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Agjencia e Kosovës për Akreditim
Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency

PRISHTINA UNIVERSITY

BANKING AND FINANCE/MSc

RE-ACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

2nd of JULY, 2020, PRISHTINA



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: July/2/2020

Expert Team (ET) members:

- *Prof. Dr. Magdalena Iordache Platis*

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- *Naim Gashi, Acting Director of KAA*
- *Shkelzen Gerxhaliu, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring*
- *Ilirjane Ademaj, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring*
- *Arianit Krasniqi, Senior Officer for Accreditation and Evaluation*
- *Leona Kovaci, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring*

Sources of information for the Report:

- *Self - Evaluation Report (SER) for Banking and Finance/BSc;*
- *SER for the connected programs: Banking and Finance/MSc level and SER for Money, Bank, Finance, Insurance MSc;*
- *Website – University of Prishtina;*
- *Additional documents requested after the online site visit;*
- *Information provided during the online site visit.*

Criteria used for program evaluation:

- *Compliance to Standards and performance indicators for external quality assurance from the Accreditation Manual of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency;*
- *Fitness to standards of the evidence provided by the university.*



1.2. Site visit schedule

2nd of July

09.00 – 09.30 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 and this applies for each session*)

- 09.30 – 10.30** Meeting with the heads of the study programme (BA programme)
10.30 – 11.30 Meeting with the heads of the study programme (MA programme)
11.30 – 12.10 Lunch break
12.10 – 12.50 Meeting with quality assurance representatives
12.50 – 13.30 Meeting with teaching staff
13.30 – 14.10 Meeting with students
14.10 – 14.50 Meeting with graduates
14.50 – 15.30 Meeting with employers of graduates
15.30 – 15.45 Internal meeting between KAA and experts
15.45 – 15.55 Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and program

Nr.	Study programs	Experts	Responsible persons of study programs		
1	Banking and Finance BSc	Magdalena Platis	1. Hysen Ismajli	2. Skender Ahmeti	3. Vlora Prenaj 4. Alban Elshani
2	Banking and Finance MSc	Magdalena Platis	1. Driton Balaj	2. Safet Merovci	3. Drita Konxheli
3	Management BSc	Tornikie Khoshtaria	1. Berim Ramosaj	2. Lura Rexhepi	3. Veton Zeqiraj
4	Management MSc	Tornikie Khoshtaria	1. Enver Kutillovci	2. Sevdie Alshiqi	3. Gentrir Berisha
5	Money, Bank, Finance, Insurance MSc	Dorota Dobija and Christoph Back	1. Arben Dermaku	2. Arber Hoti	3. Mjellma Carabregu 4. Arbana Sahiti



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

The Banking and Finance Program/MSc is organized as part of the Faculty of Economics which is an academic unit within University of Prishtina "HASAN PRISHTINA". The Faculty of Economics was set up in 1961/62 as a joint faculty together with the Faculty of Law, but after 1971/72, the faculty is itself an academic unit of the university. *“The Faculty of Economics is an institution dedicated to the preparation of capacities for taking the leadership roles in the community through teaching, research and practice in the field of Economics”*, according to SER (page 3).

At the university level, according to SER (page 5), “The Steering Council decides on the budget of the academic unit according to the Rector's proposal and budget hearing within the academic unit”; “Each faculty is led by the Dean and can be assisted by two or three deputy deans (Deputy dean for Science, Deputy dean for Financial Affairs, and Deputy dean for Teaching), and they are elected by the Council with an absolute majority votes”; “The Faculty of Economics has the Secretary of the Faculty who helps the Dean and the Deputy deans in their work and follows the legal part of the work of the staff”. At the same time, the Council of the Faculty and the Student Council are important decisional bodies within the Faculty of Economics.

