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UBT COLLEGE
BSc MEDICAL BIOCHEMISTRY

ACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

4th May 2021, Cardiff, UK and Riga, Latvia

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: Zoom meeting , 19th April 2021

Expert Team (ET) members:

- Professor Kenneth Wann, Cardiff University, UK
- Ms Asnate Kazoka, PhD student, Riga, Latvia

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- Shkelzen Gerxhaliu, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring

Sources of information for the Report:

- UBT Medical Biochemistry Program Self Evaluation Report (SER)
- KAA Accreditation Manual, July 2018
- Information obtained from meetings with two members of Management of the Faculty, six Quality Assurance Representatives and Administrative Staff, three Heads of the Study Program, six Teaching staff, and three Stakeholders.
- Web site of UBT College
- UBT Medical Biochemistry Course description - Annex A
- UBT Medical Biochemistry Program Annex B Research
- UBT Faculty of Health Sciences Organogram
- Staff CVs
- Handbook of Student, May 2020
- UBT Faculty of Health Sciences Strategy 2020-25
- UBT Health Sciences Faculty Strategic Research Plan, 2020-2025
- UBT Quality Assurance Regulation, May 2019
- Video of UBT College
- Examples of the appeals processes



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- Meeting minutes of the Quality Assurance Sub-Committee
- Report of the Quality Assurance Sub-Committee
- Faculty semestral report for the 2021 winter semester
- Transfer report for the Nursing study programme
- Internship program handbook
- Expert report for the BA “Laborant of Biochemical Medicine” from 2019

Criteria used for program evaluation:

- KAA Accreditation Manual, July 2018
- Annex A: Medical Biochemistry Program Course Description

Note:

It should be noted that the program is awaiting initial accreditation and has therefore not commenced. Therefore some standards cannot yet be evaluated.

1.2. Site visit schedule

Site Visit Program

19th April 2021

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

09.45 – 10:30 Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff

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10.35 – 11.35	Meeting with the heads of the study programme
11:35 – 12:10	Lunch break (to be provided within the faculty premises)
12.10 – 12:50	Meeting with teaching staff
12.55 – 13.35	Meeting with employers of graduates
13.35 – 13.50	Internal meeting between expert team and KAA
13.50 – 14.00	Closing meeting with the management of the faculty

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

The University for Business and Technology (UBT) is a private University in Kosovo. The College was licensed to operate as a private bearer of higher education by the Ministry of Education, Science and technology no. 808/02-1, date. 18.10.2004. The Institution built on the experience of the Institute of Enterprise Engineering and Management (IEME), which was founded in 2001. The UBT Website lists several locations and branches, and within the infrastructure is apparently housed one of the largest libraries in Kosovo and over 80 laboratories. Thus UBT has a presence in several regions of Kosovo and also abroad, namely - UBT Prishtina Campus, (main Campus), UBT Lipjan Campus, UBT Prizren Campus, UBT Ferizaj Campus, UBT Peja Campus – Dukagjini College, UBT Gjilan Campus – Arberi College. There is also apparently an UBT Austria Office and UBT Hungary Office.

The SER states that “the main proposition of the UBT is to support Resilience and Sustainable Development of Kosovo”. Also “The philosophy of the Institution has been to offer competitive programs in applied education that would base teaching on labour market demands and international practices”.



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The Website shows that UBT operates a broad range of Bachelor and Masters level programs. There are currently around 17,000 students, the claim being that 98% of these enter the job market, Graduates of UBT being “leaders in entrepreneurship and new businesses, managers in the banking sector, public sector, information technology, engineering, architecture and construction”.

UBT is claimed to be the largest beneficiary of international student exchange projects from the European Commission, and the Website states that UBT has 450 International Partnerships.

Currently UBT has 10 Research Centres which are multidisciplinary, crossing departmental boundaries: significantly one of these is “The Health Sciences Research Centre”.

The study program under evaluation is summarised below



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Program: Medical Biochemistry

<i>Name of the institution</i>	BPRAL UBT College
<i>Faculty/Department</i>	Nursing
<i>Main Campus or Branch</i>	Main Campus
<i>The program applies to Branch</i>	No
<i>Name of the study program</i>	Medical Biochemistry
<i>Person responsible</i>	Dr. Dugagjin Sokoli
<i>Accreditation/Reaccreditation</i>	Accreditation
<i>NQF Qualification Level</i>	NQF Level VI
<i>Academic degree conferred</i>	BSc in Medical Biochemistry
<i>ECTS</i>	180
<i>Program profile (specialization)</i>	Medical Biochemistry
<i>Erasmus Code</i>	12.9
<i>Type of study</i>	Full-time
<i>Number of students</i>	150
<i>Minimum duration of study</i>	3 years

2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

2.1. Mission, objectives and administration

The mission of BSc in Medical Biochemistry, as stated in the SER, is to contribute to higher education through contemporary curricula, based and harmonised with the best practice at European level, distinct educational philosophy, research and services to the community.

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The aim of UBT with this study program is to provide the possibility of study of future trends and developments in the profession of a medical biochemist and to prepare practitioners for work in medical laboratories.

While the aim of the program is clear, it is not reflected in the mission statement and this mission statement could as well be applicable to any other study program. The expert team would advise revising the mission statement in order to clearly demonstrate the comparative advantages and the strategic orientation of the study program in terms of geographic area, academic and professional relevance and research focus.

The general ambition for implementing such a study program is clear given the fact that the UBT consortium itself operates a UBT Laboratory Clinic and UBT Hospital.

The situation analysis included in the SER states that there is a low number of medical biochemists in Kosovo and that the majority of practicing medical biochemists possess a secondary education only. However, the provided analysis dates back to 2017, and is largely based on the statement that there is a general lack of medical biochemists, rather than that the skills of those with secondary education only, are not sufficient for executing their professional duties.

