UNIVERSITY OF PRIZREN "UKSHIN HOTI"

BSc in SOFTWARE DESIGN

REACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

May 2019, Prishtina

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: 15.05.2019
Expert Team (ET) members:

- Prof. Stephen Adam
- Prof. Dr. Magdalena Platis
- Prof. Dr. Kristiina Tõnnison
- Prof. Dr. Johannes Falterbaum
- Prof. Dr. Peeter Normak
- Mihai Adrian Vilcea

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:

- Self Evaluation Report (SER)
- Statute of the University "Ukshin Hoti" Prizren
- Syllabi of the courses
- CVs of the academic staff
- Code of Ethics
- Other documents of the University of Prizren (UPZ) submitted upon request
- KAA Accreditation Manual
- Administrative Instruction for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Kosova
- Official website of UPZ

Criteria used for program evaluation:

- Standards and performance indicators for external quality assurance (Re/accreditation of bachelor and masters study programs) set in the Accreditation Manual
- National Qualifications Framework

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1.2. Site visit schedule

<u>14th May</u>

19.45	Meeting at the Reception of the Hotel
20.00	Working dinner

<u>15th May</u>

07.30	Meeting at the reception of the hotel
09.00 – 10.30	Meeting with the management of the institution
10.40 – 11.50	Meeting with the 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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1.3. A brief overview of the institution and program under evaluation

The University of Prizren (UPZ) was established in 2009 as a public university through reorganization of the Faculty of Education of the University of Prishtina. UPZ started officially in 2010 and has currently five faculties: 1) Faculty of Education, 2) Faculty of Economics, 3) Faculty of Law, 4) Faculty of Computer Science, 5) Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences. With about 17 000 students is UPZ the second biggest public university in Kosovo.

The Mission Statement of UPZ: To provide quality education, research and innovation in order to produce leaders in the field of Technology, Economics, Law, Education and Philology etc, this will suit the needs of a dynamic world.

The Mission Statement of the Faculty of Computer Science (FCS): Conduct scientific research of the highest international level with the purpose of social and industrial development, as well as educate distinguished students who are going to be the leaders of future generations.

The Vision of UPZ: The University of Prizren will be the University of Choice for the majority of students of the Republic of Kosovo, and a University of choice for all students seeking educational opportunities tremendously. University of Prizren will be a university that offers research chances to increase the quality of life, not only for all Kosovars, but also to contribute intellectual and around the world.

The Vision of FCS: The Computer Science Study is recognized as one of the leading fields in Europe in Computer Science.

The BSc program in Software Design is offered at the Faculty of Computer Science.

Remark 1. The Self-Assessment Report was extremely declarative and almost did not contain substantive information. The formulations of standards were in many cases just rewritten into the SER, without any evidence that would allow the ET decide whether the standard is satisfied or not. Therefore, the SER was almost useless in the preparation of the initial version of the current Assessment Report. For example, the text devoted to research occupied only about 1/3 of a page in the SER.

Remark 2. The session *Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders* was skipped as no employer appeared. Only one graduate attended on the session *Meeting with graduates*.

2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

2.1. Mission, objectives and administration

1.1. As software design belongs to the scope of technology, the study program is in compliance with the mission statement of the university.

1.2. The list of learning outcomes (p 242 of SER) is adequate. On the other hand, comparing these with the study program and with the learning outcomes of the courses, the following questions came up: 1) Why the competences in an object-oriented programming (OOP) is singled out while there is only one course (out of 38) devoted to OOP?; 2) What the learning outcome "Apply operating system and computer architecture concepts and principles to problem solving in the context of computer systems" means, taking into account the fact that there is no course devoted to computer architecture in the study program?

1.3. The SER does not describe any overarching didactic concept. The teaching and learning methods are described in syllabi in the most formal way, using almost an identical formulation (for example, "This module is taught through a series of weekly lectures and laboratory sessions. The learning outcomes are achieved through a combination of lectures, supervised practical work and independent study/practice."). However, the interviewed students valued very much interactive and attractive mode of teaching.