The program “Banking and Finance MSc” is considered as proposed for re-accreditation, being a program of level VII and of 2 years of studies, generating 120 ECTS, being placed in the main campus of the university; the proposal is for a high number of students: 150 students (*“number of available enrolment slots”* – SER, page 7). This program is submitted as a new version of the previous program on “Banking, Finance and Accounting MSc” which based on the previous international experts’ recommendations is no longer functional being instead split into two other programs: Banking and Finance MSc and Accounting MSc. Therefore, the current evaluation for Banking and Accounting MSc is considered as re-accreditation; in addition, most of the evidence is connected to the former program: staff, students, graduates, employers. For example, the number of students (SER, page 13) show the following: graduates in 2017 were 137 and in 2018, 133 students; number of students enrolled in 2017 and 2018 were 150 and 154. These figures include the 3 areas related to the previous program. Therefore, the future figures only for Banking and Finance (2 areas out of 3) will be somehow smaller, as Accounting will be a totally separate program.



2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

2.1. Mission, objectives and administration

According to SER (page 3), “The Faculty of Economics has a mission to prepare capacities that contribute to the overall economic and social development of Kosovo and beyond, to advance global knowledge in the field of economy”. For the proposed program, in SER (page 7) it is considered that:

- *“The purpose of the study program Master of Science in Banking and Finance is to equip students with inclusive and accredited academic and scientific education in the field of banking and finance.*
- *This program offers students preparation in the theory of banking and finance and focuses on student training for scientific research methods”.*

In an additional document, called “Mission statement of the University (Faculty) and the programme”, it is stated that “The Faculty of Economics has a mission to prepare capacities that contribute to the overall economic and social development of Kosovo and beyond, to advance global knowledge in the field of economy”. During the discussion with the faculty management, the components of the faculty mission were considered: learning/knowledge, research and international university-business cooperation. Therefore, the study program mission is in compliance with the general mission statement of the Faculty of Economics, especially considering the interest in providing solutions for the banking industry of the country; the master program focuses on scientific research methods and this differentiates the program from the BSc in the same field.

The design of the curriculum has considered the National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, but there is no evidence that the faculty/program management asked for relevant academic and professional advice in the process of defining the intended learning outcomes; learning outcomes are described for the disciplines in all years presented in SER (pages 28-40). Instead, there is a Regulation for the master studies at institutional level (<https://ekonomiku.uni-pr.edu/getattachment/Vendimet/RRegullore-per-Master-2019.pdf.aspx>) adopted in 2019 and the Faculty of Economics has provided to ET as annexes to SER the document called “RREGULLORE MBI STUDIMET MASTER” in which it is stated that *“The master studies are led by the collegium of master studies of the respective departments. The Collegium consists of all teachers who are engaged in implementation of study-master programs in the*



respective departments. List of teachers proposed by the Departments for the implementation of the program in master studies is approved by the Faculty Council. The Collegium of Master Studies is headed by the Vice Dean for Teaching.” Within these documents, clarifications are included on how a student can take the master thesis starting from the topic and the decision making on allocating a professor as a mentor to guide the students. The text included the importance of the practical related connection to the topics and the research oriented component. Therefore, there is formal evidence that academic staff cooperate. During the discussion with the management of the faculty, it was clear that some informal professional advice has been offered in the process of program delivery.

The general didactic and research concept of the program is explained in SER (pages 9-10), by considering the same principles for the didactic concept explanations: “For this reason, teaching and learning at the program level is based on these principles: Reflection, diversity, the use of the Electronic Management System for students and new technologies, use of information technology within different subjects, the combination of theory with practice, collaboration between staff and students, internationalization”. As for the research concept of the program, in SER, it is states that there are some activities considered “*to be very important and contributing to the increase of research activities at the level of the program, the faculty, and the UP as a whole:*

- *Support for applications in various research grants*
- *Support in the management of research grants*
- *Strengthening the legal basis for research activity*
- *Creation of a network of experts and various local/international institutions*
- *Budget allocation at university level for research activities*
- *Adoption of certain regulations foreseen for research activities by the staff*
- *International staff trainings and certifications*
- *Staff support for participation in conferences/seminars/international workshops*
- *Exchange of staff and students for realization of research activities;*
- *Joint publications with international professors in various prestigious international journals;*
- *International scientific networking*
- *Joint research projects*
- *Reward of researchers*
- *Involvement of students in research activities*
- *The international number of students*
- *Number of international visitors professors”.*



Therefore, the list is totally identical to the BSc program on Banking and Finance. ET accepts that regarding principles that explain the teaching and learning processes can be the same for BSc and MSc, as in terms of principles, they are considered fundamental aspects that provide a foundation for programs. For the research concept instead, ET considers that starting from the mission statement which for the master level includes a higher orientation to research field, the research concept must reflect this differentiation and thus, the study program will have a well-defined research concept.

