

Report to the Kosovo Accreditation Agency
on a site visit to undertake an evaluation of three new programmes at the

UNIVERSUM COLLEGE

on Monday 22 May 2017

Programmes:

Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in Integrated Design
Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Nursing
Master of Science (MSc) in Computer Science

International Expert Team:

Professor Alan Brickwood
Professor Peeter Normak
Professor Danica Zeleznik

INTRODUCTION

1. This report is of a site visit that took place to evaluate applications by the Universum College (hereafter referred to as the 'College') for the accreditation of two new bachelor programmes and one new masters programme.

BFA Integrated Design	BSc Nursing	MScComputer Science
180 ECTS, EQF 6	180 ECTS, EQF 6	120 ECTS, EQF 7

The visit took place on Monday 22 May 2017.

2. The Expert Team (ET) comprised:
 - Professor Alan Brickwood, Research and Higher Education Consultant, Alan Brickwood & Associates, UK.
 - Professor Peeter Normak, Director, School of Digital Technologies, Tallinn University, Estonia
 - Professor Danica Železnik, Dean, University College of Health Sciences, Slovenj Gradec, Slovenia.
3. Support was provided by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) and, in particular by Ms Furtuna Mehmeti, Acting Director of KAA and her colleagues, to whom the ET wish to record their gratitude.
4. During the initial meeting the leadership described the College to be highly entrepreneurial and outlined plans for expansion over the next few years. Its priorities were business policy, health sciences and technology and, within the field of computer sciences, artificial intelligence. This was a variation to stated priorities in 2016 which were then science, media and mass communications. The ET were also told that the College had acquired larger premises that will become available from the early part of 2018.
5. The Masters in Computer Science programme would be a natural development of the undergraduate programme in a fast-growing sector. It was also part of an ambition to develop postgraduate provision. Proposals for Bachelor's programmes in Integrated Design and in Nursing represented new directions for the College driven by 'market needs'. The ET were advised of a shortage of qualified nurses nationally and of a big demand for designers in a proportionately large fashion and textiles industry. Last year the College had mounted a three-month training short-course for the fashion industry. This had been fully subscribed with all of the students being offered employment, in the industry, upon completion.

6. References to distance learning developments in the SER are not applicable to the three programmes under review.
7. The ET were shown accommodation that would be used for the programmes but there were no nursing students nor design students and no work to examine. With regard to these subject areas, the ET had therefore to base their evaluation upon a Self-Evaluation Report (SER), other documentation submitted by the College and the outcome of discussions carried out during the visit.
8. The ET were also informed that a new Coordinator for Quality Assurance and additional staff had been appointed to strengthen internal procedures and prevent premature proposals¹ and that the current proposals had benefitted from these new arrangements. This had been a recommendation by KAA following previous visits.

BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS (BFA) IN INTEGRATED DESIGN

ACADEMIC PROGRAMME AND STUDENT MANAGEMENT

9. The BFA programme in Integrated Design was being presented for accreditation for the first time.
10. Discussions were held on a range of issues concerning aims, objectives and learning outcomes; entry requirements; actual content of the curriculum and syllabuses; and assessment. These were with the programme leader and two other members of staff responsible for graphic design and fashion design pathways. The ET was however unable to establish satisfactory connectivity between these essential components.
11. The aims and objectives were thorough, impressive and broadly consistent with the Mission of the College and ranged from critical thinking, problem solving and teamwork skills through to an ability to work independently and collaboratively in a professional and socially responsible manner. It was however unclear from discussions with the teaching team how such a broad and ambitious set of learning outcomes could be achieved from the way the programme had been devised.
12. The overall impression gained by the ET from the SER was of a programme that seemed to be largely theoretical, having been designed for a very large intake of 200 students per year, of diverse entry qualifications, pursuing a broad and inevitably shallow theoretical and largely self-directed programme with little opportunity for any practical 'hands-on' experience. This impression had been formed by statements in the SER on the intended theory/practice ratio of 50/50² and breakdowns listed in the individual syllabuses that pointed

¹ SER 2017 pps. 272-273.