1.4. The main document stating the structure and administration is a thorough (74 pages, 239 articles) Statute of the Unversity "Ukshin Hoti" Prizren which is publicly available. However, this document is not machine readable and therefore its content is not searchable. Moreover, it seems that some important documents are missing in the web (for example, General development strategy, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Strategy, Work Regulation of Committee's quality assurance, Quality Assurance Guidelines).

1.5. The principles of ethical conduct are presented in the "Code of Ethic" (https://uni-prizren.com/repository/docs/Code_of_Ethics_160744.pdf). The Statute states that the students have the obligation "to respect the regulations of the ethic code (Article 144) and that the academic staff are obliged to respect "the ethic codex" (Article 181). Most probably the "Code of Ethics" was kept in mind in both cases.

1.6. The SER did not provide any information about reviewing the policies, regulations, terms of reference and statements of responsibility relating to the management and delivery of the study program. The study program remained in fact practically unchanged if compared with the study program that was presented to the accreditation in 2015; only some few recommendations of the ET from 2015 were implemented.

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Compliance level: Substantially compliant.

ET recommendations:

1. Specify the mission of the Faculty. Currently the mission statement of the Faculty is more general than this of the university.

2. Update the official websites of the university, especially English websites.

2.2. Quality management

2.1. The SER was extremely formal (especially the section devoted to the quality management). This indicates that the staff was not enough involved in the composition of SER.

2.2. The main quality processes take place on the university level. However, the main document (Quality Assurance and Enhancement Strategy of the University of Prizren "Ukshin Hoti") does not regulate the evaluation processes. It only states that "UPz values student participation at all levels of the institution and actively seeks to involve students in its quality." It is claimed in the SER that "Quality assurance functions throughout the institution are fully integrated into normal planning and development strategies in a defined cycle of planning, implementation, assessment and review." However, no evidences were provided that the evaluation processes and planning for improvement are integrated into normal planning processes.

2.3. The quality issues belong to the scope of the Vice-Rector for Quality Assurance and International Relations. Practical activities in quality assurance are coordinated by the Quality Assurance Office. The processes are unified on the university level.

2.4. Regular evaluations are carried out at the end of each semester. It is claimed in the SER that "Evaluations take into account inputs, processes and outputs, but give particular attention to the quality of outcomes".

2.5. There is a quality assurance coordinator in the faculty. However, the extremely low quality of the SER is an indication that the quality assurance processes do not ensure that required standards are met in the university.

2.6. Again, the SER claims that "Survey data is collected from students, staff, graduates and employers; the results of these surveys are made publicly available" (nearly exact copy of the wording of Standard 2.6) and that "it is foreseen to use quantitative and qualitative instruments for quality assurance, such as: Questionnaires, interviews,

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monitoring, evaluation scheme, self-evaluation reports, but also double assessment, and external consultancy …". However, no evidences were presented that the staff has been evaluated by others than the students. Moreover, the big majority of documents that the ET additionally requested were in Albanian language and therefore could not be analyzed by the ET.

2.7. As mentioned above, the only – minor – changes in the study program that have been implemented since the last accreditation were those proposed by the ET of 2015. The students came up during the discussion with several ideas how the study programs could be redesigned. This indicates that there is in fact no effective quality assurance system in the Faculty.

2.8. The main relevant documents (*Quality Assurance and Enhancement Strategy of the University of Prizren "Ukshin Hoti"* and "Strategic Plan of the Faculty of Computer Science 2018-2021) do not contain any statements about preparing reports on the quality of the study programs.

2.9. According to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Strategy, "The University Management will review and evaluate the principles and implementation of the strategy on regular basis and it will take corrective actions if necessary".

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. Set up a study program committee where representatives of the graduates and employers are represented.
2. Develop a holistic quality assurance process where all main stakeholders (teachers, students, graduates, employers) are involved.