In SER, (page 10) many documents and links are provided, but not all of them with a functional link:

- "Access to payment forms: <https://notimi.uni-pr.edu/fletpagesatonline>
- SEMS: <https://notimi.uni-pr.edu>
- Application for students with index: <https://notimi.uni-pr.edu/ApplicationMeIndex>
- e-Referent (Frequently Asked Questions): <https://ekonomiku.uni-pr.edu/getattachment/Ballina/e-referentii.pdf.aspx>
- Syllabuses: <https://ekonomiku.uni-pr.edu/Departamentet.aspx>
- Curriculum 2011/2015: <https://ekonomiku.uni-pr.edu/Planprogramet.aspx>
- Curriculum 2016/2019: [https://ekonomiku.uni-pr.edu/Planprogramet-\(1\).aspx](https://ekonomiku.uni-pr.edu/Planprogramet-(1).aspx)
- Brochure and guide: <https://ekonomiku.uni-pr.edu/Broshura.aspx>
- Faculty Regulations: <https://ekonomiku.uni-pr.edu/Vendimet.aspx>
- Projects: <https://ekonomiku.uni-pr.edu/Projects.aspx>
- Accredited programs: <https://ekonomiku.uni-pr.edu/Programs-e-credited.aspx>
- Disciplinary Commission Decisions: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B_36rMoVdto4QmVnUm1rQËNrTFE
- Schedule of meetings at the Faculty:
- Monographs of the University: https://ekonomiku.uni-pr.edu/Files/Documents/Relevante/Monografia_opt.aspx
- University Statements: https://ekonomiku.unipr.edu/Files/Dokumente/Relevante/pasqyra_up_2008.aspx".

Although the list is clear, some of the links are not functional. Nevertheless, most important regulations are provided at <https://ekonomiku.uni-pr.edu/Vendimet.aspx> (some in English, some in Albanian), being divided as referring to bachelor level or master level of studies.



Therefore, ET considers that there are formal policies, guidelines and regulations dealing with recurring procedural or academic issues. made publicly available to staff and students.

There are several internal regulations that include ethical conduct references, such as the “Statute of the University of Prishtina and various accompanying regulations, which regulate the ethical behaviour of staff and students in research, teaching, and assessment in all academic and administrative activities. One of the key regulations is also the "Regulation on Disciplinary Procedure", which sets out the basic principles of disciplinary procedures for professors and students.” – SER, page 11. Unfortunately, the link provided to check the decisions of the disciplinary commission is again, not functional (SER, page 11: “Otherwise, all decisions of the disciplinary commission are public and posted on this link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B_36rMoVdto4endMËUZuËËY4Unc”). The university has also a Code of Ethics that applies to the faculty members. Unfortunately, almost all the annexes provided to SER are in Albanian (21 annexes), and this made the whole work of the ET very difficult. Nevertheless, ET considers that academic community, including staff and students comply with the internal regulations relating to ethical conduct in research, teaching, assessment in all academic and administrative activities.

Guidelines for programs are revised regularly. Last revision of the documents for the program was in 2018, according to <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1dcrU6WWu8y3f-774KwamObLns0pNWKQe>; this is a functional link and includes guidelines for different programs; once opened the document, the year is 2017, but the revision was made in 2018; ET assumes that no content revision was necessary at the 2018 time. Many other regulations that are applied at the faculty are documents from the institutional level and needs recent revision. Therefore, regulations relating to the management and delivery of the program are reviewed at least once every two years.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Redefine the research concept of the program, differentiating from the BSc in the same field of Banking and Finance, revealing the focus on student training for scientific research methods, as this is part of the program mission;*
2. *Express the difference and competitive advantage for the MSc on Banking and Finance from the title of the program; suggestion: “Advanced Studies in Banking and Finance”;*



3. *Consider an annually mechanism/procedure of getting academic and professional advice in defining/revising learning outcomes – either by organizing a focus group or a survey;*
4. *Integrate research into teaching (example: some results of different research projects to be integrated into syllabi at different subjects);*
5. *Revise the documents uploaded and increase the number of regulations that are publicly available and also translated.*