The employer representatives and UBT representatives whom the expert team met during the interviews, confirmed that there is a general lack of specialists for medical laboratories and that there are also certain companies and positions where a bachelor degree would be appreciated or even required.

However, the admission requirements for the study program state that only students that have completed at least two years of prior medical education at upper secondary school will be considered for admission. This limits the possibilities for increasing the number of medical biochemists, in addition to those who have already made an informed decision to obtain medical education at the secondary school level.

Therefore, if the intention of the study program is to increase the number of qualified biochemists, it is not entirely clear how that could be achieved. Also, the claimed impact of the bottleneck created by the University of Prishtina as the only institution currently offering such studies is not clear because the demand of bachelor level specialists and the demand from the prospective students' perspective has not been analysed.



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Another remark is related to the future trends that are highlighted in the aim of the study programme. The expert team did not find any evidence that the future trends would have been analysed and also did not identify any mechanisms that could be used for this purpose.

The vision statement communicated through the UBT website states that UBT aims to implement an integrated strategy to establish itself as an internationally competitive, research-intensive university, committed to the transfer of knowledge and the provision of a world-class education and service. This somehow contradicts the statement in the SER that UBT is primarily a demand-driven higher education institution oriented towards the local community with the philosophy to offer competitive programmes in applied education. The place of the BSc in Medical Biochemistry in this overall setting is therefore not clear.

The BSc in Medical Biochemistry is claimed to be aligned with the European Union Directive 2005/36/EC and European Union Directive EP 2013. There is currently no legislation that would define the minimum requirements for such a profession in Kosovo, except the general requirements of the Kosovo Qualification Framework (KQF) which have been taken into account.

It is stated in the SER that the study program includes 1,050 hours of theory and 1,260 hours of practice. At the same time it is stated that the core subjects are mostly practice-oriented. When looking at the course descriptions, the vast majority states that the relation between theory and practice is 50-50, a small number of study courses have the theory-practice relation set as 65-35 or 60-40.

There are only three study courses, in addition to the Professional Practice (I, II, III), where the practice dominates over theory - Modern Biochemical Techniques, Emergency Laboratory Diagnostics, Laboratory *in Vitro* Cells Method with the theory-practice ratio of 35-65.

Therefore it can be concluded that the practical orientation of the study programme is not fully substantiated by the theory-practice ratio.

Overall, UBT is a well established institution with reasonable experience in implementing study programmes in higher education. All the main regulatory documents, including the UBT Statute, Regulation on Bachelor Studies and Code of Ethics, have been developed and are published on the UBT website. The documents also clearly state the rights and responsibilities of students and staff. However, it should be said that, judging from the SER, the substance of and reasoning for certain accreditation standards often has not been

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understood and sometimes even misinterpreted, for example, the mechanisms for improving the teaching strategies and quality of learning materials, student assessment mechanisms, self-evaluation of the academic staff etc. It is not sufficient to only establish formal structures and documentation because of external requirements. An effort has to be made to ensure that these arrangements are fit for purpose, communicated to the staff and stakeholders in an effective manner and functioning well.

The expert team also would like to make a note that the SER refers to the Faculty of Health Sciences (or Medicine) while the UBT website (both the English and Albanian version) presents the Faculty of Nursing with only one study programme currently being implemented - BSc Nursing. The organisational structure and strategic plan submitted for accreditation are developed for the Faculty of Health Sciences with a number of departments and study programmes that do not seem to exist according to the information published on the UBT website. While it does not directly affect the assessment of this study programme, it leaves doubts about the maturity of the faculty level processes that would be applicable to this study programme as well.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
Standard 1.1. The study program mission is in compliance with the overall mission statement of the institution.		X
Standard 1.2. Relevant academic and professional advice is considered when defining the intended learning outcomes which are consistent with the National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.	X	
Standard 1.3. The study program has a well-defined overarching didactic and research concept.		X
Standard 1.4. There are formal policies, guidelines and regulations dealing with recurring procedural or academic issues. These are made publicly available to all staff and students.	X	

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Standard 1.5. All staff and students comply with the internal regulations relating to ethical conduct in research, teaching, assessment in all academic and administrative activities.	X	
Standard 1.6. All policies, regulations, terms of reference and statements of responsibility relating to the management and delivery of the program are reviewed at least once every two years and amended as required in the light of changing circumstances.	-	-

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Revise the mission statement to clearly demonstrate the strategic orientation of the study programme;*
2. *Align the programme aim and mission statement with the general mission statement of the UBT;*
3. *Establish a reliable mechanism for collecting the data on the demand for bachelor level specialists and the demand from the prospective students' perspective;*
4. *Establish a reliable mechanism for collecting and analysing the information on future trends in the profession of medical biochemist;*
5. *Establish the didactic and research concept of the study programme and ensure that the programme content and teaching and learning mechanism is fully based on it;*
6. *Ensure that the BSc in Medical Biochemistry and the relevant faculty is fully included in the UBT internal quality assurance system.*

2.2. Quality management

The UBT Quality Assurance Regulation states that the basic values in the mission of the UBT are academic excellence and assurance of high quality standards. However, from the Regulation and the mission statement the UBT concept of excellence is not clear, except that the education has to be relevant to the needs of the individuals and organizations in Kosovo.



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It is therefore recommended to develop a Quality Policy on the institutional level where the UBT statement on quality and the overarching principles would be listed.

The UBT Quality Assurance Regulation states the main quality assurance mechanisms related to different stakeholder groups and areas, procedures, roles of those involved, reporting and data collection principles. However, the Regulation does not include information on each specific procedure that is carried out, its purpose and regularity and is not easy to navigate for operational use. It would be suggested to support it with an operational document (Quality Manual) specifying all separate procedures, their regularity, responsible persons and tools/forms that have to be used.

