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UBT COLLEGE

LLM Law – Civil Law and Property Right

PROGRAM ACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

Pristina, 17.06.2019



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit:

Expert Team (ET) members:

- Prof. Dr. Milan Pol
- Prof. Dr. Alan Brickwood
- Prof. Dr. Peter Parycek
- Prof. Dr. Zdravko Lackovic
- Prof. Dr. Ulrike Beier

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- Avni Gashi, Acting Director of KAA
- Shkelzen Gerxhaliu, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring
- Arianit Krasniqi, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Accreditation

Sources of information for the Report:

- SER
- CV
- Syllabus of courses

Criteria used for program evaluation:

- KAA Standards



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1.2. Site visit schedule

31 May

08.30	Meeting at the reception of the hotel
09.00 – 10.30	Meeting with the management of the institution
10.40 – 11.50	Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative services
12.00 – 13.00	Meeting with the heads of study programs
13.00 – 13.50	Lunch break
13.50 – 14.50	Visiting tour of the facilities and infrastructure
14.50 – 15.40	Meeting with teaching staff
15.50 – 16.40	Meeting with students
16.50 – 17.40	Meeting with graduates
17.50 – 18.40	Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders
18.45 – 19.00	Internal meeting – Expert Team and KAA
19.00 – 19.15	Closing meeting with the management of the institution



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A brief overview of the institution and program under evaluation

Regarding the SER of UBT, UBT College was established in October 2004 by Prof.Dr. Edmond Hajrizi.

Currently, UBT has 19 academic units that offer about 30 undergraduate and graduate programmes BA and MA degree programs, in areas of business, computer science, social science, architecture, engineering and arts. (SER, p.13f) It's continuously growing and based on annual intakes, the second largest national private higher education organisation. (SER, p. 16) The institution has established seven spin-offs, e.g. Association for Management or Kosovo Association for Modelling and Simulation. (p. 17)

UBT College currently operates in our campuses: UBT Pristine, UBT Innovation Campus, UBT Prizren and UBT Ferizaj. (p .740)

The UBT campus in Pristina was very lively and prospering during the SV. The majority of academic and administrative services seem to be digitized. All in all, it was great to see and feel the progress of UBT.

UBT is building an ecosystem of spinoffs; currently, they have founded ten spin-offs. Another very positive development is the establishment of five Erasmus programs, which creates knowledge and capacity through the international exchange; ten students managed to use the opportunity in the ongoing semester.

UBT invested in Turnitin Software licence, and they created an open access repository.

1.3. Mission, objectives and administration

The study program mission and objectives are in line with the overall mission statement of the institution; nevertheless, the institutional mission statement itself is too generic and could be the mission statement of other similar institutions in Kosovo; UBT is not using the differentiation potential of their engineering and computer science expertise. (1.1.) For defining the program, UBT cooperates with public institutions to cover the needs and requirements of the justice system in Kosovo, p. 742. (1.2)

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The study program has a traditional overarching didactic concept, which is quite usual in all other law faculties in private and public institutions. The research potential of master thesis is not fully used, they are designed as an individual process, which is correct, but the potential of research frameworks is not used, e.g. a combination of master thesis for answering complex issues or analyzing specific domains. These kinds of methods would provide the opportunity to increase the overall weak research activities of the faculty. (1.3)

The formal policies, guidelines and regulations are well established at UBT in theory and practice and have been mentioned during all SV meetings and described in detail in the SER. In addition, UBT has been certified by ISO and EFQM since 2003 and 2014. (p. 59). So, the likelihood that all UBT staff and students comply with the internal regulations relating to ethical conduct in research, teaching, assessment in all academic and administrative activities, is quite high, during the SV no contradictory statements were mentioned. (1.4, 1.5)

Policies and standards are reviewed by UBT in the context of quality improvement, coordination of internal control standards, identifies the situation and performance indicators, develops improvement activities and periodic monitoring and evaluation of academic programmes, student services, resources and stakeholder engagement policies. (p. 59); SER provides an overview of the evaluation of different policies and standards, p. 33f; 208. (1.6)

Another crucial factor for organizations of this size and the current development phase is a governance structure for innovation. Currently, the ET had the impression, that most of the innovation is driven by the top management, which is important especially in a starting phase, but reached this size the main question is, how to facilitate bottom-up innovation from departments, centers or single academic staff members.