2.2. Quality management

According to SER (page 17), “the staff of the Faculty of Economics, including that of the Bachelor of Science in Banking and Finance program, participates in self-assessment to enhance the quality of the teacher as well as teaching in general. Evaluation and planning for improvement processes are integrated into the normal planning processes” and currently the assessment “is computerized and implemented through SEMS and that has facilitated the process of producing quick analyses and has made the data generated for staff performance more reliable”. According to the Statute of the University (<https://ekonomiku.uni-pr.edu/getattachment/Vendimet/Statute-of-UP.pdf.aspx>), Art. 216: “Evaluation of teaching, of scientific research, and artistic work of staff shall be conducted in the following manner: 1.2. questionnaires and self-evaluation conducted by academic staff”. Nevertheless, although, the SER mentions that self-assessment is integrated in the process of enhancing quality of teaching, there is no clear evidence at this stage on the fact that all staff participate in self-evaluations and cooperate with reporting and improvement processes in their sphere of activity. The only document of evaluation is “STUDENT EVALUATION FOR TEACHING AND COURSES” provided as additional document, but this does not cover the area of self-evaluation. In addition, academic staff should have a visible interest in their sphere of activity, including research; unfortunately, the CVs provided are some cases with research publications of 2017 as most recent ones (example: Muhamet Ali CV-en); ET appreciates the CVs that are up to date, even till 2019, such as that of Nexhmie Berisha Vokshi.

An interest in improvement is integrated into normal planning process, mainly on the basis of the students’ evaluation on teaching and courses. In the list “THE LIST OF ALL CERTIFIED STAFF MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PRISHTINA DURING THE PERIOD NOVEMBER 2017 - FEBRUARY 2020 (UNIVERSITY OF MITROVICA "ISA BOLETINI" - UMIB STAFF INCLUDED)” provided to ET as additional document, different teaching



trainings were taken by staff member of the Faculty of Economics. In addition, the real number of participants is higher, as in the end of the document is the following explanation: *“The number of participants in CTE trainings is greater than is shown on this list. Only those participants who attend all the sessions of the training get certified. Participants who miss sessions are required to attend them in the next round of trainings in order to complete the training and have their certificate issued”*.

According to SER (page 18):

- *“The University performs evaluation activities on an on-going basis in areas such as: a) Assessment of the quality of teaching (as a sample, a questionnaire for course assessment is attached to Annex 19) b) Evaluation of Student Services c) Evaluation of scientific activity and doctoral studies d) Evaluation of international cooperation e) Evaluation of learning resources;*
- *The assessment of the University activities is guided by the Central Quality Assurance and Evaluation Commission at the University. The University's activity assessment process is administered by the Office for Academic Development with the assistance of quality assurance and evaluation coordinators, in the academic units and the working group, which is established as needed”*.

Main issues of quality assurance are managed at the institutional level. Different services and resources within university are provided for students within the program of MSc on Banking and Finance. There are 108 places in computer rooms and 220 places in the library, according to the additional document called “Report, written or visual about resources like library capacity etc”. There are several examples of services and support related to the program planning and delivery:

- Advisory Board at the Faculty of Economics established since 2015, about which it is mentioned that *“All the present members signed a memorandum of understanding and committed to offer technical assistance in improving study programs, to develop joint scientific projects, and to offer students opportunities to apply their theoretical knowledge in practice”* (<https://www.uni-pr.edu/page.aspx?id=2,24>);
- in the area of curriculum development: *“The development of a study program is a continuous process. The process is better when there is: 1. Evaluation of the existing program 2. Compilation of an improved program/ respectively a new program 3.*



Implementation of a new program 4. Evaluation of the revised program” (<https://www.uni-pr.edu/page.aspx?id=2,26>);

- the university has a short guide for revising the syllabi and curriculum development which applies also to the programs at the Faculty of Economics (<https://www.uni-pr.edu/desk/inc/media/02BA1AB5-2325-4800-9BD5-1FBF4EBA253F.pdf>).

Therefore, ET considers that in general, quality assurance processes deal with different aspects of program planning and delivery; also, different services and resources are provided by other parts of the institution. Examples abovementioned demonstrate this support.