Although there are a number of different assessment mechanisms, from the information provided in the SER and during the visit, the expert team did not obtain any evidence of staff self-assessment. The Quality Regulation and the Annual Report on quality assurance of teaching and associate staff includes proof that there is staff assessment by peers and supervisors and staff assessment by students but no proof of self-assessment.

The Strategic Plan 2020-2025 of the UBT Faculty of Health Sciences lists a number of strategic objectives but none of them is directly related to quality assurance. The structural units related to quality assurance are not involved in executing or monitoring the plan. Also, it has to be noted that the Strategic Plan provided is not operational as it is not clear what are the exact targets, what is the timeline, who is responsible and how the achievement of strategic objectives will be measured.

The quality assurance mechanisms listed in the UBT Quality Regulation seem to cover all areas related to operation of the study programme. However, the surveys for employers and graduates seem to be missing. The documented evidence provided for the Faculty of Health Sciences confirmed only the existence of the peer assessment, assessment by supervisors, and staff assessment by students therefore the expert team cannot confirm that the other survey mechanisms exist and are used.

The BSc in Medical Biochemistry is not implemented yet, therefore, in order to assess the general capacity for the execution of the survey mechanisms, the expert team requested the samples for the Faculty of Health Sciences in general and was provided with samples for the BSc Nursing study program.

The Annual Report on quality assurance of teaching and associate staff for the BSc Nursing study program provides only the information on Quality Assurance Sub-Committee and basic

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statistics about the execution of the abovementioned survey tools. There is no evidence of any conclusions and/or suggestions that would have been collected and submitted for further actions and also no information on what actions have been taken as a result of these surveys. It is also not clear what are the internal targets related to these quality assurance processes and their results and what are the expected targets (key performance indicators) of each study programme. Neither this report nor other quality assurance reports for the Faculty of Health Sciences were available publicly at the time of drafting the expert report.

The meeting minutes of the Faculty's of Health Sciences Quality Assurance Sub-Committee contain some, although general, information about the improvements made to the quality assurance arrangements. However, the nature of these improvements is not clear as some of them are related to UBT institutional policies rather than the responsibilities that fall under the Faculty of Health Sciences.

The expert team is aware of the assessment that BSc Laborant of Biochemical Medicine underwent in 2019. The BSc Laborant of Biochemical Medicine did not succeed to obtain accreditation and judging from the objectives and program content can be considered as the direct predecessor of this study program. However, the SER does not include any evidence of such previous assessment and does not document any changes that would have been made to the study program based on the results of this previous assessment.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
Standard 2.1. All staff participate in self-evaluations and cooperate with reporting and improvement processes in their sphere of activity.		X
Standard 2.2. Evaluation processes and planning for improvement are integrated into normal planning processes.		X
Standard 2.3. Quality assurance processes deal with all aspects of program planning and delivery, including services and resources provided by other parts of the institution.	X	

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Standard 2.4. Quality evaluations provide an overview of quality issues for the overall program as well as of different components within it; the evaluations consider inputs, processes and outputs, with particular attention given to learning outcomes for students.	X	
Standard 2.5. Quality assurance processes ensure both that required standards are met and that there is continuing improvement in performance.		X
Standard 2.6. Survey data is being collected from students, graduates and employers; the results of these evaluations are made publicly available.	-	-
Standard 2.7. Results of the internal quality assurance system are taken into account for further development of the study program. This includes evaluation results, investigation of the student workload, academic success and employment of graduates.	-	-
Standard 2.8. The institution ensures that reports on the overall quality of the program are prepared periodically (eg. every three years) for consideration within the institution indicating its strengths and weaknesses.	-	-
Standard 2.9. The quality assurance arrangements for the program are themselves regularly evaluated and improved.		X

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Develop Quality Policy on the institutional level;*
2. *Develop operational Quality Manual which would define the purpose, frequency and practical execution of each quality assurance procedure;*
3. *Introduce self-assessment for academic staff and survey mechanisms for employers and graduates;*
4. *Define key performance indicators on the study program level;*



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5. *Incorporate the results of all questionnaires as well as the monitoring results of certain key performance indicators in the overall activity reports either on the program or on the faculty level and make them available publicly;*
6. *Produce analytic quality assurance reports that would include recommendations for the relevant parties within UBT;*
7. *Define quality assurance related strategic goals for the Faculty of Health Sciences;*
8. *Develop operational plan for achieving the goals listed in the Strategic Plan for the Faculty of Health Sciences;*

2.3. Academic staff

The curriculum vitae for all the academic staff teaching on the study program are provided. All teaching staff on the study program are claimed to be full time UBT, tenured, and possess a PhD. Academic staff comply with the legal requirements in the Administration instruction of Accreditation and have conforming work loads.

On p 34 the SER tabulates the three full time staff assigned to each 60 ECTS of the study program.

Meeting with the teaching staff confirmed that they considered their workloads to be manageable, and that there were ample opportunities afforded for additional professional development. The SER indicates (p 34) that one of the priorities following consultation with senior members of staff within UBT was “supporting staff in the professional development of lecturers and researchers”. There is apparently a Staff Development Plan at the Faculty of Nursing with objectives to include providing “a framework for allowing appropriate development opportunities” What exactly this looks like, is however not clear. Consideration is given by the Faculty to properly resource staff development, and such development is described as “an integral part of the Faculty Strategic Planning process”. This is not explicit however in the UBT Faculty of Health Sciences Strategic Plan 2020-2025. One focus has been pedagogical skills and training at the UBT Institute for Development of education and Academic Affairs (IDEAA) and this has been cited in the SER as one strategy for quality enhancement in the teaching arena.

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At present the respective responsibilities of all Academic Staff are listed as the same, and hopefully division of labour will evolve and change as it should, as the study program develops, and embeds. At meetings with teaching staff the questions around workload revealed that there was agreement that sufficient times could be made available for consultations with students and community service. Current policy is that the Dean ensures that mechanisms for the allocation of workloads are transparent, approved and implemented. Workload allocation is one metric intended to inform any application for promotion.