² SER 2017 p 91.

to those being closer to 75/25³, respectively. Certainly, if those higher ratios were correct, it answers queries over the logistics of teaching a broad curriculum to large groups - but was unlikely to deliver practice-based professional outcomes.

13. The programme management team were specifically appraised of these impressions and invited to describe where the 'centre of gravity' for the programme lay. They confirmed the learning outcomes stated in the SER⁴ were correct and cited the inclusion of a culminating 'capstone project' as evidence.
14. Any favourable impression of the kind of broad based programme that might be appropriate, or of the kind of changes the College might need to make to ensure consistency between objectives and programme design, was hampered by highly inconsistent documentation. The ET was bewildered as to why some subjects had been included and others omitted. Similar subjects often had an array of differing titles and it was comprehensively not clear what was being taught to which students, due to major inconsistencies in the way information was presented in the documentation⁵. To name just a few:
- why is *structural engineering design* being taught? This is a subject covering the *'basic methods of structural analysis and the design of simple structures built of reinforced concrete, steel, timber and masonry'*?
 - Similarly, why are the subjects *'Economics and Engineering Management'* and *'Mechanical Engineering'* included?
 - Why is *'shoe design'* being taught to product design but not fashion and textiles students?
 - Presumably *'Computer Aided Design'*⁶ and *'CAD and Computational Structural Analysis'*⁷, both Scheduled for Seminar 3, are the same?
 - Why is *'Project Management'* being taught to Product, Graphics and Interior Design students but only as an elective for Textiles and Fashion students? Surely this should be mandatory for all students if they are to have any awareness of professional practice.
 - *'Professional Communication/Development Seminar'* is included in the detailed syllabuses but not in the Programme Overview?
 - How are students to understand the properties of common materials such as wood, metal, plastic, ceramics, composites and fabrics and yarns? This is not included.
 - Similarly, why not human factors? How are students supposed to understand any man/machine interface, readability of communications

³ Lecture/seminar, tutorial and self-study vs Laboratory/Practical.

⁴ SER pps 89, 90.

⁵ Components not consistently listed in the SER Overview, SER Syllabuses and Additional Syllabuses supplied in the main tranche of documents prior to the visit.

⁶ Overview of the Programme, SER p94.

⁷ Syllabus in SER p105.

and areas such as perception without being taught the essentials of anthropometry, ergonomics and applied psychology?

15. In particular, the ET specifically questioned why subjects such as '*Structural Engineering Design*', '*Economics and Engineering Management*' and '*Mechanical Engineering*' were to be taught to all students and was astonished by the robust defence for their retention in the programme by the Programme Leader. Clearly, their inclusion was not, as the ET suspected, an error that had occurred with the transferal of material from elsewhere. The Programme Leader was adamant that these subjects were properly included in the curriculum along with a number of other similarly incredulous explanations for the design and balance of the curriculum.
16. As a consequence, the ET sought to establish how the programme had been designed. Who, for example, was responsible for the curriculum - content and balance? The answer given offered an explanation for many of the inconsistencies that had emerged from the discussions. It seemed the College had taken no corporate responsibility for the design of the programme and especially which subjects should be included in the curriculum and which should not. The ET questioned how this could have occurred and was told that the curriculum had been devised by a democratic process where a wide range of contributors had a similar influence and, it seemed to the ET, this had been regardless of their knowledge and experience. Justification for the programme content was also said to have been provided by the influence of friendly local small-scale employers – a constituency generally known for its short-term vision and fickleness.
17. The appropriateness of the *Bachelor of Fine Arts* title, and BFA prefix to the degree was questioned and it was suggested this might be misleading to students. *Fine Art* is usually associated with studies in painting, sculpture and printmaking⁸.
18. There was a lack of any clear distinction between assessment for monitoring and feedback to students and staff; for progression; and for award.
19. The shape, content and balance of the programme as defined in the documentation is inconsistent, confusing, frequently inappropriate and, as a consequence, inappropriate to the award of an academic degree.
20. The programme is not sound nor understood properly by the teaching team.
21. The programme is not of international standard.
22. It is unclear whether the structure of the programme would give any opportunity for independent study, reflection and analysis by students.