In SER (page 18) it is mentioned that “*Dean of the Academic Unit develops the improvement plan after each evaluation activity and sets the measures to be taken in the annual budget of the Academic Unit.*” The Faculty does not elaborate regular quality overview of the program apart from the period of submitting for external evaluation. A draft of the strategic plan was provided as additional document considered a document (not yet approved) generated from a workshop in 2017; in this document, an objective is “Study programs”, with 6 measures; there is no relevant connection to learning outcomes revision or other program quality overview.

Quality assurance processes are mostly organized at an institutional level (<https://www.uni-pr.edu/page.aspx?id=2,25>). As supporting mechanisms, “*there are a number of mechanisms for quality improvement in the University. The quality of research activities of the academic staff of UP is measured through publications in scientific journals with international review and participation in scientific conferences in the country and abroad. Also, the promotion of academic staff is done based on the number of publications in journals with international review. The data is collected from the faculties for students’ performance such as: the percentage of passing in exams, organization of continuous assessment, duration of studies etc. Also, a traditional mechanism is the accreditation of study programs by the Senate of UP, where every new study program should pass through the faculty structures, and then be approved by the Senate*”. Nevertheless, at the program level, there is only a report on staff performance provided as additional document called “Example of Staff performance report”; Here, there are only issues in relationship to the teaching activity. In fact, quality assurance processes include more criteria than teaching and not only related to academic staff. Quality assurance processes cover at least the following areas: teaching and learning; research; service to society; student support services; governance and administration of the faculty. At this stage, there is evidence only for teaching domain, as part of the quality assurance internal



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evaluation. Therefore, ET considers that quality processes should cover more areas, such as the abovementioned to ensure both that required standards are met and that there is continuing improvement in performance; for example, an internal review can be done annually at a program level, following the standards for accreditation/reaccreditation.

Survey data is collecting from students; SER (page 18) mentions about an interest in collecting data from international students and companies. Unfortunately, at this stage, there is no clear evidence on surveys and their reports from graduates and employers. During the discussion with the employers, participants mentioned more or less of their cooperation with the faculty, such as participation as investors in classrooms, as lecturers on topics related to Banking and Finance, to career development, participation to job fairs. They did not mention any survey at this stage. Indicators from the institutional strategy can be applied (<https://www.uni-pr.edu/page.aspx?id=2,27>) at faculty level.

Development of the study program is based on the curriculum development which is institutionally managed (<https://www.uni-pr.edu/page.aspx?id=2,26>). In addition, the program follows the institutional guide for reviewing and revising the syllabi (<https://www.uni-pr.edu/page.aspx?id=2,26>); in this document (page 7) it is mentioned that “*The aim of writing a good and quality syllabus is to provide information to students on the content of a course and its key elements: aim and purpose of the course, learning outcomes, student’s workload, methodology of teaching and learning, assessment method and reading material. This enables students to pick suitable courses and prepare for them - they will know what to expect from the course and what is expected from them as learners.*”. Plus, the current program has been reconsidered after the previous international experts’ recommendations and changed accordingly from Banking, Finance and Accounting to Banking and Finance. In terms of employment of graduates, the discussions with the graduates revealed that it was easy for them to find a job in the field of their studies, most of them finding a job through the internship opportunity. Therefore, the ET considers that the development of the program is based on evaluation results, including investigation of the student workload, academic success and employment of graduates.

The faculty takes care in submitting reports on time for reaccreditation. In SER (page 19) it is mentioned that:” Quality Assurance Central Committee and Assessment at Rectorate develops the five years plan and action plan for each year, which elaborates the activities undertaken each year. It includes evaluation activities of academic units”. In the report, there is a SWOT

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analysis showing the faculty preoccupation for self-identification of missing aspects to perform better in the program development.