Discussions with teaching staff revealed that in lectures peer to peer reviews of staff took place and that student evaluation was something that happened on a regular basis. The SER states that the Deans are responsible for the staff appraisals, part of the year end review, using the criteria in the regulations for staff Appraisal. Section 4.6 in the UBT Quality Assurance Regulation, 2019 refers to student surveys as one tool used to judge teachers and feedback from these is intended to inform teaching improvement strategies. According to the SER, the Dean's initial evaluation is sent to the staff member and the final Staff Evaluation Report goes to the Faculty Council and UBT Academic Council Committee. There are several instances in the SER where the narrative is duplicated. The text in Standard 3.9 repeats narrative in 3.6 and also lifts section 5.5 verbatim from the UBT Quality Assurance Regulation, 2019 and does not address the standard requirements.

<i>Standard</i>	<i>Compliance</i>	
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
Standard 3.1. Candidates for employment are provided with full position descriptions and conditions of employment. To be presented in tabular form data about full time (FT) and part time (PT) academic/ artistic staff, such as: name, qualification, academic title, duration of official (valid) contract, workload for teaching, exams, consulting, administrative activities, research, etc. for the study program under evaluation.	X	



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Standard 3.2. The teaching staff must comply with the legal requirements concerning the occupation of teaching positions included in the Administrative instruction on Accreditation.	X	
Standard 3.3. Academic staff do not cover, within an academic year, more than two teaching positions (one full-time, one part-time), regardless of the educational institution where they carry out their activity	X	
Standard 3.4. At least 50% of the academic staff in the study program are full time employees, and account for at least 50% of the classes of the study program.	X	
Standard 3.5. For each student group (defined by the statute of the institution) and for every 60 ECTS credits in the study program, the institution has employed at least one full time staff with PhD title or equivalent title in the case of artistic/applied science institutions.	X	
Standard 3.6. Opportunities are provided for additional professional development of teaching staff, with special assistance given to any who are facing difficulties.	X	
Standard 3.7. The responsibilities of all teaching staff, especially full-time, include the engagement in the academic community, availability for consultations with students and community service.	X	
Standard 3.8. Academic staff evaluation is conducted regularly at least through self-evaluation, students, peer and superiors' evaluations, and occur on a formal basis at least once each year. The results of the evaluation are made publicly available.	-	-
Standard 3.9. Strategies for quality enhancement include improving the teaching strategies and quality of learning materials.		X
Standard 3.10. Teachers retired at age limit or for other reasons lose the status of full-time teachers and are considered part-time teachers.	-	-

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Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Ensure that all staff curriculum vitae are up to date in all respects;*
2. *Provide evidence of the staff development plan;*
3. *Remove all passages where the narrative is repetitive and cite the source of any narrative taken from other documents;*
4. *Provide examples of any special assistance offered to staff facing difficulties vis a vis professional development;*
5. *Provide information how student surveys are constructed and what input staff have to the question set;*
6. *Address standard 3.9 properly.*

2.4. Educational process content

The proposed Medical Biochemistry program is new, and hence some standards cannot yet be evaluated or addressed. The program is intended to equip students with the necessary basic knowledge, practical knowledge and skills, patient-related skills and the professionalism and integrity required of a practicing Medical Biochemist. It is asserted that the program satisfies professional requirements and European Directive 2005/36/EC, and it is stated that there is “approximation of the program with those applicable elsewhere in European Union” and that “major advising and expertise was given by International Biomedical scientific Council (p 15 of the SER). The SER lists the International Universities consulted by UBT (p 16 of the SER). The subject material in the curriculum is therefore, as should be expected, wide ranging including coverage of underpinning basic scientific disciplines, laboratory techniques, health Psychology, medical Bioethics, communication skills and professional Practice elements. There are however elective courses in each year meaning that all students may not be exposed to some key skills such as communication and consultation. For the mandatory work, there are 1050 hours of theory, 1260 hours of practice, and 180 ECTS over 6 semesters. so on average 1 ECTS equates to about 13 hours activity. The elective courses are however also assigned credits, which is confusing. Reference is made to the “studies and

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the academic title of BSc in Biomedical technician” which is clearly a mistake. Reference to “courses in the social science and humanities” which are supposed to be delivered is made, although it is unclear where they are in the curriculum. Some material e.g. Biochemistry, Biochemical Analysis, Haematology and Professional Practice are delivered logically i.e. level I,II then III. The learning outcomes on p 44 of the SER and also the Program Overview document are however that of a Medicinal Chemistry program, not a Medical Biochemistry program, and need to be completely rewritten. The description on p14 of the SER is much more appropriate. Learning outcomes and Assessment methods are fully articulated in the Medical Biochemistry program description (Annex A) and are also introduced at the induction session and duplicated in the Student Handbook. Annex A also provides for all disciplines Aims and Objectives, Learning methods, and some reading material. In the Annex, Emergency Laboratory Diagnostics is named unit 34 instead of 33. In many cases there are no Albanian texts in the bibliography. This list is not exhaustive but includes courses 1, 5, 7, 33, 34, 41-43 and 45-47. There are no assurances given that the students can cope with the bibliography provided. This might have been addressed in standard 4.5. The literature should be updated with newer editions of textbooks also (see e.g. courses 4 and 31). Some course descriptions and titles do not match. For example, course 1 is an Introduction to Laboratory Biochemistry but learning outcomes are as follows:

Outline basic characteristics of medical biochemistry as a profession and a science;
Recognize tasks and responsibilities of medical biochemist in the health care system;
Explain competencies and proficiencies of medical biochemists and distinguish acquired technical, organizational, information and research skills;
Describe principal study courses important for the profession;
Determine role of medical-biochemical laboratory in the primary health care and describe practical procedures on the pathway from prescription ordered by the MD to obtain laboratory results by the patient.

