

**“Report on the Site-Visit for the Re-
Accreditation
of Academic Programs of the
Medical Faculty, University of Pristina,
Kosovo”**

Site visit on the Friday, May 6, 2016

At the Faculty site

Experts Team (ET):

- Prof.Dr. Markus Paulmichl - Paracelsus Medical University, Salzburg (A)
- Dr. Charity Nofziger - Paracelsus Medical University, Salzburg (A)
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Coordinator's of KAA (CKAA):

- Prof. Blerim Rexha
- Ms. Furtuna Mehmeti
- Mr. Fisnik Gashi

The Task:

The Faculty of Medicine of the University of Pristina is applying for re-accreditation of the Doctoral programs in Medicine (Dr. Med.), Dentistry (Dr. Stom.) and Pharmacy (Mag. Pharm.), as well as the following Doctoral Study Programs: Preclinical Medicine, Clinical Medicine and Dentistry.

The site visit was on the 6th of May at the Faculty site and organized as follows:

- Meeting with management of the Medical Faculty
- Meeting with responsible persons for the study program (curriculum, teaching and research)
- Visit of the facilities and infrastructure
- Meeting with the teaching staff
- Meeting with the students
- Expert team (ET) consultation

- Closing meeting with management

Procedure:

The faculty of Medicine applied for re-accreditation of the following programs:

- (1) Level 6 diploma of 'Medicine'; 150 students per year.
- (2) Level 6 diploma of 'Dentistry'; 70 students
- (3) Level 6 diploma of 'Pharmacy'; 50 students
- (4) Doctoral Study in Preclinical Medicine; 10 students
- (5) Doctoral Study in Clinical Medicine; 10 students
- (6) Doctoral Study in Dentistry; 10 students

The report is based on:

- Self evaluation report 2015
- Meeting with the Management of the Faculty of Medicine and extensive discussion between the members of Faculty, the expert team, and representatives of KAA
- The Code of good practice and guidelines for site-visit, provided by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency
- Site-visit of the facilities
- Verification of the compliance with the recommendations provided by the KAA

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- Additional documents provided
- Response to the former report

General Remarks:

Overall, the documentation for re-accreditation of the different programs was in place. However, there were some inconsistencies between the written report and the information obtained during the face to face discussions (in the basic data section of the program for the Doctor of Sciences program in Dentistry (page 518), the number of students the school would like to admit is 10, but during the meeting, Prof. Ass Dr. Fatmir Dragidella Mr. Sc, PhD (person responsible for the academic Dentistry program) and Prof. Asoc. Dr. Metush Disha Mr Sc, PhD (person responsible for the academic Doctor of Sciences in Dentistry program) communicated that 20 students should be admitted). **In the future, it would be advisable to prepare the SER more diligently in order to avoid disturbing inconsistencies.**

Administration agreed that 10 (and only 10) students should be admitted to the Dentistry program, since the infrastructure and personnel does not allow more without compromising on quality of teaching. A committee directly reporting to the management will be appointed in order to increase diligent workflows throughout University administration.

The upfront work done by the members of the KAA in crosschecking the HR requirements for the different applied courses according to Kosovarian law was tremendously helpful.

The continuous improvements done within the Medical Faculty at the level of infrastructure, policies, HR and curriculum are highly appreciated by the

ET. The new building slotted for administration and teaching, which is currently (2016) under construction, will help to substantially improve academic life.

The ET strongly supports, as mentioned in earlier recommendations, any attempts leading to a new statute giving the Faculty of Medicine more possibilities to be in charge of their own budget and recruit personnel. It is the strong feeling of the ET that the Faculty of Medicine is in the transition from 're-organization' and managing problems on a day-by-day base to (i) consolidation and (ii) coherent vision of the future.

