the supervision of the ministry or suspends activities until the conditions are met, for a period not exceeding two academic years, or proposes to the Council of Ministers the closure of the institution's activities.

Chapter XIII

TRANSITIONAL AND FINAL PROVISIONS

Article 124

1. Diplomas of study programs lasting 3 years (6 semesters) are equivalent to "Bachelor" diplomas.
2. Diplomas of study programs issued in the Republic of Albania, lasting at least 4 academic years (8 semesters) until the adaptation of studies according to the principles of the Bologna process, are equivalent to "Master of Science" diplomas.
3. Diplomas for second-cycle integrated programs (DIND), issued before the entry into force of this law, are equivalent to "Master of Science" university diplomas. Second-cycle (DND) diplomas, issued before the entry into force of this law, are equivalent to "Master of Science" university diplomas.
4. Diplomas of study programs "Master of the first level" are equivalent to "Professional Master" diplomas.
5. Diplomas obtained in postgraduate in-depth studies and "Master of the second level" within the framework of the "School of Advanced Studies" are equivalent to "Executive Master" diplomas.
6. Diplomas obtained in the School of Magistracy are equivalent to diplomas of long-term specialization studies.
7. All higher education institutions offering second-cycle programs in the field of justice begin implementing integrated programs in the academic year 2017-2018.
8. Within 9 months of the entry into force of this law, changes are made to the relevant field laws specified in Article 82 of this law.

Article 125

The codification of study programs is carried out within one year from the entry into force of this law. Any program approved after the entry into force of this law is codified according to the provisions of this law and relevant subordinate acts. Procedures for codifying new and existing study programs and their reorganization are determined by the minister responsible for education.

All programs approved until the entry into force of the Study Program Code are reorganized and codified within the academic year 2016-2017.

Article 126

1. Academic staff employed in higher education institutions in the category of "Associate Professor," within the framework of the provisions of Law No. 9741, dated 21.5.2007, "On Higher Education in the Republic of Albania," as amended, is considered "Lecturer."
2. Academic staff employed in higher education institutions in the category of "Lecturer," within the framework of the provisions of Law No. 9741, dated 21.5.2007, "On Higher Education in the Republic of Albania," as amended, is considered "Assistant Lecturer."

3. Academic staff of higher education institutions are reorganized according to the categories of academic personnel specified in this law, starting with the new academic year, after the entry into force of this law.

4. The provisions of this law do not violate employment contracts, with an unspecified duration, concluded before the entry into force of this law, between higher education institutions and academic staff. Academic staff employed in higher education institutions as full-time personnel must complete doctoral studies within five years from the entry into force of this law. Within this period, if academic staff does not complete doctoral studies, the rector initiates procedures to terminate the employment contract.

5. Procedures for the employment of invited academic staff, full-time and part-time, will be carried out according to the provisions of this law and subordinate acts, after its entry into force.

Article 127

Requests for the opening, reorganization, closure of a higher education institution, and requests for the start of the activity of an institution, submitted before the entry into force of this law, for which there has been no decision until the entry into force of this law, are considered according to the provisions of this law.

Article 128

Requests for the opening and closing of study programs offered by a higher education institution, submitted before the entry into force of this law, for which there has been no decision until the entry into force of this law, are considered according to the provisions of this law.

Article 129

1. Existing higher education institutions are reorganized within the first two academic years from the entry into force of this law, and in accordance with the provisions of this law for:

- a) types of higher education institutions;
- b) their naming, as well as the offered study programs;
- c) internal academic and administrative structure.

2. The Ministry responsible for education is tasked with issuing or proposing subordinate acts for the reorganization of HEIs, according to paragraph 1 of this article.

Article 130

1. Public higher education institutions may be transformed into IALPPs, according to the provisions of this law, no earlier than the academic year 2017-2018.

2. Non-public higher education institutions may be transformed into IALPPs, according to the provisions of this law, no earlier than the academic year 2018-2019.