Surely a better title for the above course would be “Introduction to Medical Biochemistry”

A learning outcome in a Biophysics course is to “Demonstrate a thorough comprehension of the core concepts of classical and modern physics (“concepts”)” which does not seem that

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appropriate. The expert team would also dispute the Aims and Objectives of Course 9, Biochemistry 1 which include “becoming familiar with structures and function of a healthy human organism”, and that “a study program in biochemistry is the basis for acquiring the principles of physiology and pharmacology,

A number of teaching methods are to be adopted, although the issue of flexibility to meet the needs of different groups of students is not directly addressed (Standard 4.7). Indeed the different educational background of students is considered a threat in the SWOT analysis of the SER (p 52 of the SER). There are a “healthy” range of teaching strategies presented which is a strength, but equally a challenge when it comes to assessment. In regards to the latter, little attention seems to have been paid to how to deal with borderline marks. The expert team would have expected double marking (particularly for less experienced staff) to be offered to verify or check marks where a pass or fail is in question. It is not clear how mitigating circumstances are to be dealt with also. The introduction of a mitigating circumstances panel might be welcome. The approach to be adopted is that any appeals go straight to the Vice Dean.

UBT has a number of agreements with both private and public services within Kosovo to support training in practice in the field. The logistics of the practice internship placements are not clear to the expert team (p 3 of Internship Program Handbook). Also it is stated that 5 ECTS are allocated to Professional Practice I,II and III each. However in the opening paragraph of the Internship Program Handbook it is stated that 450 hours are assigned to practice-based learning. In other words the implication is that 1 ECTS equates to 30 hours activity. This is not in line with the study program overall hours/credit ratio and needs to be clarified. These practice-based elements have assigned Academic staff members (p 41 of the SER). Assessment is by a mentor of Professional Practice who offers guidance and input to a report, which is checked by the Head of Professional Practice (e.g. p 52 of Annex A). However, the learning methods for Professional Practice I, II and III (Annex A) state that these courses adopt a combination of didactic and workshop materials, the teaching methods include lectures, practical exercises, lecture demonstrations and written practical reports. On the other hand, the theory practice ratio for both courses is 0 /100. This clearly needs to be resolved in the narrative.



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Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
Standard 4.1. The study program is modelled on qualification objectives. These include subject-related and interdisciplinary aspects as well as the acquisition of disciplinary, methodological and generic skills and competencies. The aspects refer especially to academic or artistic competencies, to the capability of taking up adequate employment, contributing to the civil society and of developing the students' personality.		X
Standard 4.2. The study program complies with the National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. The individual components of the program are combined in a way to best achieve the specified qualification objectives and provide for adequate forms of teaching and learning.	X	
Standard 4.3. The disciplines within the curriculum are provided in a logical flow and meet the definition and precise determination of the general and specific competencies, as well as the compatibility with the study programs and curricula delivered in the EHEA. To be listed at least 7 learning outcomes for the study program under evaluation.		X
Standard 4.4. The disciplines within the curriculum have analytical syllabuses which comprise at least the following: the discipline's objectives, the basic thematic content, learning outcomes, the distribution of classes, seminars and applicative activities, students' assessment system, the minimal bibliography, etc. The full course description/ syllabuses of each subject/ module should be attached only in electronic form to the self-assessment report for the study program under evaluation.		X
Standard 4.5. If the language of instruction is other than Albanian, actions are taken to ensure that language skills of both students and academic staff are adequate for instruction in that language when students begin their studies. This may be done through language training prior to the commencement of the program.	-	-X
Standard 4.6. The student-teacher relationship is a partnership in which each assumes the responsibility of reaching the learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are explained and discussed with students from the perspective of their relevance to the students' development.	X	-

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Standard 4.7. Teaching strategies are fit for the different types of learning outcomes programs are intended to develop. Strategies of teaching and assessment set out in program and course specifications are followed with flexibility to meet the needs of different groups of students.		X
Standard 4.8. Student assessment mechanisms are conducted fairly and objectively, are appropriate for the different forms of learning sought and are clearly communicated to students at the beginning of courses.	-	-
Standard 4.9. Appropriate, valid and reliable mechanisms are used for verifying standards of student achievement. The standard of work required for different grades is consistent over time, comparable in courses offered within a program, and in comparison with other study programs at highly regarded institutions.		X
Standard 4.10. Policies and procedures include actions to be taken in dealing with situations where standards of student achievement are inadequate or inconsistently assessed.		X
Standard 4.11. If the study program includes practice stages, the intended student learning outcomes are clearly specified and effective processes are followed to ensure that those learning outcomes and the strategies to develop that learning are understood by students. The practice stages are allocated ECTS credits and the work of the students at the practical training organisations is monitored through activity reports; students during practice stages have assigned tutors among the academic staff in the study program.	X	
Standard 4.12. In order to facilitate the practice stages, the higher education institution signs cooperation agreements, contracts or other documents with institutions/organisations/practical training units.	X	

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Provide an example of an equivalent course in the European Union;*
2. *Provide a testimonial from an expert who was consulted on the program content;*
3. *Correct the mistakes that this report draws attention to;*

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4. *Rewrite the study program learning outcomes particularly on p44 of the SE, review learning outcomes for all courses and amend where appropriate (e.g. Biophysics);*
5. *Revisit the Aims and Objectives of courses providing more suitable descriptions (e.g. course 9, Biochemistry 1);*
6. *Ensure that course titles match course descriptions;*
7. *The logistics or mechanics of the Professional Practice courses need to be described and clarification as to the hours /credit ratio assigned to these three courses;*
8. *Reference where courses in the social science and humanities appear in the curriculum;*
9. *Revisit the literature suggested for each course, updating or adding new material where necessary;*
10. *Address the issue of student language skills where no Albanian texts have been suggested;*
11. *Provide reassurance that exam marks may be checked for validity. Consider introducing marking schemes and double marking for borderline marks;*
12. *Consider introducing a mitigating circumstances panel for review of student appeals where necessary.*

2.5. Students

The SER states that the admission procedure is organised based on the Faculty Council Regulation on Admission. The general admission requirement for this study programme, in addition to completed secondary education, is completion of at least two years of prior medical education at upper secondary school level. There is also an entrance examination for all applicants.