For these goals to be realized, it seems mandatory that the Medical Faculty gains autonomy. This will empower the Faculty to be responsible for its own future. Establishment of an autonomous Medical University with three faculties of (i) Medicine, (ii) Pharmacy and (iii) Dentistry seems to be the single most important structural change in order to guarantee a prosperous development of the Healthcare related disciplines. This is for the following reasons:

- Speed in acting and reacting to an increasingly faster changing healthcare environment in order to be able to compete with neighboring and European Healthcare institutions
- Coping with the complex academic fabric composed of medical education and clinical practice, which is also accentuated by the split-power imposed on the medical school by two different ministries, i.e. health and education

- Special needs in gaining momentum at the level of biomedical research, which is important to avoid that the medical education be reduced to a teaching entity deprived of research, which is the single most important factor for innovation
- Successful installation of the NEW programs (see below), which seems to be essential for a prosperous development of medical education and research in Kosovo

As discussed with the administration of the Medical Faculty, the leading team envisions the creation of a Medical, Dental and Pharmaceutical pathway under the common roof of a Medical University harboring (i) patient care, (ii) education and (iii) research, according to leading European or US institutions.

The ET fully supports such a vision!

At the time of the site visit, the leading team of the Medical Faculty was in power only for a few months, however, the ET could already feel the enthusiasm spread throughout the academic staff, which was substantiated by well-thought programs that should be activated in the near future. These initiatives include:

- Empowering the position of a “Clinical Facilitator” in order to reduce friction between the clinical and the preclinical environment
- Increased recruitment of alumni that experienced an in-depth education abroad

- Internationalization of the Medical School by activating exchange programs (students and teaching staff) with leading institutions abroad (US and EU)
- Structural help for the University staff for applying for EU-funds
- Activating a network of friends and ex-patriots of Kosovo that might be willing to donate money for the development of the Medical education in Kosovo
- Creation of an E-LAB (Blackboard, Moodle etc.) in order to better structure teaching plans and offer students a transparent time-table of lecture and exam dates, as well as other pertinent information
- Establishment of a Clinical Skills laboratory
- Streamline administrative workflows
- Creation of a reward system for highly motivated students

It is important to mention that the successful implementation of the above mentioned initiatives will most likely only succeed if the structural autonomy of a future Medical University (as is that throughout Europe) is established in Kosovo.

As mentioned above, the ET STRONGLY supports the creation of a MEDICAL UNIVERSITY in Kosovo, which is in accordance with EUROPEAN patterns.

General Medicine:

(1) Academic Program and Student Management

As in the past, substantially more students were admitted than the Faculty and the ET previously proposed. 415 (!!!) students were admitted in the academic year 2012/13.

After carefully examining the infrastructure, staff personnel and financial recourses, the ET suggests the admittance of NO MORE than 150 students per year. (In a subsequent statement, University administration 'strongly supports' this advice.)

The adjustment of the ECTS points for Anatomy and Embryology suggested earlier (2013) are still **NOT** in effect. In Anatomy, the reduction should be from 8+7+2 (2nd Semester and 3rd Semester) to a maximum of 10, and in Histology/Embryology from 5+6 (3rd semester and 4th semester) to a total of 6, respectively.

(In a subsequent statement, University administration 'strongly supports' this advice.)

The diploma thesis workload should be increased from 10

(present) ECTS to a minimum of 20 ECTS!

It is absolute paramount to keep track of the drop out students!

The management team was unable to tell how many students dropped out each year.

(In a subsequent statement, University administration replies: 'The new Management of the Faculty of Medicine will address these recommendations and initiate all procedures to make these changes in the curricula. These procedures will get approval from the Faculty's Council at the next meeting. The current management has undertaken steps to establish a system to monitor students that drop out from various study programs. In this regard, the coordinator for academic development has been introducing an electronic system of monitoring various administrative components within the faculty. This will initiate and

greatly facilitate the monitoring of student drop out figures.)

A strategy should be developed to constantly improve the teaching. The curriculum and the respective syllabi should be regularly (yearly) visited and the management should keep track of the implemented changes. This would also allow the ET to better track development of the curriculum.