The establishment of performance indicator is an ongoing process, performance indicators and KPIs are mentioned in the report several times and were mentioned during the SV. UBT has established a "Performance Assessment Framework" and "Implementation Plan"; strategic plan goals are subdivided into a set of objectives and each objective has a number of projects and actions assigned to it with delivery dates, resources and funding. And UBT is using an internal balanced scorecard as the main tool and repository for all project related information. (p. 33f)



Specific key performance indicators for civil law are defined: "Access, progression and outcomes; Efficiency of learning and teaching and the student progression; The programme output and student employment." (p. 748) (KPI 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4) and equal opportunities are mentioned in the KPI section of the report, so this should be covered as an indicator. (1.5)

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Mission needs to be more concrete linked to the overall UBT mission.*
2. *Master thesis as an opportunity to increase research.*
3. *Developing and transforming quality management from securing quality to innovation.*
4. *Developing a governance structure for decentralized bottom-up innovation in faculties, departments, centres, etc.*

1.4. Quality management

The Law Faculty is a member of the European Association of Law Faculties, mentioned in the SER (p. 755) and during SV, which is a positive development because it ensures international exchange and learning about the current development of law studies in Europe.

UBT has established quality management framework, and most of the processes are digitized. Core elements are student surveys and semester and annual reports. Faculty activities are monitored by the office of quality assurance, and students and graduates are integrated into the processes. The reports are discussed within the faculty, and concrete decisions and measures are taken, like training for a single faculty member or seminars for the whole faculty; this was mentioned several times during the SV. Ongoing learning process seems to be established (2.1, 2.2)

The following aspects and perspectives are covered in the quality management process: curriculum structure and course description; process of assessing the teaching of staff and learning of students; students' admission and progression; students support and advice at each academic year; graduates work experience and enhance employability; learning resources like



libraries, teaching rooms; supervising; quality of services. (p. 755 f) During the SV in different discussion, these elements were mentioned by staff and students (2.3, 2.4)

The student and graduates' results are consolidated into the semester and annual reports and used for different types of internal and external evaluation: external examiners reports; feedback from industry partners and others; feedback from students, academic and administrative staff, graduates; course board reviews, internal audit reports; faculty and collegial meetings. The results are used for continuous quality management, and students are informed regularly. (p. 756 f). (2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8) The quality management process is further developed through international exchange, memberships and further audits. (2.9)

Performance indicator about program evaluation is implemented, and it seems heavily used. The indicator concerning teaching plan is existing and used in ongoing development and communication between program coordinator faculty students and office of quality assurance. A comprehensive revision after five years is not mentioned explicitly; students are involved in the ongoing development.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Based on the high maturity level, which is comparable with similar institutions in European member states of EU the next development step would be to transform from quality management to quality and innovation management.*

1.5. Academic staff

The faculty of law has planned to teach the program with experienced and existing staff members, which is for a two-semester program possible, but still, the workload is higher.

Over 80% of the academic staff members are full-time employed, and 36 credits are covered by full-time staff, just two external experts are added to the faculty, which is a very good ratio; only two part-time staff members, who bring in practitioner experience.



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All in all, eight full-time faculty members and two part-time faculty members; from the eight full-time lectures 6 hold a PhD degree, and two of them are female; all of them are qualified, bring in experience and have a regularly publishing record. One issue is Egzona Osmani's CV, which is formatted in the College Dukagjini template, so it is unclear if he still works there; concerning SER he should be full time at UBT; maybe KAA could do a double check. The second issue is Kushtrim Ahmeti, who has a top philosophical profile and impressive track record, but not a single link to law science. Teaching the course “legal science” is critical and he properly fulfills not the needed profile. (3.1, 3.2, 3.3)

The establishment of the staff development process is a good sign for a fruitful development, and it seems the shortage of scientific researchers and lectures has been almost overcome in Kosovo; five doctors of science staff members became assistant professors, and one assistant professor was promoted for associate professor; further promotions are planned for 2019. The positive impression of staff development has been confirmed in the meeting with academic staff members.