The Faculty Council Regulation on Admission is currently not available on the UBT website. The UBT website includes the Regulation on Bachelor Studies which in regard to the admission process and requirements fully refers to the Faculty Council Regulation on Admission.

The SER, annexes or the information available on the UBT website do not provide any information on specific size for student groups, except that the groups are dimensioned for lecture type activities and for practical exercises. The issue of student groups has to be looked

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at together with the planned enrolment and the technical capacity of the premises and while the expert team does not have any remarks on the size of student groups, the remarks related to the available resources are provided in the section 2.7 of this report.

The Regulation on Bachelor Studies defines certain deadlines for the academic staff for publishing the exam results, depending on the number of the students in a group and at a request of the student the teacher is obliged to give to the student a written assessment of the exam.

The Regulation on Bachelor Studies foresees several cases when exceptions or special arrangements can be applied, for example, when evaluating and grading the work of a student with disabilities, the possibility for leaving studies for the period of maternity or paternity leave or serious illness. The regulation defines several possibilities for taking exams - winter, summer and autumn exam session - and states that the student has the right to withdraw from the exam no later than 24 hours before the exam but it does not define any special cases when a student could be allowed to withdraw later and take the exam at a different time without sanctions, for example, because of urgent health issues, participation in a mobility programme abroad etc.

The Regulation on Bachelor Studies states that after the completion of studies, each student is issued a diploma that certifies the completion of the studies and the achievement of the professional or academic title. The diploma is issued in Albanian and English. In addition to the diploma, students receive a diploma supplement that certifies the study courses passed and other academic achievements, if applicable.

The SER states that the faculty maintains a list of student records - examination register, application, list of students taking the examination in the given examination period, examination report, students' logbook, student files containing information on students' re-examination activities and final grades earned during these activities. It is also stated that such information is used by the Quality Assurance Sub-Committee. As the BSc Medical Biochemistry is not yet implemented, the expert could not evaluate the application of these processes. Also, the provided meeting minutes of the Quality Assurance Sub-Committee do not confirm any actions that would have been taken in the faculty based on these records.

The information about the student rights and responsibilities is included in the Regulation for Bachelor Studies. There is also a Student Handbook that generally includes valuable information, but there is no reference to student rights and responsibilities. It would be

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suggested to communicate the student rights and responsibilities to the students in a friendly way through the Student Handbook and also include in the handbook links to any relevant legal documents, for example, the Regulation on Bachelor Studies.

The Semestral report on the BSc Nursing study program for the 2021 winter semester states that consultations are held at the request of students, usually in the pre-exam period, or after exams. Schedules for the possibility of meeting with teachers have also been set for the consultations. There is also tutoring available and there have been occasional tutoring sessions according to the needs of the students and in particular regarding the preparation of diploma thesis. However, the tutoring rate has not been very high due to the lack of requests from students.

The transfer possibility is foreseen in the Regulation on Bachelor Studies and it is presented clearly. In winter semester 2021 there have been two student transfer cases in the BSc Nursing.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
Standard 5.1. There is a clear and formally adopted admission procedure at institutional level that the study program respects when organising students' recruitment. Admission requirements are consistently and fairly applied for all students.	X	
Standard 5.2. All students enrolled in the study program possess a high school graduation diploma or other equivalent document of study, according to MEST requirements.	X	
Standard 5.3. The study groups are dimensioned so as to ensure an effective and interactive teaching and learning process.	X	
Standard 5.4. Feedback to students on their performance and results of assessments is given promptly and accompanied by mechanisms for assistance if needed.	X	

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Standard 5.5. The results obtained by the students throughout the study cycles are certified by the academic record.	X	
Standard 5.6. Flexible treatment of students in special situations is ensured with respect to deadlines and formal requirements in the program and to all examinations.	X	
Standard 5.7. Records of student completion rates are kept for all courses and for the program as a whole and included among quality indicators.	-	-
Standard 5.8. Effective procedures are being used to ensure that work submitted by students is original.	-	-
Standard 5.9. Students' rights and obligations are made publicly available, promoted to all those concerned and enforced equitably; these will include the right to academic appeals.	X	
Standard 5.10. The students' transfer between higher education institutions, faculties and study programs is clearly regulated in formal internal documents.	X	
Standard 5.11. Academic staff is available at sufficient scheduled times for consultation and advice to students. Adequate tutorial assistance is provided to ensure understanding and ability to apply learning.	X	

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Publish the Faculty Council Admission Regulation on the UBT website;*
2. *Define special cases when a student could be allowed to take the exam at a different time without sanctions, for example, urgent health issues, participation in a mobility program abroad etc.;*
3. *Include student records among the key performance indicators on the study program level, regularly monitor them and include the results in annual reports on study programs;*



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4. *Complement the Student Handbook with information about student rights and responsibilities and with links to relevant UBT internal documents.*

2.6. Research

The SER states that “The Medical Biochemistry research plan is part of the UBT institutional research strategy”. The research plan on the Medical Biochemistry Program is provided in the SER (p 61) and is organized into three themes 1) Cell Biology 2) Protein structure and Dynamics and 3) Computational Biology. The UBT research plan is not however described, nor could the expert team find it on the UBT website. Only general statements (with no plan) in the UBT Research and Innovation section on the web exist. There is no mention in the SER of which of the staff in Medical Biochemistry will support the above three themes. Nor is there anything detailed in the SER, which speaks to the issues of financial, logistic and human resources being allocated to achieve the proposed research objectives as demanded by standard 6.1.

