Faculty of Islamic Study
Pedagogy for Islamic Education, BA

Final Report

ACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

Jule 7, Prishtina

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1.1. Context

Date of site visit (on line): June 17, 2021

Expert Team (ET) members:

- Prof. Dr. Melita Kovacevic
- Prof. Dr. Zekirija Sejdini

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- Naim Gashi, Executive Director of KAA
- Shkelzen Gerxhaliu, Senior Officer for Monitoring and Evaluation
- Arianit Krasniqi, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Accreditation
- Leona Kovaçi, Senior Officer for Monitoring and Evaluation
- Ilirjane Ademaj, Senior Officer for Monitoring and Evaluation

Sources of information for the Report:

- Faculty of Islamic study, BA Pedagogy for Islamic Education SER (Self Evaluation Report plus annexes);
- Meetings with management, staff, administrators, and employers of the institution;

Criteria used for program evaluation:

- KAA Accreditation Manual

1.2. Site visit (on line) schedule

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17th of June

09.00 – 09.40   Meeting with the management of the faculty where the programme is integrated *(no slide presentation is allowed, the meeting is intended as a free discussion)*

09.45 – 10:25   Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff

10:30 – 11:30   Meeting with the heads of the study programme

11:30 – 12:15   Lunch break

12:20 – 13:00   Meeting with teaching staff

13:10 – 13:50   Meeting with employers of graduates

13:55 – 14.15   Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts

14:15 – 14:25   Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and programme

1.3. A brief overview of the institution and programme under evaluation

The Facuty of Islamic Study is an independent educational institution established in 1992. It is located in Prishtina and has only one campus. Its main aim is to provide education for professional development of individuas who will be able to serve the needs of Islamic Community and Kosovo society in general. The Faculty has two programmes, one on a bachelor level, Islamic Theology and one on a master level, with the same title. The programmes are developed within the framework of Bologna process. It has about 300 students.

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2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

2.1. Mission, objectives and administration

- *Faculty*

The Faculty of Islamic Studies is a relatively small academic institution that is not affiliated with any university. Nevertheless, it has clear administrative structures, a mission, and goals that it aims to realise through various study programmes. In its administrative design, the Faculty of Islamic Studies is particularly oriented towards European universities and strives to implement the structures there. This also applies to the development of curricula. Through its study programmes, it tries on the one hand to cover the need for qualified personnel for the domestic Islamic religious community, and on the other hand to advance research in the field of Islamic theology.

Nevertheless, more intensive cooperation with foreign universities is needed to be able to fulfil the goals and mission in their entirety. Cooperation agreements that are merely on paper and mutual inspirations alone are not enough. Intensive cooperation in research and teaching is needed to increase the quality and to achieve the given goals. The establishment of an academic advisory board consisting of recognised scholars from the field of Islamic theology and religious education would be also helpful. Also, to be considered is the establishment of a new position, that of Dean of Studies, who would be exclusively responsible for teaching and could thus specifically improve the quality of teaching. Experience at European universities shows that in addition to the administrative management of a faculty, which is the responsibility of the dean, a separate function is needed that is exclusively concerned with teaching issues.

- *The study programme*

The mission and the goals of the study programme Islamic Religious Education, and the administrative structure correspond to that of the faculty. In the study programme reference is made to the lack of such a study programme in the Albanian-speaking region. The need for qualified personnel in the field of Islamic religious education is to be covered by this study programme. This clearly demonstrates the importance and necessity of this study programme. Despite the detailed description of the necessity of such a study programme and the reference

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to the fact that the study programme is oriented towards foreign universities, there is a lack of precise description of occupations that can be prusued by the graduates of the study programme. The precise description of the occupational fields served by the respective study programme is of enormous importance for every study programme. They are indispensable for studies in religious education. This is because religious education encompasses a broad field. In relation to schools, for example, a distinction is made between the primary level, secondary level one, and secondary level two. In particular, the question of which form of pedagogy and didactics is required depends on the professional field for which the graduates are trained. Therefore, there is a need to specify the occupational fields for which the study programme qualifies. Depending on the orientation, the curricula must also be adapted.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. The establishment of an international scientific advisory board
2. The installation of a dean of studies
3. The specification of the occupational field

2.2. Quality management

Faculty of Islamic Studies is a small HE institutions, with a few programmes and a small student body. Nevertheless, it expresses awareness that the quality of institution is a relevant factor and that needs to be supported and implemented in individual programmes as well as across the whole institutions. The instituton has developed its own Quality Assurance Guide, which is published and available to all staff members. The guide describes the principles and procedures of the faculty's quality, key activities, goals, measurable indicators and practices related to assessment, measurement and development of activities.