A shared concern is the development of the research laboratories after the TEMPUS period. The University is advised to constantly improve the laboratory facilities in terms of infrastructure, equipment as well as the access to consumables. In agreement with the general management, the ET strongly recommends that a laboratory for molecular biology/genetics be established. It is also appreciated that the management informed the ET that the following facilities will be established: 'an e-LAB, a clinical skills center, a drug information center (DIC) and the creation of the Clinical Facilitator role within our Faculty. In this regard, the e-LAB will provide the means for ongoing training of our academic staff in relation to best teaching and assessment practices through use of technology and distant learning. The DIC, in addition to better integrating our Faculty with major stakeholders such as the University Clinical Center, The Ministry of Health and Kosovo's Agency for Medicinal Products, will also provide support for our academic staff and students in relation to various drug related issues. The Clinical Skills Centre and the Clinical Facilitator role is expected to significantly improve our student's clinical experience prior to starting their real clinical practice. The new Management has also appointed a Committee for Donations and Projects. The aim of this Committee is to seek alternative funding bodies (besides the budget) in order to increase the research laboratory capacity of our Institution. All the members of this Committee will participate in the seminar "Writing Competitive Research Grant Proposals", due on 13-14 of June, 2016 and organized by Arizona State University within ASU-UP Partnership.'

(2) Personnel

The ET appreciates the effort undertaken in the last years to improve HR necessities. Improving the teaching workflow (pre-clinics and clinics, teaching, medical service and research) would certainly improve the teaching quality. This, however, is a problem that the presidency of the University was unable to solve. The aforementioned autonomy of a future

Medical University would certainly lead to a dramatic improvement of this unsatisfactory situation.

(3) International Cooperations

The Faculty of Medicine should seek institutionalized collaborations at the level of staff and student education. This would increase the sustainability of building a competitive Medical education at the local University.

However, the Dean and associated management team articulated clear and convincing ideas as to how to achieve this.

(4) Finances and Infrastructure

It was a general complaint (by both students and staff) that INSUFFICIENT funds are available for laboratory and clinical-based 'research' work. This fact seriously hampers the quality of the Medical education, as well as the continuous education of the medical staff! In addition, there is also a shortage of space and equipment for research laboratories. The ET appreciates the existence of the two laboratories financed by the TEMPUS-project, however these alone are insufficient for the laboratory-based education of the students, as well as the continuous research by the staff as required for a competitive Medical School at the current European level.

Pharmacy:

(1) Academic Program and Student Management

As in the past, substantially more students were admitted than the Faculty and the ET proposed.

After carefully examining the infrastructure, staff personnel and financial recourses, the ET suggests the admittance of NO MORE than 50 students per year.

If the respective budget is NOT substantially increased, the ET is convinced that the admission of more than 50 students will DECREASE the quality of the respective course!

Administration strongly supports this view.

The leading team of the Pharmacy track informed the ET that a “Center for Drug Information” is envisioned in the future. The ET highly appreciates this initiative, which would not only increase the quality of the school, but also have a significant, positive impact on Kosovo’s healthcare system!

(2) Personnel

The ET appreciates the effort undertaken in the last years to improve past HR issues.

It would be advisable to also establish a career model for the teaching staff in Pharmacy.

(3) International Cooperations

The Faculty of Medicine should seek institutionalized collaborations at the level of staff and student education. This would increase the sustainability of building a competitive medical education at the local University.

In a subsequent statement administration stated: 'The new management is seeking to establish collaborations with international universities in the field of Pharmacy. In this regard, the Dean is due to visit MSPHS University in Boston, USA. Furthermore, the management is also initiating pharmacy specific research and teaching collaborations with Curtin University in Australia. Other international collaborations are being intensified in lieu of the overall vision of the new Management to internationalize the Faculty of Medicine (Linkoping University, Sweden; Vienna Medical University, Austria; Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth, USA; University of Derby, UK; University of Zagreb, Croatia; Gent University, Belgium and Medical Universities in Turkey). '

(4) Finances and Infrastructure

It was a general complaint (by both students and staff) that INSUFFICIENT funds are available for laboratory based 'research' work. This fact seriously hampers the quality of the education as well as the continuous education of the staff! In addition, there is also a shortage of space and equipment for the research laboratories. Additional space and equipment is necessary for the laboratory-based education of the students, as well as the continuous research by the staff.