2.2. Academic staff

3.1. UPZ as a public university follows strictly all regulations concerning employment.

3.2. UPZ as a public university follows strictly all regulations concerning the occupation of teaching positions.

3.3. Academic staff do not cover, within an academic year, more than two teaching positions (one full-time, one part-time). The university has fixed even stronger requirement: Article 166 of the Statute states that "Staff members with full-time contracts shall not hold any part-time or full-time employment contracts inside or

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outside the University". There was certain confusion with the academic staff. According to the CV-s, out of 12 teachers teaching on the study program, only 7 CV-s were submitted, all having full-time employment in UPZ. Additional 2 CV-s were submitted from persons (Selman Jaxghiu and Xhevahir Bajrami) who have not been listed among the teachers in the SER. Ilir Murturi is listed as a teacher in SER but with no course assigned to. All teachers (except Nazli Tyfekxhi) are visible in Google Scholar.

3.4. In fact about 58% of the academic staff are FT, and they cover about 70% of the classes.

3.5. There are 7 full-time and 5 part-time teachers (altogether 9,5 full-time equivalent) on the study program, six full time teachers have a PhD (Samedin Krrabaj, Naim Baftiu, Ercan Canhasi, Arsim Susuri, Malush Mjaku, Dhurate Hyseni). As there are 250-300 active students on the study program, the student/teacher ratio is acceptable. On the other hand, as the majority of teachers are teaching also on other study programs, the student/teacher ratio is less favorable. Current student/teacher ratio does not allow the teachers devote enough time to research.

3.6. Although the SER claims that "The institution has clear plan for all staff professional development, a structured approach in identifying such needs, and allocates appropriate resources for its implementation. All staff are given appropriate and fair opportunities for personal and career development, with special assistance given to any who are facing difficulties" the staff were not satisfied with the level on opportunities. Moreover, the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Strategy, adopted already in 2013, states "Promotion of academic and student mobility" to be as one of the guiding principles of the university. To the request of the ET to bring an example how professional development was supported, an example was given of a teacher who faced difficulties in the delivering of his course being consulted by the Dean. The teaching staff expressed the wish to have more opportunities for internship/sabbaticals outside Kosovo.

3.7. For serving the community, the teachers have offered the students practical projects (projects on QR codes and card recognition were mentioned as examples).

3.8. The assessment of academic staff is conducted at the end of each semester.

3.9. The ET was not provided convincing evidences or explanations that *s*trategies for quality enhancement include improving the teaching strategies and quality of learning materials.

3.10. The age of teachers according to submitted CV-s is up to 50 years, and therefore no teacher has reached the retirement age.

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Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Develop and implement a system of yearly development discussions for the staff with their superiors, accompanied with prior self-assessment of teachers.

2. For lowering the student/teacher ratio, employ more – preferably full-time – academic staff.

3. Assign resources for professional development of academic staff.

3.11. Educational process content

4.1. The scope of the study program is relatively broad covering several topics of software design. The study program is unique in Kosova and the graduates are widely needed. The general conception of the study program remains unclear. The most reputable institution (ACM) that has issued curricula recommendations for undergraduate and graduate programs (https://www.acm.org/education/curricula-recommendations) are not mentioned in the SER. There is a number of aspects that were not explicitly discussed in SER or that came up during the interviews:

    4.1.1. Although the students conduct several small projects during the studies, there is no course where the students could experience a full life-cycle of software development.

    4.1.2. There is no company placement (professional practice) foreseen in the study program.

    4.1.3. Every course has 6 credits, and 2 hours lectures and 2 hours exercises each week, not depending on the type of the course (theoretical or practical). Students explained that some practical exercises are also made during the lectures.

    4.1.4. It is also widely accepted that there should be an emphasis on the ethical conduct and professional responsibilities in IT study programs. However, problems related to ethics are not mentioned in the content descriptions of the courses.

    4.1.5. The study program has relatively big common part (50%) with another study program – Information Technologies and Telecommunications. Some students

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said that in fact they would better study on the other study program, but were not competent enough to choose after graduating the high-school.