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Quality management meets four out of nine standards as specified in the KAA accreditation manual. There are responsible staff for the quality management and there are procedures and all the staff as well as other main stakeholders are aware of the processes that are either implemented or that need to be further enhanced. Quality office is in charge of implementing procedures, and to prepare and administer internal evaluations.

The heads of the programme as well as the programme staff confirmed that the student evaluation processes were consistent and understood by both staff and students, and that they had personally benefitted from these quality assurance mechanisms. Of course, these statements are based on the experience from the existing two programmes., not one to be accredited.

At this point, it is not possible to check if everything what it has been planned is actually done, however, it does not seem that the plan is to make the results from the evaluations fully available publicly. It has been reported during the site visit that the resukts are presented to all the staff and it is a metter of internal discussion.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *It would be important to assure implementation of all the procedures claimed that are planned*
2. *To assue that evaluation results and survey outcomes are publicly available*
3. *To start implementing staff self-evaluations as an important part of internal QA*

2.3. Academic staff

The faculty has enough qualified staff. Most of the lecturers have a degree in Islamic theology, which they acquired mainly at an Arabic university. There are occasional external lecturers who are qualified in philosophy, sociology, or education. Thus, Islamic theology is well covered. However, this cannot be said for Islamic religious education and didactics, but also for general pedagogy. Due to the lack of staff in Islamic religious education, the courses in religious education and didactics are taught by theologians. This is partly understandable at the beginning because the academic resources are not sufficient to adequately fill this gap. In the long run, however, it is a great disadvantage that the academic approach differs considerably from the religious education approach. In addition, it is noticeable that many of the academic staff

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members are not very active in research and consequently publish too little. There is not only a lack of publications in English, which could be justified by the fact that most of the academic staff do not have sufficient knowledge of English, but also in Albanian. Increasing the research activities and thus the publications of individual academic staff members is indispensable for strengthening the quality of teaching. Therefore, there is a need for a publication strategy that motivates the individual academic staff members to conduct research in their own fields and to publish them. There is also little international exchange. Only individual actors within the scientific body have built up their own network. The majority, however, have no international experience. This must be supported institutionally.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Hiring of experts in the field of Islamic religious education*
2. *the recruitment of at least one pedagogue, for general pedagogy*
3. *development of a publication strategy*
4. *further training in English language and additional research funding for translations etc.*
5. *strengthening international exchange*

Compliance level: XXX compliant

ET recommendations:

2.4. Educational process content

According to its own information, the programme is oriented towards various European study programmes that also offer Islamic religious education. This orientation is visible in the curriculum. The curriculum is set up in such a way that a broad range of disciplines is covered. Nevertheless, the impression arises that the curriculum for the study of Islamic religious

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education is not the result of an independent concept, but a kind of composition of various other curricula. Above all, it is not clear how the division between the subject courses, the pedagogical courses, and the religious education courses came about. For this reason, the number of theological subjects seems very low. With the subject knowledge offered in the study programme, the graduates would not be able to teach the subject of Islamic religion in schools. For this, there needs to be a clear division of these categories and a justification of the logic according to which this division is carried out. It is conspicuous that the study programme has no practical school components. These must be added, as school practice is an indispensable component of a study programme in religious education. The school practice must cover the school levels for which the graduates are qualified. In addition, important general pedagogical courses are missing, which are necessary to strengthen the pedagogical competences of the teachers. For example, subcject courses in the field of elementary education must be introduced if graduates are to teach in primary schools. Therefore, the curriculum needs a thorough revision to remedy these deficiencies and to strengthen the profile of the study programme. The elective courses should also be adapted to the needs of religious education. Courses such as Arabic literature are interesting, but irrelevant for school practice.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Exact distribution of ECTS points between the theological courses, religious education courses, courses in educational basics, subject didactics, and school practice.*
2. *Introduction of general education courses*
3. *Introduction of school practice*

2.5. Students

The students did not participate in the interviews due to the fact that there is no enrolled students, therefore the evaluation of standards in this section is based primarily on a written SER. All the standards are met, except the standard 5.7. and 5.8.

Acccording to the SER and data collected during the interviews, students and staff agreed that the assessment mechanisms and grades are understood and are fairly applied. (Standards 5.4. and 5.5).

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Standard 5.8 has not fully met yet. Although there are institutional awareness about this issue, it appears to be no clear system to examine the originality of student work. It is strongly recommended to invest in software for plagiarism detection, and to make that resource available to the instructors.