Dentistry Program:

(1) Academic Program and Student Management

The Dental Curriculum is still suffering from the excess (triple!!) number of students admitted in the past. The existing infrastructure, staff

personnel and financial resources only allow for the admittance of maximum 70 students per year!

Table 1 gives an overview of the number of students enrolled in the Study Year 2015/16

	Number of Students
1st year	56
2nd year	70
3rd year	120
4th year	86
5th year	100
6th year	76
Total	508

Table 1: Number of students in the Dentistry program in study year 2015/2016

During discussions with the teachers, it was mentioned that with so many students the workload is too high and translates to a loss in the quality of teaching.

The obligatory scientific work thesis was added and mentioned in the syllabus of the SER (page 136) in the 12th semester with 10 ECTS. During discussions with the person responsible for the study program, it was mentioned that the summer of 2016 will be the first semester in which this program is implemented. Students should have the possibility to start this work at an earlier timepoint, and the ECTS should be raised to a minimum of 20 ECTS to fulfill international standards.

(2) Personnel

At the moment, not every dental discipline is covered by a full professor. Only the department of Cariology and Endodontology has a full professor (Prof. Dr. Veton Hoxha, Mr. Sc., PhD).

During the discussions, a new academic staff list from May 2016 and a career development plan were presented (Table 2 and Figure 1). Table 2 demonstrates the academic staff of the Dental department:

	Number of academic staff
Full Professor	1
Assoc. Professor	8
Ass. Professor	4
Assistants	30
Total	43

Table 2: Number of academic staff May 2016

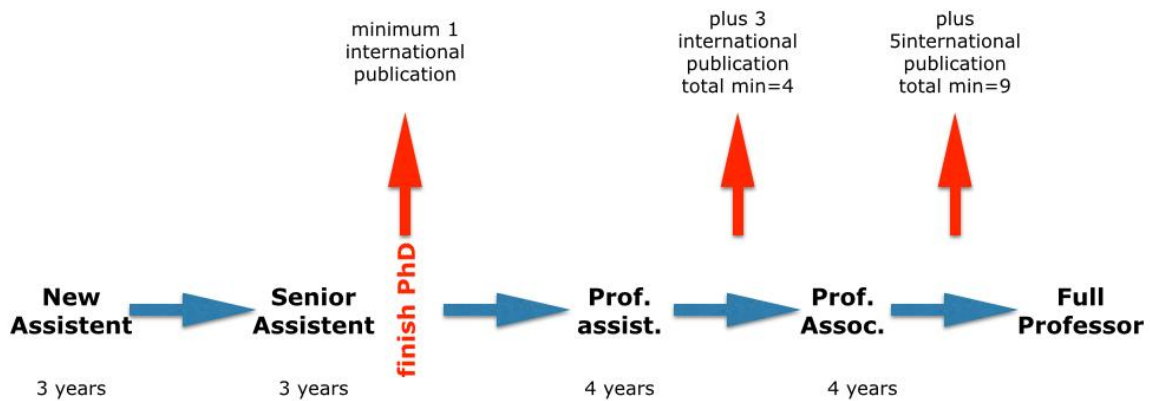


Figure 1: Dental career model

The number of academic staff compared to 2013 is constant (N=42). After explanation of the career development plan, the mentioned 8 Assoc. Professors should become full Professors next year. After a 4-year period of being Assoc. Professor and fulfilling the requirement of a minimum of 9 international publications, this seems to be reachable the next year. Additionally, 7 Assistants already earned an international PhD in Dentistry. The current number of dentistry staff is sufficient for a maximum of 60-80 students per year. As the Doctor of Dental Sciences program (PhD-program) was established in 2014 and 25 students were admitted in 2015, the number of students in the dental department increased to a total student number of 533.