⁸ 'Fine Art' is included in design courses in the *Beaux Arts* tradition but that is not relevant here.

23. It is difficult to assess whether the workload for students is reasonable and manageable.
24. Teaching methods and delivery intentions are unsuitable for successful achievement of the programme's current aims, objectives and intended outcomes.

STAFF

25. The ET had difficulty engaging with the programme management team. Two of the three members at the meeting with the teaching team (Graphics and Multi Media; Fashion and Textiles) were unable to communicate effectively in English. The lead member for Interior Design was not on the approved KAA list and therefore not present. This left representation of Product Design and much of the input for the teaching team to the Programme Leader who is neither qualified nor experienced in either Design or in the teaching of higher education⁹.

FINANCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE/SPACE AND EQUIPMENT

26. Without fully understanding what the programme comprised it is not possible to reliably assess the appropriateness of resourcing. Certainly, if the intention is for students to engage in projects involving any significant degree of practical engagement then it is highly unlikely that the facilities briefly seen during the visit will be adequate for the exceptionally large numbers of students planned.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

27. The ET is bound to question the effectiveness of the College's recently strengthened internal procedures designed to prevent premature proposals such as this¹⁰.

RECOMMENDATION

28. ***The ET is unable to recommend that the proposed Bachelor of Fine Arts Programme in Integrated Design be Accredited.***

BACHELOR OF ARTS (BA) IN NURSING AND MIDWIFERY / BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (BSc) IN NURSING¹¹

ACADEMIC PROGRAMME AND STUDENT MANAGEMENT

29. The vision and mission statement of the programme do not reflect the philosophy of nursing. It is very medically oriented and should be revised to include philosophies of all areas taught.

⁹ CV.

¹⁰ Paragraph 8, above.

¹¹ Programme title changed after ET comments in draft report.

30. The academic standards are high but do not reflect the EU directive and standards for nurses because this time only the program of nursing is presented.
31. The prospective programme coordinator described clearly why the programme is needed and how it would contribute to higher education in Kosovo.
32. All persons, responsible for the implementation of the programme are medical doctor specialists, with the highest competences and academic qualifications. The EU directives, however, are clear on the fact that the course providers for nursing, as well as the programme manager, can only be academically qualified nurses, which is not the case here. Nursing is an autonomous and independent profession with its own field and competences, consistent with the EU directive.

STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAMME

33. The presented curriculum includes all elements that should be featured in the structure of a curriculum (except for a legend), however the dispersion of hours in some courses is illogical. For example, the elective subjects in the second year (English, German, Human Resource Management, Job Searching Strategies and Health Disparities on Vulnerable Groups in Kosovo) include 30 hours of clinical practice
34. Clinical practice means direct contact with patients in a clinical environment! In addition, laboratory hours are too many and they are included in some subjects that are not entirely suitable for time to be spent in a laboratory – such as Sociology, Psychology.
35. According to EU directives and the Bologna process, a programme must include 10% elective courses, which the presented programme does not have.
36. The course providers, who are esteemed professionals, with high ranking academic titles in the field of medicine, could not explain why the curriculum was structured like it is. The ECTS are not evenly divided. The first semester includes 27 ECTS and the second 33, which means that the students do not receive an even workload in each semester.
37. The program is intended to take place in Ferizaj, which is half an hour away from the College's main campus and where there is enough space to conduct laboratory exercises, lectures and seminars.