What staff are allocated, in terms of teaching, research and scholarly activities does not match what the SER claims. No account has been taken of “the position of the employee within a research-teaching nexus” Despite the statement in the SER that “overall individual workload allocation adheres to certain principles” the teaching, clinical, administration and research responsibilities are (with the exception of the heads of the study program) weighted percentage wise equally amongst staff - namely 40:20:10:30 (see pp 32-33 of the SER). So no consideration is given to “the requirement to undertake research will be balanced as appropriate with other obligations” or to differential weightings “in the light of research record of academic staff” as stated in the SER. The Year-End Review does take account of performance in all activities in evaluating staff and making decisions on promotion.

It is stated that UBT has adopted the Administrative Instruction for platforms and international journals review as its standard. In addition the program has identified its own journals for publication. In this regard UBT aims to adhere to international standards. The publication lists demonstrate publication in journals and conference proceedings. There is evidence of central support for research and commercialisation. For example, forums are to be created, the Faculty invites applications for support “for special purposes such as international conferences”. UBT also offers financial support for staff conferences and

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research presentations. The Faculty attempts to structure research through Research centres which act as a hub to foster or support commercialisation, builds alliances with external stakeholders and sets as an objective “to foster staff development programs to enable and incentivise staff to engage in the creation and transfer of knowledge”. It is stated that considerations of confidentiality, data protection or intellectual property must comply with the UBT and Faculty Code of Ethics. The research activities of the staff features in the curriculum design (standard 6.9) so bridging the divisions of teaching and research . There are also grants of up to 2000 Euro per annum to involve undergraduates in research.

The publications of the staff of the study program are presented in the SER standard 6.4 (pp 63-70) and also in the document Annex B: Research and publication list of academic staff for Medical Biochemistry Program and staff CVs. There are 18 staff listed in the SER and 19 staff in Annex B, so the lists do not correspond precisely. Publications are not always presented in an easy to understand format and there would seem to be no publications for 2021 or 2020 and few for 2019 from the documents and lists presented. These lists however need to be updated to include impact factors if available. Some staff appear in web database searches such as PUBMED. This shows evidence of collaboration with international groups in e.g. the USA, Sweden and Spain and significantly of papers published in 2020 and 2021. However, many staff do not seem to have produced at least an average of one scientific output per year for the past three years as demanded by standard 6.7. The subjects and the academic staff who teach them is provided on pp 40-42 of the SER (standard 4.1). This list does not match precisely that provided on pp 63-70 that addresses whether staff have a track record in the subject they teach (standard 6.4). There is evidence that some staff have a track record or research interest in the same topic as their teaching activity. The evidence is less convincing in other cases. Some clearer illustrative examples of where this is the case would have been helpful. However what is certain is that some teaching staff in standard 4.1 do not appear under 6.4 and equally some staff in 6.4 do not appear to teach. Dr Afrim Zeqiraj would be an example of the latter.

<i>Standard</i>	Compliance	
	Yes	No



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<i>Standard 6.1.</i> The study program has defined scientific/applied research objectives (on its own or as part of a research centre or interdisciplinary program), which are also reflected in the research development plan of the institution; sufficient financial, logistic and human resources are allocated for achieving the proposed research objectives.		X
<i>Standard 6.2.</i> Expectations for teaching staff involvement in research and scholarly activities are clearly specified, and performance in relation to these expectations is considered in staff evaluation and promotion criteria.	X	
<i>Standard 6.3.</i> Clear policies are established for defining what is recognized as research, consistent with international standards and established norms in the field of study of the program.	X	
<i>Standard 6.4.</i> The academic staff has a proven track record of research results on the same topics as their teaching activity.		X
<i>Standard 6.5.</i> The academic and research staff publish their work in speciality magazines or publishing houses, scientific/applied/artistic products are presented at conferences, sessions, symposiums, seminars etc. and contracts, expertise, consultancy, conventions, etc. are provided to partners inside the country and/or abroad.	X	
<i>Standard 6.6.</i> Research is validated through: scientific and applied research publications, artistic products, technological transfer through consultancy centres, scientific parks and other structures for validation.	X	
<i>Standard 6.7.</i> Each academic staff member and researcher has produced at least an average of one scientific/applied research publication or artistic outcome/product per year for the past three years.		X
<i>Standard 6.8.</i> Academic and research staff publish under the name of the institution in Kosovo they are affiliated to as full-time staff.	X	



<i>Standard 6.9.</i> Academic staff are encouraged to include in their teaching information about their research and scholarly activities that are relevant to courses they teach, together with other significant research developments in the field.	X	
<i>Standard 6.10.</i> Policies are established for ownership of intellectual property and clear procedures set out for commercialization of ideas developed by staff and students.	X	
<i>Standard 6.11.</i> Students are engaged in research projects and other activities	X	

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Show the medical Biochemistry Research Plan alongside the UBT Research Plan to underscore whether, or how well they are aligned;*
2. *Provide some reassurance that there is a mechanism or algorithm already in place to bring to bear when computing how the relevant obligations or responsibilities of any staff member are to be divided e.g. teaching versus research;*
3. *Indicate what examples of non-compliance with any Code of Ethics might occur in the light of previous experience;*
4. *Ensure that staff lists are accurate and correspond in different parts of the SER and/or Annex submitted;*
5. *Update staff CVs to include publications, where relevant in years 2020 and 2021 to provide the evidence of the recent productivity required to meet standard 6.7;*
6. *Provide clear examples of where the staff research expertise matches the staff teaching activity.*

2.7. Infrastructure and resources

The location of the Medical Biochemistry premises is in the UBT Hospital at the Innovation Campus in Lipjan several km from Prishtina. The video testifies to the modern nature of the building and provides a tour of some laboratories, seminar rooms, a lecture hall and a library.