After carefully examining the infrastructure, staff personnel and financial recourses, the ET suggests the admittance of NO MORE than 80 (70 dental and 10 PhD) students per year. This should allow the assistants to have sufficient time to specialize in their subject, treat patients and do research.

(3) International Cooperations and Research

International collaborations still exist and were intensified in the last years. Some staff members have already went abroad to participate in some research projects and 7 dental Assistants have already earned an international PhD.

A detailed list of regional and international publications (peer reviewed journals, textbooks, conference proceedings, abstracts) of the teaching staff were provided during the meeting (2013 through May 2016, N= 85).

(4) Finances and Infrastructure

Since the last accreditation, the Dental Clinic received substantial interior construction. For example, all stairs and floors were renewed, the x-ray system was converted to a digital one, and 25 new chairs were purchased, more than half of which are already in use.

Every student now has their own private locker in the basement. It was a general complaint of the teachers that the phantom heads (originally established in 1974) should be renewed, and more materials (artificial

teeth, burs, and novel filling materials (especially new composite materials), etc.) (years 1-3) should be provided for the preclinical courses. A granted fund should be established to finance the preclinical courses. From the teachers point of view, the clinical courses are well staffed for patient treatment due to additional assets provided by the Ministry of Health.

During the meeting, the faculty envisioned that if the pharmacology department (now located on top of the dental clinic) could get other research facilities on the campus the dentistry department could establish new research facilities for dental microbiology and pathology research projects in Periodontology, as well as a bigger lecture hall on top of the clinic.

Doctor of Dental Sciences Program:

(1) Academic Program and Student Management

In 2013, the Doctor of Dental Sciences program (PhD-program) was accredited by the Ministry even though the ET mentioned recommended that the study program should not be accredited (due to the disproportion between capacity and number of students).

By 2015, 25 students were admitted to the program (please see table 3).

The three students in the second year of study already own a Masters degree, and for this reason they have fulfilled the study goals of the first year and were allowed to start their second year of study.

	Number of Students
1st year	22
2nd year	3
3rd year	0
total	25

Table 3: Number of students in the Doctor of Dental Sciences program in study year 2015/2016

The structure of the program is full-time. During the discussion, it was mentioned that 8 students are employed at the dental clinic to get their dental specialty and the remaining students seem to work in private dental practices.

As mentioned before, the SER was incorrectly prepared because the faculty wanted to re-accredit a 6-year program for 10 PhD students.

The obligatory doctoral work thesis (PhD thesis) is installed and mentioned in the syllabus of the SER (page 526 ff.). During discussions with the teachers, it was mentioned that to pass with a PhD thesis, at least one international publication should be acquired.

(2) Personnel

As mentioned before, the current number of dentistry staff is sufficient for a maximum of 60-80 students per year. As the Doctor of Dental Sciences program (PhD-program) was established in 2014 and 25 students were

admitted in 2015, the number of students in the dental department increased to a total student number of 533. The management considers a train-the teacher program by providing the PhD mentors the opportunity to strengthen their supervisory skills through mentor-specific workshops and seminars.

(3) International Cooperations and Research

International collaborations exist and were intensified, but more visiting international staff could be invited.

(4) Finances and Infrastructure

A research and travel budget for each PhD student should be installed to guarantee enough research experience and regular participation in scientific conferences. Since last accreditation the Dental Clinic received a lot of interior construction. For example, all stairs and floors were renewed. The x-ray system was converted to a digital one and 25 new chairs were bought-more than half of them already in use in the different dental ambulances.

During the meeting, the faculty envisioned that if the pharmacology department could get other research facilities on the campus (now located on top of the dental clinic) the dentistry department could establish new research facilities for dental microbiology and pathology research projects in Periodontology and a bigger lecture hall on top of the clinic. This would allow enough space for sufficient PhD research projects in the future.

The planned relocation of the Pharmacy department will provide approximately 25% more space for the Dentistry department. This is expected to improve the quality of teaching and research in terms of space needed.

Doctor of Preclinical Medicine:

(1) Academic Program and Student Management

At the moment, 8 students are enrolled into the program.