4.2. The SER considers "Expected results tailored to the appropriate level (level VII) in the National Qualifications Framework" as one of the strength of study program. This is probably a mistake as BA programs are in fact level VI programs.

4.3. There are listed 8 learning outcomes. This does not completely harmonize with the explanatory text that follows on page 242 of the SER. For example, according to the learning outcome "Work effectively as an individual under guidance and as a member of a team", the graduates are not expected to have managerial positions. On the other hand, it is claimed in the text that the graduates can work as project managers and have other managerial positions.

4.4. The syllabi contain all the necessary components and were submitted in electronic form. They could have more details. For example, "Project 40%, Final exam 60%" does not say much about the actual evaluation methods and passing criteria.

4.5. The language in which the study program will be offered is Albanian, separate groups are formed also for Bosnian and Turkish languages.

4.6. The students were very positive about the teaching staff and the teaching methodology. This allows to conclude that the student-teacher relationship is a partnership.

4.7. Each syllabus contains separate sections Teaching and learning methods, and Evaluation methods and passing criteria.

4.8. The students did not complain about the assessment mechanisms.

4.9. The students seem to be very motivated, the majority spends in average 20-30 hours in a week for independent studies.

4.10. No case of inadequate or inconsistent assessment was reported.

4.11. There is no industrial practice course in the study program. Instead, the students will conduct several case studies on the real-life issues.

4.12. The University of Prizren "Ukshin Hoti" has signed an agreement with the Kosovo Business Alliance for professional practice placement in public companies, private companies, financial institutions, banks and other companies. There is also an agreement signed with the Edirne-Turkey Chamber of Commerce and Industry for students to pursue their professional practice.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

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ET recommendations:

1. Consider the possibility to merge the two study programs (*Software Design* and *Information Technologies and Telecommunication*) into one, with two specializations. This would offer the students after some period of study (for example, after 1,5 years) the opportunity to select a specialization which better matches their interests.

2. Harmonize the learning outcomes as well as the list and content of syllabi.

3.12. Students

5.1. The criteria for admission of new students are conducted according to the clauses set in *Provisional Statute of the University* and in accordance to the legal regulations established by MEST and KAA.

5.2. To enroll in this program, the applicants must have finished secondary education and have successfully passed the admission exam.

5.3. One group of students consists of maximum 90 students per lecture while for laboratory work and exercises up to 30 students.

5.4. The communication of the student evaluation results is made not later than 7 days from the date of the exam, according to the official schedule.

5.5. The final results achieved during the entire process of studies for each subject are certified in the transcript of records.

5.6. The exam from the same subject can be repeated up to 4 times (the 4th to a commission).

5.7. At the end of each semester, the Faculty prepares a semester report in which, among others, the percentage of student success rate is reported.

5.8. Procedures related to academic misconduct, including plagiarism and other forms of copying are defined by the *Code of Ethics*. In this thorough document (16 pages), separate sections are devoted to the duties of the personnel, confidentiality issues, conflict of interest, students' behavior, plagiarism and other aspects. The document describes also relevant disciplinary measures.

5.9. All rights and obligations of students in terms of teaching, attendance of lectures, evaluation, etc. are determined in the Statute of the University. The Statute is freely available in the Internet.

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5.10. Students' transfer is not regulated by the *Statute of the University* or any other document submitted. Nevertheless, taking courses from other institutions is possible and some students have used this opportunity.

5.11. The academic staff is obliged to be available to the students for a few hours on a regular schedule for both academic and advisory councils. Additional hours of consultations with academic staff may be organized. Consultations can be organized in individual or group form.

Compliance level: Fully compliant/Substantially compliant (the ET has not provided enough information for forming a clear decision).

ET recommendations:

1. Elaborate and formalize clear procedures for students' transfer between higher education institutions, faculties and other study programs of UPZ.

2. Update information materials for helping high school graduates to make informed decisions in selecting a study program.