38. The laboratories are equipped with beds and dolls. They also have a few other models to teach anatomy, physiology, gynaecology. The College has also acquired an old ambulance and a few vital function monitoring devices. The equipment, however, is old. The eprouvettes are dirty and unsuited for educational purposes.
39. The Management wants to enrol 200 students for the program, which is also completely unacceptable.

STAFF

40. Unfortunately, the Universum College does not have sufficient, competent enough teaching staff to deliver the nursing program. Yes, there are four staff with PhDs but they are qualified in medicine, not nursing. There are also nurses who will be included in the program but they cannot be course leaders (which is demanded by the EU directive). This is because they don't have the adequate academic qualifications.

RECOMMENDATION

41. ***The presented programme is completely unfit for implementation. The ET cannot recommend the proposed Bachelor of Science programme in Nursing be Accredited***

MASTER OF SCIENCE (MSc) IN COMPUTER SCIENCE

ACADEMIC PROGRAMME AND STUDENT MANAGEMENT

42. The MSc programme in Computer Science was being presented for accreditation for the first time.
43. The following findings and evaluation are based upon the documents presented to the ET, on the site visit and on discussions with some staff members to include those that coordinated the preparation of the SER, namely Petrit Nahi, Arbana Kadriu and Agon Memeti and the programme leader, Adelina Basholli.
44. According to its Mission Statement, the College *“is to provide high quality, accessible and affordable educational opportunities and services to a Kosovar and international student body through teaching excellence, lifelong learning, applied research and partnership building thus preparing students to be thoughtful, responsible and successful citizens and support the economic development of Kosovo and the region”*. The Mission Statement does not specify any priority area for the College and, as a consequence, the programme can therefore be considered to correspond to the mission of the

College.

45. The first year of studies consists of eight courses focusing on software engineering which are mandatory for all students. The courses in the third semester are divided into three partially overlapping specialist pathways in *Software Engineering, Mobile Application Development and Artificial Intelligence*. There is one mandatory and between 5 to 8 electives in each of these specialisms. The fourth semester is fully devoted to the thesis.
46. All courses have 7.5 ECTS except the thesis which has 30. There are 15 expected learning outcomes listed from which about half are specific to the three specialisms (*'concentrations'*). The descriptions used to define the *learning outcomes* are not wholly appropriate. This has been discussed amongst staff and there has been some related training provided. *Learning outcomes* should describe the competences of the graduates. For example, *"is able to apply analytical tools for solving real world problems"* would be more suitable than the current *"Develop analytical skills to solve real world problems using these technologies"*. The expected learning outcomes for the three specialisms are not specified and, due to a common formulation for all specialisms, the ET found it impossible to predict whether the learning outcomes would be achieved.
47. Although the syllabus for the thesis was not provided, the programme's quality, range and academic aims are generally appropriate to the award of an academic degree.
Note: Following the request of the ET to provide the syllabus for the thesis, a document *'Third Year Undergraduate Dissertation Project'* was provided.
48. The SER does not describe any overarching didactic concept. The formulations of teaching and learning methods are in the majority of cases identical. For example, *"lectures, demonstration, in-class exercises, presentations, practical project assignments and discussions"*. Additionally, individual projects and group projects were mentioned.
49. The SER claims¹² that study programmes of several other universities were analysed¹³ as well as the ACM curricula recommendations. What the outcomes were from this study and how the results were used, was not revealed.
50. The share of compulsory courses is relatively high at around 67% (60 ECTS out of 90 ECTS). This will work well if the study group is homogenous and the prior education of the students relatively similar. However, in the SER the target group of entrants to the programme is described quite broadly as being *'students with an undergraduate degree in a computing discipline or business and administration science'*. Therefore, the study programme

¹² Page 144.

¹³ The Universities of Kent, Staffordshire, Drexel, Ohio State, Edinburgh, Southampton, Derby, Bradford, Linnaeus and University of Technology Sydney.

should have enough flexibility for adapting to the different needs and prior education of the students. In response to queries about students being able to cope, the ET was informed that a tutoring system is planned for underperforming students.