Article 131

1. Elections for authorities, academic governing bodies, the Administration Board, the administrator of the higher education institution, the administrator of the main unit, and the administrator of the base unit in public higher education institutions will be held upon the completion of the mandate of existing authorities and bodies elected according to Law No. 9741, dated 21.5.2007, "On Higher Education in the Republic of Albania," as amended. Non-public IALs are reorganized within the same period.
2. The Ministry responsible for education, before the completion of the mandate of existing authorities and bodies in public IALs, approves the regulation for the first elections according to this law of the authorities and governing bodies of public higher education institutions. The regulation determines the criteria for drawing up electoral lists, registering candidates, the voting process, validity and vote-counting criteria, rules for announcing results and winners, and the process and deadlines for appeal.
3. The number of mandates won as the academic governing authority of the IAL, in the same function and in the same institution, cannot be more than two, consecutive or separate. In the number of mandates, according to this point, are calculated the mandates won according to Law No. 9741, dated 21.5.2007, "On Higher Education in the Republic of Albania," as amended, and all other subsequent mandates.
4. Representation ratios on the first Administration Board will be determined in relation to the funding level of participating institutions, over the last four financial years.
5. Existing institutions reorganize internal units, in accordance with this law, within the first academic year, from its entry into force.

Article 132

Higher education institutions draft and approve their statutes in the ministry responsible for education and their regulations, in accordance with this law, within the first academic year from its entry into force.

Article 133

1. Within 9 months from the entry into force of this law, the ministry responsible for education approves and publishes the list of higher education institutions that meet the criteria for awarding academic titles.
2. Until the conferment of degrees and academic titles, according to this law, the degrees and titles are treated according to the existing legal framework in force. The Academic Titles Assessment Commission ceases to exist 1 year after the entry into force of this law.

Article 134

1. Students who have started doctoral programs before the entry into force of this law complete them according to the criteria and modalities of the legislation at the time when these students were admitted.
2. The provisions of this law on the extension of study programs apply to students who start studies after the entry into force of the law.

Article 135

Admission of candidates to higher education institutions in the academic year 2016-2017 and beyond, in all study programs offered by higher education institutions, is carried out according to the provisions of this law.

Article 136

The Public Agency for the Accreditation of Higher Education is reorganized into ASCAL within 6 months from the entry into force of this law, according to the provisions of this law and the relevant decision of the Council of Ministers.

Article 137

The Code of Higher Education Quality is approved within 1 year from the entry into force of this law.

Article 138

The external quality assurance process, institutional accreditation, and program accreditation continue according to the existing legal framework until the reorganization of the Public Agency for the Accreditation of Higher Education into ASCAL and the approval of the Quality Code.

Article 139

The financing of higher education institutions begins to be applied, according to this law, in a staggered manner, from the budget year 2016.

Article 140

The Institute of Public Health is considered, in the implementation of this law, a research institution/center that maintains existing agreements with IALs in the medical field until the fulfillment of the conditions specified in Article 28, paragraph 5, of this law.

Article 141

Subordinate acts

Subordinate acts under Article 4, paragraph 4; Article 5, paragraph 1, letter "e"; Article 8, paragraph 3; Article 9, paragraphs 2, 4, and 6; Article 10, paragraph 1, letter "c"; Article 11, paragraphs 3 and 4; Article 12, paragraphs 4 and 8; Article 14, paragraph 10; Article 15, paragraph 7; Article 28, paragraph 5; Article 29, paragraph 3; Article 30, paragraphs 3 and 7; Article 32, paragraph 2; Article 35, paragraph 6; Article 60, paragraph 3; Article 71, paragraph 2; Article 75, paragraph 3, letter "b"; Article 79, paragraph 7; Article 82, paragraph 3; Article 87, paragraph 3; Article 91, paragraph 5; Article 92, paragraph 6; Article 96, paragraph 2; Article 98, paragraph 1, letter "d"; Article 100, paragraph 4; Article 101, paragraph 2; Article 105, paragraph 2; Article 106, paragraph 8; Article 112, paragraphs 5 and 6; Article 114, paragraph 3; Article 115, paragraph 2; Article 120, paragraph 7; Article 125; and Article 136 are approved within 9 months from the entry into force of this law.

Article 142

Abrogations

With the entry into force of this law, Law No. 9741, dated 21.5.2007, "On Higher Education in the Republic of Albania," as amended, is abrogated. Subordinate acts, approved before the entry into force of this law and not conflicting with it, will be applied until subordinate acts envisaged in Article 139 of this law are approved.

Article 143

Entry into force

This law enters into force 15 days after publication in the Official Gazette.

CHAIRMAN

Ilir Meta

Approved on July 22, 2015