The academic staff members are trained regularly, and it is expected that full-time academic professors teach eight hours per week, and they should be present 40 hours on campus. (p. 764). The available offices still do not correspond to the stated 40 hours on campus; nevertheless, during the consultation hours they seem to be available, based on the discussion with students and graduates; in addition, students and graduates also highlighted the online availability and fast response times.

One of the open discussions was the number of students for the program, UBT mentioned that they submitted a proposal for 30 master students during the SV; SER informs about hundred study places on page 740; on page 799 in the footnote, it is mentioned the number of students will be fifty. Nevertheless, the teaching of 50 or 100 students should not be a problem in the field of law and could be arranged in two groups; but mentoring 50 to 100 master theses with the current faculty could become an issue. During the discussion it became evident that they have not designed a process handling 100 master theses, or how they could streamline a process, or create a support process of group teaching in regard to ensure the progress of master thesis writing, which could improve the ratio of study finishing and reduce the one to one mentoring. Another issue is that modern interactive studying, as they proposed to do, would be difficult or impossible without a higher number of a faculty member, who support co-teaching.



Based on the information, they could have two study groups with 50 students each. In regard to KAA regulations, 60 credits program and two groups they would need at least 2 PhDs, which is the case with six full-time PhDs, so the formal regulation is fulfilled. (3.4)

Quality management and academic staff evaluation are one of the strengths at UBT, based on the mandatory evaluation process, internal meetings and semester reports with recommendations, teaching staff are continuously developed. The continuous development process was also mentioned during SV several times. (3.6, 3.8, 3.9)

All staff members of the program provide activities in practice and scientific communities through publications and active participation in conferences; the goal of publishing a minimum number of one article is not reached by all faculty members. (3.7)

Based on the information, retired teachers lose their status, p. 760. (3.10)

Performance indicators are developed in the field of teaching evaluation, but not on strategic level; (P 3.1) indicators for teaching skills are established and used for providing teaching training on an individual level and team level. (P 3.2) they are used for improving teaching capabilities of academic staff members; teaching staff is involved in professional development, but not monitored (P 3.5); it is not clear if evaluation results are used as criteria for promotion purposes and renewal of contracts, but the likelihood is quite high, that they use for promoting.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Change responsibility role for the course “legal research”.*
2. *Improve and define performance indicators for the faculty for better guidance for management and staff members and combine indicators for different (strategy) processes like staff promotion, improving teaching on personal and faculty level. Data could become a crucial element for decision making.*
3. *Establishing a Master thesis process and cooperation between the staff members for handling high numbers of students.*



Comment UBT

- *Dr.Egzona Osmani is a full-time professor at UBT. The revised Curriculum Vitae has been attached (see Annex 1).*
- ***ET appreciates the information, but has no impact on the final recommendations, because this was a minor issue.***
- *Dr.Kushtrim Ahmeti, is part of the institutional core on research methodology and has been highly recommended for his academic and hands on experience in research methods. However, the institution understands the comments were made in the context of legal research and will review it accordingly.*
- ***ET The overall qualification of Dr.Kushtrim Ahmeti is no question, but there is still no evidence for legal research methods competence, so this issue is highly critical and needs to be solved through co-teaching or new personnel.***

1.6. Educational process content

The study program in civil law is in line with comparable international and national programs; typical courses have been developed like Advanced Private Law, Obligations and Contracts, Commercial Law, Comparative Private Law, International and EU Intellectual Property Law, etc.

The course "Legal Research" is a core element in the two-semester curriculum and should provide the foundation for the master thesis. The flow arrangement of courses and their objectives ensure competencies and capabilities for typical job profiles. Course descriptions are state of the art, are well documented and include all standard elements like course purpose, learning outcomes, content, teaching methods, exam framework and literature. Overall description of the program and courses are in line with the National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. (4.1, 4.2, 4.3 4.4, 4.7)

A different discussion point was, how graduates are capable handling real cases; an opportunity could be to focus more on practice than theory and use different teaching approaches, e.g. problem orientated teaching in law in the master program. This was also mentioned as the top priority need in the meeting with practitioners. The combination of a theoretical component and the necessary practical training is mentioned several times, but as



we know from practice, it is hard to establish, because it is resource intensive and special teaching methods are needed. The ET highly recommends investing in the approach.