51. The principle that the courses of the programme are relatively big (7,5 ECTS) is, in general, appropriate. Each course is supposed to have three hours learning in the classroom each week. This would total 45 hours (15x3 = 45 hours) but differs in some syllabi. Taking into account the fact that the courses have 7.5 credits, the number of hours for independent work of the students during a course should be about 140. The programme therefore gives sufficient opportunity for independent study, reflection and analysis.
52. According to the SER, the college uses an identical pattern for course structures. This is two hours of lectures and 1 hour of exercises each week and applies to all courses regardless of their objectives and whether they are theoretical or practical in nature. The course descriptions are generally sound but there are some cases where they contradict entries in the SER. For example, the *Mobile Application Design Project* has, according to the syllabus, 60 hours lectures and 80 hours exercises and laboratory classes. As to independent work, neither the course descriptions nor the SER provide any specification and a large proportion of the course literature is not available in the College library. Details on the organisation, supervision and assessment of independent work is not given.
53. The programme corresponds to international standards but there is confusion with regard to *internships*. Whilst the SER states "*Internships are planned for the Master of Science degree in Computer Science in posts suitable to the job market using the pre existing collaborations with a number of companies from the IT sector. These internships will count towards the final ECTS Credits*" – they are not explicitly included in the curriculum.
54. The programme aims, objectives and outcomes are described in very general terms but there is dysconnectivity between some of those overall aims and component courses. For example, there is an overall learning outcome "*Work efficiently and effectively as a member of a project team*" but nowhere is there listed any teaching or learning component to support this. Similarly, course content is not always consistent with course titles, as in the course *Human-Computer Interaction* which seems focused mainly on graphical user interfaces and the course *Research Methods* on statistical analysis.
55. As to the separate courses, time available for discussing the content of all of these thoroughly was far too limited for the ET. The description of the courses in the SER was insufficient, because the quality of syllabi of the courses was far from the exemplary one that was presented in Appendix A of the SER.

56. All students who have completed an undergraduate degree in computer science and engineering, information systems, mechatronics, or electrical engineering/electronics are eligible to apply. Graduates from business and administration fields can apply provided they have prior work experience in computer science and engineering or are able to complete the *Computer Science Preparation Packages*. Whether bachelor graduates from other study areas can apply and what are the admission criteria are not specified. For admission the students should have at least 8.0 points. For bachelor graduates from non-IT areas a two-week crash course is planned.
57. The plan is to admit 200 students per year onto the programme. With 16 teachers this would provide an acceptable ratio of academic staff to students but only if the calculation is separate from other commitments by the same teaching staff and this may not be so. It was unclear if those same teachers had commitments to the bachelor programme and most were listed as having full time employment elsewhere. This raises serious doubts about the reality of staff/student ratios.

RECOMMENDATIONS

58. ***Formulate expected learning outcomes for each specialism (concentration) separately.***
59. ***Compose the syllabus of the thesis.***
60. ***Organisation, supervision and assessment of independent work should be described explicitly in the course descriptions.***
61. ***Compose the literature lists in course descriptions from only those items that are available to the students.***
62. ***Harmonise the learning outcomes between the study programme and the separate courses.***
63. ***Update the content in the course descriptions.***

STAFF

64. The proportion of permanent to part-time teaching staff is currently relatively low. Only five (out of 21) teachers listed in the Computer Science section of the SER¹⁴ have permanent employment and the interpretation of the terms “*permanent*” as well as “*full-time staff*” seems to the ET to be very different from those used normally.
65. The *Academic Staff Employment Contract* in the SER¹⁵ clearly defines full-time to mean 40 hours work a week but the real workload of staff might be very different as most seem to be employed by 2 to 3 institutions. Each course is assigned two teachers – one having a PhD degree and another

¹⁴ Section 4.3.