It is advised, however, that the maximum number of enrolled students each year is no more than 5!

The academic program corresponds to the institution's mission statement and principles of operation. The teaching methods and content of teaching units are sufficient for the successful achievement of the program's goals and outcomes.

There is a huge discrepancy between the laboratory work hours (Exercise, total of 330) and the self-learning (Self-learning, total of 3795!!). At the moment, the laboratory capacities are limited (see above), however, the laboratory hours need to be substantially increased.

Administration will make the following changes in the curriculum:

Semester	L	S	E	LP	SL	Total hours	ECTS
I	65	90	130	300	165	750	30 ECTS
II	-	100	80	300	270	750	30 ECTS
III	-	30	30	360	330	750	30 ECTS
IV	-	30	30	360	330	750	30 ECTS
V	-	30	30	360	330	750	30 ECTS
VI	-	30	30	360	330	750	30 ECTS
Total	65	310	330	2040	1775	4500	180 ECTS

L = Lecture; S = Seminar; E = Exercise; SL= Self-learning; LP=Laboratory Practice;
ECTS = European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System.

This should be checked at the next accreditation audit.

(2) Personnel

Research staff needs to be hired in order to allow for the necessary in-house research experience of the enrolled students. At the moment, in order to cope with the lack of respective staff and infrastructure, every student is required to have an external mentor, which is the next best option to an in-house education.

(3) International Cooperations

The University is advised to activate international exchange programs.

(4) Finances and Infrastructure

A basic budget is in place. However, the faculty should be able to allocate a fixed and reasonable budget per student, sufficient to cover all laboratory work.

Doctor of Clinical Medicine:

(5) Academic Program and Student Management

At the moment, 47 students are enrolled into the program.

It is advised, however, that the maximum number of enrolled students each year is no more than 10, as also requested by the faculty!

The academic program corresponds to the institution's mission statement and principles of operation. The teaching methods and content of teaching

units are sufficient for the successful achievement of the program's goals and outcomes.

There is a huge discrepancy between the lab-work hours (Exercise, total of 650) and the self-learning (Self-learning, total of 3450!!). At the moment the laboratory capacities are limited (see above), however, the laboratory hours need to be substantially increased.

Administration will make the following changes in the curriculum:

Semester	L	S	E	LP	SL	Total hours	ECTS
I	65	90	130	300	165	750	30 ECTS
II	-	100	80	300	270	750	30 ECTS
III	-	30	30	360	330	750	30 ECTS
IV	-	30	30	360	330	750	30 ECTS
V	-	30	30	360	330	750	30 ECTS
VI	-	30	30	360	330	750	30 ECTS
Total	65	310	330	2040	1775	4500	180 ECTS

L = Lecture; S = Seminar; E = Exercise; SL= Self-learning; LP=Laboratory Practice;
ECTS = European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System.

This should be checked at the next accreditation.

(6) Personnel

Research staff needs to be hired in order to allow for the necessary in-house research experience of the enrolled students. At the moment, in order to cope with the lack of respective staff and infrastructure, every

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student needs to have an outside mentor, which is the next best thing of an in-house education.

(7) International Cooperation's

The University is advised to activate international exchange programs.

(8) Finances and Infrastructure

A basic budget is in place. However, the faculty should be able to allocate a fixed and reasonable high budget per student, sufficient to cover the laboratory work.

The faculty of Medicine applied for re-accreditation of the following programs:

- (1) General Medicine
- (2) Pharmacy
- (3) Dentistry
- (4) Doctor of Pre-Clinical Medicine
- (5) Doctor of Clinical Medicine
- (6) Doctor of Dentistry

After a thorough review of the documentation and analysis of all the other necessary conditions, the ET notes that the Faculty of Medicine has met all the conditions for the successful re-accreditation of all 6 programs.

Conclusion:

Recommendation by the Expert Panel:

The aforementioned 6 (six) programs should be accredited. The ET is aware that the accreditation period would be 5 years, however, it is advisable that the implementation of important new additions to the curriculum, and for the medical school in general, should be monitored throughout these years.