A second aspect which could be strengthened is developing cross-faculty courses which ensure an interdisciplinary understanding and could lead to comprehensive problem-solving capabilities.

Third main discussion issue during the SV was increasing the graduation rate of students; most of the students drop out at the beginning and at the end of the program; for dropping out at the end of the process, the main reason is not finalizing the master thesis. In a one-year master program, this is even more critical, because the time for finishing is just two semesters in the best case and in practice one semester because students often need the whole first semester for finding the topic and research question. Study groups are a motivating factor which disappears after finishing courses, so they open items are: how to ensure fast finding of research questions, therefore a group deadline with abstracts and presentations could be one element, or to continue group discussions and presentations after the second semester and offer a course for students in the "third" semester who did not manage to finish in time.

The student-teacher relationship seems to be well established; staff members are described by students as very responsive and open-minded. (4.6)

Student assessment are well described and suitable for the different courses and comparable with international programs; no complaints from students were mentioned during SV. (4.8, 4.9) SER describes the process for exam/evaluation complaints, p. 189.

Policies and actions are defined for dealing with conflicts on institutional level student described concrete cases, which are line with KAA regulation and UBT policies; typically, students have to do the exam another time for improving their grades. (4.10)

UBT has signed a high number of cooperation contracts with different institutions at the institutional level and faculty level. The integration into a course and program development could be increased; founding an official advising council could be a concrete measure. (4.12)

Use of IT tools is established, and different electrotonic communication channels are used by the whole organizations and the academic staff members. (P 4.2) The study design is as



mentioned, quite common; inappropriately designed courses should be detected at latest within one semester, and students are asked through questioners (P 4.1) Furthermore, sophisticated indicators should be developed, especially for measuring the teaching strategies in achieving different types of learning outcomes (P 4.3).

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. The main issue is designing a harmonized group mentoring process for master thesis writing for the whole law faculty.*
- 2. The second issue is the course "Legal research" which is fine developed, but it could be an opportunity to continue the course in the second semester with 2 or 3 credits; for creating a course for motivating and learning from peers through discussing current research results; therefore one course needs to be shifted.*
- 3. An opportunity could be an even more practice-oriented master program, which builds the capability for writing and analysing cases; this was mentioned as the main need by the stakeholders during SV.*
- 4. An opportunity could be a cross-faculty course for interdisciplinary discourse and creating problem-solving capacity.*
- 5. An opportunity could be the integration of partner in developing the program by a formalized advising council for the program and/or the faculty.*
- 6. Developing further performance indicators should be done for data-based decision making and covering KAA standards.*

1.7. Students

The master program is primarily designed for law bachelor graduates; law bachelor programs in Kosovo are 4-year duration, eight semester and graduates have typically accumulated 240 credits. (p. 785) From the ET perspective, it is not clear how the program is designed to enable the attendance for non-law-graduates, it only refers to the general Law on Higher Education, which enforces the enrolment of bachelor graduates with different study background, if they have passed 300 credits. The master program has a very clear law focus, students, as a consequence, the non-law-study background will not be able to handle the courses; therefore, a bridging semester with courses of about 20 to 30 credits should be



designed for non-law graduates. Another open question is, how students are selected if demand is higher than available study program places; for this scenario processes and regulations are not described in the general part of SER nor in the chapter of law faculty. (5.1, 5.2) The general transfer between higher education institutions is regulated in the regulation on student's registration, as a formal regulatory act of the UBT College. (p. 785) (5.10)

The study group are planned with 50 students and seminars with 25, which is for law studies a perfect size, p. 786. (5.3) As mentioned in the previous chapter, mentoring master theses could become a critical issue and could lead to a lack of resources. Another opportunity to focus on practice relevance by increasing the interactive part could also lead to higher demand and workload. The faculty should be big enough to handle these challenges. (5.3) During the meetings, students and graduates stated that academic staff members were highly responsive for common questions, but also for specific problems. (5.4, 5.6, 5.11)

Student completion rates are monitored through the electronic evaluation processes, but ET had the impression that data is hardly used for strategic decisions; during the discussion management and academic staff members were not able to describe how the data is used; (5.7)

Actions for anti-plagiarism have started; UBT purchased the service software "Turnitin"; at the moment, especially for the field of law, the software is ineffective, because it does not support Albania language. A well-designed mentoring process and critical reading are still needed. This fact increases the already mentioned issue of the mentoring process for a potentially high number of master theses. (5.8)