¹⁵ Appendix B.

without but only one in five of the full-time listed staff with a PhD have indicated Universum College as their employer in the professional network *LinkedIn*. Similarly, they have also not indicated the College as their employer in their scientific publications. They apparently do not consider the college as their primary employer.

66. Availability and dedication of the staff seems therefore to be the most problematic aspect of staffing.
67. Another striking fact was revealed whilst discussing the content of separate courses with the teachers. They were not able to answer simple and direct questions about the teaching methods and tools to be used and by way of explanation, the ET discovered that some teachers were assigned to courses arbitrarily. This means that the qualifications of the teacher do not always correspond to the courses assigned to them - which would be highly inappropriate. Moreover, formal qualification requirements were not always fulfilled. At least one teacher did not have a master's degree.

RESEARCH AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

68. The College clearly identifies research as a priority, as evidenced in its Strategic Plan for years 2014-2019 and from its adoption of a separate *Research Plan and Cooperation* document in 2016. It also plans to spend about 8% (186,430 €) from its 2016/17 budget on research and research related projects¹⁶. Teaching staff with PhDs are said to be involved in research but those without a PhD normally are not, as shown in *Google Scholar*. Two developmental projects were mentioned – Rebus (Erasmus+ project “*Ready for Business*”) and Consus (Tempus-project “*Connecting science-society collaborations for sustainability innovation*”) but otherwise no evidence was found by the ET of any ICT research activity in the College including participation in international projects.
69. An explanation for this disparity seems to be that most of the research is conducted outside the College with staff listing their affiliation with other institutions in their scientific publications.

RECOMMENDATION

70. ***ICT research in the College is currently absolutely invisible. The College needs to position itself in the landscape, both nationally and internationally. This might result in a research development strategy focused upon applied research that supports innovation in an important sector of the local economy.***

FINANCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE/SPACE AND EQUIPMENT

71. No detailed budget was provided. The SER had a separate section¹⁷ that contained income statements for the academic years 2013/14 to 2016/17 and expenditure for the years 2014/15 to 2017/18. On this information, the

¹⁶ SER page 258.

¹⁷ Section 9. Financing.

following observations can be made:

- Income from the student tuition fees forms more than 87% of the budget of 2016/17.
- The share of tuition fees has decreased and other income increased during the last three years.
- Income has risen from 1.72 M€ in 2013/14 to 2.9M€ in 2016/17.
- The profit is expected to be about 22% from the income of 2016/17.
- The college has committed considerable resources for buildings and equipment in coming years.

72. The building is of good quality. Additionally, the college is preparing to acquire a new building and set up a multi-purpose lab in 2018.
73. This is all despite the absence of a development plan and budget (business plan) for the study programme presented.

QUALITY MANAGEMENT

74. The College has an Office for Quality Assurance and Accreditation to discharge its responsibilities for Institutional Regulation for Quality Assurance and Procedure that relies mainly upon regular reporting from students and teaching staff and consulting with stakeholders via questionnaires.

RECOMMENDATION

75. Starting a completely new master's programme with three specialisations is a real challenge, especially when taking into account the current position of staffing and research in the College.
76. ***The ET is unable to recommend that the proposed Masters of Computer Science programme be accredited.***
77. ***The ET recommends the college develop a strategy for the development of ICT academic activities and revise the study programme accordingly – preferably by deciding on one specialisation instead of three – and resubmit it only when there is clear evidence of ICT research and development in the college.***

SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

78. ***The proposed Bachelor of Fine Arts Programme in integrated Design should not be Accredited.***
79. ***The proposed Bachelor of Science Programme in Nursing should not be Accredited.***

80. ***The Proposed Master of Science Programme in Computer Science should not be Accredited.***

Additionally –

81. ***The College should review the arrangements it made to strengthen its internal procedures designed to prevent premature proposals.***