It has been verified that the students' rights and obligations were clearly understood, and that these were aporppriately supported. It is also supported with the institutional regulaltion and documents. An advantage of an institution as FIS is the size of the institutions which makes easier to follow closely all the procedures and to be familiarised with all the students needs.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Assure technical support for plagiarism detection, preferable by purchasing a software*
2. *Make sure to have appropriate data collection and management of the study process which also includes information as completion rate by the cohorts, success per each course etc.*

2.6. Research

Considering the profile of the institution, as well as the number of permanent staff employed, it is not to expect to have research intensive institutions, and it should not be taken as a severe disadvantage. However, at the same time, it is expected to have a balanced research activity across different disciplines/areas of study and to have research productivity. Research productivity should be blanaced and present across different fields, topics but also across different generations of academic staff. Younger generation of teachers are actually those that could be the most productive and motivated to do research, but this has not been observed among teaching staff for the programme which is unders the accreditation process.

According to the SER, most of claims related to research is predominantly focused on future activities. It was alos stated that the institutions supports financially teaching staff, however, during the interviews, it was not clearly stated and confirmd that actual funds are allocated. If they ere allocated, it was foucsed on publishing, not actual research activities. Ther are no clearly stated reseach objectives for the study programme. Also, there is no clear budget, logistic and human resources. During the interviews, it was not possible to identify clear connection between their teaching areas and their research. Additional problem is that there is

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a prevalence of part-time staff, being fully employed at other HE institutions where ther are also obliged to and with extrememly low overall publishing rate, with a very few exceptions.

According to additionaly provided information in the comment phase, the Faculty did conducted a few projects in last two years and allocated funds to perform the activities. This is definitely something to notice and support, and it could be also stressed that the allocated funds were not as modest as it is frequently the case. At the same time, these two projects were not actual research project, but work on relevant literature, while two other listed projects, one that took place and the other more pro future, do not have such a clear funding scheme, in particular those who have more clear outlook of a real research project.

The publication rate does not meets Standard 6.7, which specifies at least one publication per year per staff. Standard 6.8 was met, at least according to infromaton obtained during the interviews. Still, it was not possible to check for all the publications.

Regulations for ownership of intellectual property, procedures are developed, although according to the SER, the study programme intend to create a base for intellectual property policies and commercializing ideas developed by staff and students. F course, this is a future perspective that still needs to be realised.

Presently, it is hard to define how and will students participate in research, considering the fact that there is very little research going on, although, again, the SER states that the teaching staff is encouraged to include research and students participation in teaching process.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Consider developing mechanisms for raising research productivity, by defining more focused research topics*
2. *Prioritise firstly funding of research, not publishing first, bearing in mind that if there is no research, there will be no publications either*
3. *Consider small, but publishable research with students and/or graduates*

2.7. Infrastructure and resources

As it has been already stated FIS is a small educational institutions, but well organised and providing an adequate learning environment. It has adequate facilities, in particulat teaching spaces. The whole institutions is well-kept and provides a good teaching environment.

Students also have on disposal very focused and specialised library, that is also an added value culturally and for the society. However, it still misses technological modernisation on one side, but concerning the programme there is still of lack of sufficient human resources.

It has been reported in the SER that the inistitution has a financial plan for the next three years and it assures sustainability, although, most likely due to 'copy-paste' activity, this was reffered to another programme, not this one that is in the process of accreditation. Nevertheless, during the interviews it has ben also confirmed that substantial funding is secured.

Infrastructure and other facilities respond to the program implementation requirements for students with special needs (7.6)

Compliance level: Substnatially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Modern technology need to be introduced in all areas of institutional life*
2. *Be proactive in plagiarism software purchase*
3. *Human capacity needs to be further supported and developed*

3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the **BA programme Pedagogy of Islamic Education** is **substantially compliant** with the standards included in the *KAA Accreditation manual* and, therefore, recommends to accredit   the study program for a duration of **3 year** with a number of **40 students** to be annually enrolled in the programme.

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Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency

Expert Team

Chair

_____   **Melita Kovacevic**   **July 7, 2021**
(Signature)   (Print Name)   (Date)

Member

_____   **Zekirija Sejdini**   **July 7, 2021**
(Signature)   (Print Name)   (Date)

Member

_____   (Print Name)   (Date)
(Signature)

Member

_____   (Print Name)   (Date)
(Signature)

Member

_____   (Print Name)   (Date)
(Signature)

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Member

_____

(Signature)   (Print Name)   (Date)