5.12. Research

6.1. The university does not have a separate research development program or strategy. However, although FCS also does not have a separate document for a research strategy, aspects of the research strategy are in fact included into the *Strategic Plan of the Faculty of Computer Science 2018-2021* (*Strategic Plan*).

6.2. Expectations for teaching staff involvement in research and scholarly activities are specified in the work contract and in the *Statute of the University*. The performance in relation to these expectations is considered in the self-assessment report.

6.3. According to the Strategic Plan, "Big Data and Data Analysis" and "Cyber Security" are identified as the main areas of research. Additionally, 9 targeted research topics and application areas are identified. However, there have not been formed research groups.

6.4. The research of the academic staff is in general conducted on the topics of the study program, with some minor deviations.

6.5. The research of a big majority of academic staff is internationally visible (for example, in Google Scholar). Only one part-time teacher (Nazli Tyfekxhi) does not have any publication, and therefore does not comply with the competence criteria.

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6.6. Research is basically validated by scientific publications.

6.7. As already mentioned in 3.3, there was certain confusion with the CV-s. According to Google Scholar, the big majority of teaching staff has produced in average at least one scientific publication per year.

6.8. The regular academic staff within the Faculty publishes papers on behalf of the UPZ.

6.9. The experts were explained that as the teachers will offer the courses in their areas of competence, the specific questions that belong to the scope of the teachers' research issues will also be discussed.

6.10. Aspects of Intellectual property form a paragraph in the Code of Ethics.

6.11. It is planned that students will be involved in cooperation projects with the local industry.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Decide on the research priorities inside the two main areas of research ("Big Data and Data Analysis" and "Cyber Security") and form the research groups accordingly. Doing this, agree the work division with other institutions in Kosovo (for example, with AAB College in cyber security) and take into account the recommendations of international professional organizations (for example, ACM in teaching cyber security: https://www.acm.org/binaries/content/assets/education/curricula-recommendations/csec2017.pdf).

2. Make extra efforts for involvement in international research and development projects and for acquiring additional resources.

6.12. Infrastructure and resources

7.1. The university runs the study program already several years and certain stability has been achieved.

7.2. The financial plans are not composed by the study programs. In case of a need for additional resources, an application to the rectorate should be submitted. The budget for coming three years does not foresee any increase.

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7.3. As a public institution of higher education, University's financial sustainability is guaranteed by the Mid-Term Expenditure Framework for the next three years. The University is the owner of the space it uses, has recently obtained a new building and is currently renovating another one. According to the SAR, "Faculty of CS has 7 halls including the Amphitheatre, divided into 2 floors with an area of about 1762 m^2." The amphitheatre has 280 seats, the other six classrooms 50 or 80 seats. There were no smaller rooms (for 20-30 students) for group work presented. The students expressed the wish to have better equipped specialty labs and lockers for their personal laptops and other belongings. Remark that the recommendation to set up specialized technology labs was made already by the ET of the previous assessment in 2015.

7.4. Considering the number of students (about 300 active students on the study program), the number and size of the lecture halls, classrooms and laboratories is adequate.

7.5. The big majority of books is published within last 10 years.

7.6. The facility possesses electrical stairs, elevators, emergency exits as well as the entire infrastructure which is needed for students with special needs.

ET recommendations:

1. In upgrading the facilities foresee more smaller rooms for group work.

2. Furnish more space for students' learning and socializing outside the classrooms.

3. Strengthen the efforts for setting up specialized labs for conducting exercises on hardware-intensive courses.

8. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

The study program has reached stability on an acceptable quality level. However, the ET was not able to identify significant improvement compared to the 2015 assessment. For reaching the next quality level, additional resources are needed – for increasing the number of academic staff, for supporting scientific research and for upgrading existing and setting up new laboratories.

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the study program Software Design offered by *University of Prizren* 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 years* with a number of *180* students to be enrolled in the program.

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Expert Team

Chair

	Peeter Normak	**22.05.2019**
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)