In SER (page 19) it is stated that: “*Quality assurance arrangements for the program are evaluated and improved regularly by Central Quality Assurance and Evaluation Committee at the Rectorate*”. Quality assurance arrangements although they are set up mainly at institutional level, at department level, many arrangements can be considered and changed, such as: to extend the survey to employers, to organize focus groups with different stakeholders. Only through such an assessment, what is done at a program level will be demonstrated as functional and effective. In other words, quality assurance arrangements cannot remain only for institutional responsibility, but also for faculty or departmental level, as each program has its own mission.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Create a formal procedure for self-assessment of academic staff, including all their areas of activity: teaching, research and society engagement based on criteria and indicators; the same criteria and indicators can be considered in the process of evaluation of academic staff by the management;*
2. *Elaborate a simple annual program overview as internal evaluation of the program considering inputs, processes and outputs, with particular attention given to learning outcomes for students; this can be done by the Head of department and presented to the Dean, with few indicators as performance; develop an assessment for program quality assurance arrangements;*
3. *Include in the quality assurance processes, not only teaching but also criteria related to teaching and learning; research; service to society; student support services; governance and administration of the faculty;*
4. *Extend surveys to graduates and employers, besides the survey addressed to students; make them public, as statistical reports and show that this work counts by taking proper decisions based on them;*
5. *Start the creation of an internal data-base for alumni (many of the students at MSc are graduates from BSc in the same field), as this is accepted as a weakness, and can easily be overcome;*



2.3. Academic staff

In SER (page 15-22) a list of full staff is provided – 15 members. In addition, in additional documents provided after the visit, the same list was provided and although the list of part time was also asked for, this was not provided for MSc on Banking and Finance. They all have teaching responsibilities and consultation hours (4-6 hours/week); with the exception of the deputy dean and head of department, the other members of the academic staff do not appear as being in charge of any administrative activities. In addition, although research is part of the regular activity of academic staff, it is not included in the provided table. Nevertheless, other elements are clear: category of full position, duration of contract.

As stated in SER (page 22): *“The teaching staff is in compliance with the legal requirements regarding the occupation of teaching positions, which are included in the Administrative Instruction on Accreditation. The Economy Faculty of (EF) has adequate academic staff for offered studies. The Faculty has consistently invested in academic staff by supporting them in academic studies and academic advance. In accordance with Article 171, paragraph 2, the academic staff of the UP consists: regular professors, associate professors, assistant professors, university assistants, lecturers”*. Therefore, teaching staff comply with legal requirements in relationship to the teaching positions. In addition, there is a regulation on staff selection adopted in 2019 at institutional level: <https://ekonomiku.uni-pr.edu/getattachment/Vendimet/Regulation-on-Selection-Procedure-of-Staff.pdf.aspx>.

During the visit, questions in relationship to the working load, especially regarding teaching, revealed that in case of a high number of students, the same subject can be taught by different persons. Therefore, ET admits that 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.

As for the program on Banking and Finance MSc there are 15 full time and unclear situation of part-time staff, ET is reserved in calculation the percentage of full time staff working at this program. In addition, the program is developed with 120 ECTS and therefore, the faculty has more than 3 full time professors with PhD title.

In SER (Page 23) it is stated that: *“Within the University of Prishtina, academic staff are obliged to have at least two teaching training, which can be done at the Center for Excellence*



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in Teaching (QPM) of the University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina" or somewhere at any other training center within or outside the country. QPM provides basic level teaching training titled: Teaching in Higher Education as well as the advanced one with the title: Planning and implementation of teaching in higher education. This shows that measures have been taken within the institution for the training of teaching staff in the theory and practice of student assessment as well as other issues of teaching.” The additional document on certified professors shows the interest in staff training. During the meeting with the teaching staff, participant confirmed that they have opportunities for additional professional development and can get assistance in case of difficulties.

Academic staff have responsibilities in the area of teaching mainly and research. Consultations are provided regularly to students. Unfortunately, there is no evidence on engagement of staff neither in the academic community, nor for community service. This can be easily done once the local community is identified. The reputation of the faculty can increase in case of engagement of staff in community service, but in a formal and visible way, with proper announcement and press communicates.

Academic staff is evaluated regularly by students, every semester. In addition, “*The Office for Academic Development in the framework of the UP, respectively the Assessment Unit, performs evaluations, processes the data, conveys results and according to the management requirements compiles reports related to the evaluation results*” – according to SER (page 24). The management is considering the attendance for staff through the “Module for identification of students and teachers in learning through ID cards”, as part of SEMS. Unfortunately, this is more of a checking processes of attendance, not a proper superior evaluation. There are no peer evaluations, as well.