Students rights and obligations are communicated via handbook, and in the case of questions, the dean and program director could be approached. During the SV no complaints have been mentioned, and positive engagement was highlighted (5.9)

Performance indicators are available and established for: support services; lecturing material (part of the questionnaire); staff member performance; study workload; the results are incorporated into the semester report, which also includes recommendations and measures. (P 5.2 – 5.5) The weaknesses of the selecting process are also reflected as a missing indicator. (P 5.1)



Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Continue with data collection and build KPIs frameworks, at the moment ET got the impression, some of the data points are used for improvement, but they could be used in a more extensive way for better decision making on all levels of the organization.*
- 2. Include graduates qualitative and quantitative; offer them updates; learn from them about new needs for curriculum development; think of partnering in research; in the competing market, successful graduates are one of the best communication activities;*
- 3. A Bridging semester should be designed for non-law graduates with courses of about 20 to 30 credits.*
- 4. A selection process needs to be developed, especially for the case of demand surpassing available study-program-places.*

1.8. Research

Traditional research in the field of law is limited to publications in national journals; only view scholars are part of the international community publish in the field of social science – which is quite similar to Germany or Austria. In general, establishing research is a long-term and challenging process, especially in private institutions.

UBT established three levels of research activities: the first one is the individual academic staff member; they should publish at least two articles per year; the research output needs to be provided to the UBT Knowledge Centre. A decision about conference attendance or study leaves is decided by the department; the second level is institutional activities, like conferences. And UBT is also supporting research through its research fund, the decision is made by the Research Department. The third level is cooperation with community needs. (6.3)

The whole SER description is generic and has no reference points to law research. Faculty of law has not established objectives nor a research development plan for the program nor for the faculty; for example, research questions could be collected together with partners, focus areas within civil law could be chosen, and research question combinations could be analysed by the student as a group; still with the goal of finishing their master theses. Staff members



could be highly integrated and facilitate the research process. (6.1, 6.2, 6.10) During the SV discussions with the academic staff members and stakeholder, some smaller individual projects were mentioned, which demonstrated at least some research activities. All of the activities are individually driven and do not follow a research development plan.

Master program, in general, offer the opportunity to combine research and teaching, but therefore a clear concept and research objectives need to be developed; Either the SER nor the SV discussion offered elements for an overall framework; master theses are one to one mentoring, based on the research question of students.

Performance indicators in the field of research need to be developed, at the moment only the area of regularly publishing is measured; overall research agenda, a research development plan for faculty and staff members are missing.

Compliance level: (Barley) Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *High need for developing a research development plan for the faculty, the program and on the personal level.*
2. *Student centred courses for joint research activities for enabling students and fostering research activities of the faculty is needed.*
3. *Indicators need to be established.*

1.9. Infrastructure and resources

Based on the delivered information, the financial situation is stable and ensures the necessary resources. Law programs do not need special infrastructure resources; for the master program, the existing infrastructure, teaching rooms, library, electronic platforms, software and processes can be. In general, the investment of the last years is impressive and fulfils European standards; the three libraries offer online journals (contract with J-STOR) and adequate books for the program. (7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4) The building offers accessibility for students with special needs partly. (7.6)



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Students are very satisfied with the campus infrastructure is part of semester evaluation. (P7.3). Further, plans were mentioned during the SV, but no formal plans are provided in the SER and not monitored. (P 7.1, 7.2)

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Developing formal plans and define KPIs for infrastructure.*

2. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

Overall the program and the faculty fulfil the standard criteria. The curriculum is quite traditional and includes innovation partly. The ET recommends establishing a master thesis group mentoring process for fostering innovation potential, the process should be designed for the whole law faculty. UBT is collecting numerous data points, which are used in some cases, but the usage still could be increased for better decision making – ET recommends developing performance indicator frameworks for the different areas.

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the study program Civil Law offered by UBT is substantially compliant with the standards included in the KAA Accreditation manual and, therefore, recommends accrediting the study program for a duration of 3 years with a number of 50 students to be enrolled in the program.

Expert

(Signature)

(Prof. Dr. Peter Parycek)

(Date)