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From what is shown it is hard to see how the accommodation would serve the 150 students per year that are to undertake the study program. The lecture hall might accommodate 120 and the small teaching rooms and laboratories shown might hold 40 students and 15-20 students respectively. This would imply that a great deal of repetitive small groups teaching might be needed. No images of the videoconferencing auditorium were shown and the relevance in the SER of the facilities at Prizren (some 40 km from Lipjan) to the study program is not clear. The expert team has no real confidence from the video that sufficient laboratory equipment is currently available to support practical work of the study program. The narrative in the SER should have provided some guide to the size of student classes that can be accommodated in the space available. With respect to IT requirements, there is mention of a Faculty computer laboratory with 52 computers. However, it is not clear whether this is a shared facility or not. Also there is no mention of whether there is a small team or individual staff member with responsibility for facilities. The SER reports that the UBT owns and rents adequate space for the study program to proceed. The expert team presumes that the relevant documents (property deeds etc) to support this are held by the institution.

The SER presents financial estimates of income and expenditure and projections in both tabular and histogram form. The financial plan is described as credible and strong in the SWOT (Standard 7.6) on p 80 of the SER. The replies of the teaching staff to questions asked by the expert team around the robustness of the details of the plan were not however reassuring. Income clearly depends largely on student fees, and how guaranteed that is, remains an open question at present. Demand for places on this course has not been surveyed adequately. A minor point is that the histograms relate to 2021-2023 and not 2020-2022 as in the key.

There is little attempt in the SER to address elements of standard 7.5 which concern work / reading space for students. In respect of library stock of books, this is considered a strength in the SWOT analysis of 1.7 on p 24 of the SER. However, inspection of Annex C revealed very few classical texts in Biochemistry or Anatomy, and none it seems in Physiology or Pharmacology. The ET found only one text with the title Biochemistry (item 184). This shortfall in textbooks is clearly unacceptable. Whether there is adequate provision of relevant key textbooks for students is not addressed in the SER. Also the reading list suggested for courses does not suggest a library with appropriate material. A brief inspection of the

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literature for some units in the study program reveals either no texts suggested (e.g. for an Anatomy and Physiology course, no Physiology textbooks) or old editions (e.g. for Biochemistry 1, Devlin, 2002). For Modern Biochemistry Techniques a 2010 text is recommended (pp 33-34 of UBT Medical Biochemistry Program).

<i>Standard</i>	Compliance	
	Yes	No
Standard 7.1. The adequate long-term implementation of the study program is ensured in quantitative terms as regards premises, human resources and equipment. At the same time, it is guaranteed that qualitative aspects are also taken into account.		X
Standard 7.2. There is a financial plan at the level of the study program that would demonstrate the sustainability of the study program for the next minimum three years.	X	
Standard 7.3. The higher education institution must demonstrate with adequate documents (property deeds, lease contracts, inventories, invoices etc.) that, for the study program submitted for evaluation it possesses the following, for the next at least three years: a) owned or rented spaces adequate for the educational process; b) owned or rented laboratories, with the adequate equipment for all the compulsory disciplines within the curriculum, wherever the analytical syllabus includes such activities; c) adequate software for the disciplines of study included in the curriculum, with utilisation licence; d) library equipped with reading rooms, group work rooms and its own book stock according to the disciplines included in the curricula.		X



Standard 7.4. The number of seats in the lecture rooms, seminar rooms and laboratories must be related to the study groups' size (series, groups, subgroups); the applicative activities for the speciality disciplines included in the curricula are carried out in laboratories equipped with IT equipment.		X
Standard 7.5. The education institution's libraries must ensure, for each of the study programs: a) a number of seats in the reading rooms corresponding to at least 10% of the total number of students in the study program; b) a number of seats in the group work rooms corresponding to at least 10% of the total number of students in the study program; c) their own book stock from Albanian and foreign speciality literature, enough to cover the disciplines within the curricula, out of which at least 50% should represent book titles or speciality courses of recognised publishers, from the last 10 years; d) a book stock within its own library with a sufficient number of books so as to cover the needs of all students in the cycle and year of study the respective discipline is provided for; e) a sufficient number of subscriptions to Albanian and foreign publications and periodicals, according to the stated mission.		X
Standard 7.6. The infrastructure and facilities dedicated to the implementation of the program is adapted to students with special needs		X

Compliance level: Non-compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Provide actual numbers on the class sizes the lecture hall, meeting rooms and laboratories can realistically accommodate;*
2. *Show in the video the videoconferencing auditorium;*



3. *It was not clear to the expert team where all the relevant facilities are located. For example, mention is made of facilities at Prizren. Can all relevant locations and function be clarified;*
4. *In respect of IT provision is the Faculty computer laboratory the only one available, and is this a shared facility;*
5. *Provide evidence that student demand for places is realistic, given the student income cited in the financial plan, and correct the dates presented on the financial plan;*
6. *Appoint a body or person with overall responsibility for space / facilities/ equipment;*
7. *Address standard 7.5 to provide reassurance that all demanded provisions in respect of work / reading spaces etc are met;*
8. *Address the perceived shortfall in the library provision of up to date and relevant textbooks in both Albanian and foreign languages;*
9. *Show examples where infrastructure and facilities have been adapted to students with special needs.*

3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

2 OVERALL COMPLIANCE

Standard	Compliance level
1. Mission, objectives and administration	Partially compliant
2. Quality management	Partially compliant



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3. Academic staff	Substantially compliant
4. Educational process content	Partially compliant
5. Students	Fully compliant
6. Research	Substantially compliant
7. Infrastructure and resources	Non-compliant
Overall compliance	Partially compliant

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the BSc study program “Medical Biochemistry” offered by UBT is **Partially compliant** with the standards included in the *KAA Accreditation manual* and, therefore, recommends *not to accredit* the study program.

4. APPENDICES (if available)

None

Expert Team

Chair



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(Signature)

Prof. Kenneth Wann

04.05.2021.

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Asnate Kazoka

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