The guide for reviewing the syllabi (<https://www.uni-pr.edu/desk/inc/media/02BA1AB5-2325-4800-9BD5-1FBF4EBA253F.pdf>) explains into details how to write the syllabi, including the teaching methods, learning outcomes, references and learning materials. In addition, the syllabi provided together with SER cover most important areas. Nevertheless, some elements must be considered in the near future: at Microeconomics, basic literature is very, very old (1999), while the additional one is more recent; at European Economic Integration, basic literature is only in English (while the program is in Albanian) and 14 years old. In general, teaching strategies are improving through trainings and measures and results



have been considered in the Strategic plan (not yet finalized, due to the pandemic context at the visit date).

“At Banking and Finance department, teachers retire at the age of 65, as needed, engagement up to the age of 70 in the absence of staff in the field, or there have been cases for a period when for other engagements or other reasons and circumstances, lose status full-time teachers and are considered as part-time teachers”, according to SER (page 24).

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Create a mechanism to involve academic staff into academic community life, with clear and formal responsibilities (apart from management positions as well as into service community;*
- 2. Elaborate mechanisms in which academic staff coordinates different programs to allow students to apply as volunteers to provide service to community; make these public on the website;*
- 3. Create a self-assessment document and a superior-assessment for academic staff; monitoring the attendance can be a component of it, but all areas must be covered: teaching, research, service to community, engagement in academic community;*
- 4. Revise the syllabi annually, or at least at every 2 years, as content can change and literature, too, in a dynamic world as the contemporary context.*

2.4. Educational process content

According to SER (page 41):

- “The purpose of the Master Program of Science in Banking and Finance is to equip students with problem solving skills to enable them to work independently and responsibly in future professional areas in one scientific and practical environment.*
- This program offers students preparation in the theory and practice of the banking and finance field and focuses on student training for scientific research methods.*
- As a result, students graduated from this program will be prepared to pursue a career in academia, research institutes, but also the financial sector”.*



The study program is modelled on qualification objectives. The interdisciplinary is based on socio-economical subjects integrated into curriculum together with subjects dedicated to law issues. The design of the curriculum is based on specific learning outcomes which allow graduates to address to banking industry and financial sector. Learning outcomes are correlated through each syllabus with forms of assessment (evaluating the achieved learning outcomes) and teaching methods. These learning outcomes are declared for the MSc program as the following (SER pages 41-42):

- *“An advanced understanding of the role of banks in a modern economy.*
- *An advanced understanding of the operation and behavior of banks, financial markets and investments.*
- *Ability to determine the main components of the banking and financial environment of countries and how different environmental components change in different countries.*
- *Ability to identify banking and financial issues and make recommendations for appropriate course of action*
- *-Development of the ability to critically address knowledge issues in the field of banking and finance.*
- *-Developing the ability to link theoretical and practical concepts and to formulate thoughts on current issues in the field of banking and finance.*
- *- Ability to use econometric and statistical methods including collecting and analyzing data for independent research work”.*

The study program is of Level VII in relationship to the Level of qualification according to NQF, which means a bachelor degree, generating at graduation 120 ECTS. Specific components of the program are combined in a way to achieve the specified qualification objectives and provide for adequate forms of teaching and learning.

The disciplines within the curriculum for Banking and Finance MSc are integrated from general to specific, from fundamental, to specialized dedicated to the banking and financial sector. The curriculum is developed in a way which in general, corresponds to general and specific competences which are described in the syllabi. The flow is logic but nevertheless, there are some disciplines which have the same title (name) with those included in the BSc. The disciplines have syllabuses and the structure of them covers main areas – course data and academic unit, short subject description, objectives, expected learning outcomes, description of the student load in connection to student learning outcomes, teaching methodology, assessment methods, literature (basic and additional), learning plan and some description



regarding rules of conduct. Nevertheless, some syllabi need revision, and update especially regarding the literature, to make it up to date. The program is offered in Albanian. Nevertheless, students should be motivated to read international literature.

The relationship student-professor is oriented towards students' benefit. Management of the program and teaching staff confirmed during the visit that they gave an *open door* policy, meaning that even there are no office hours as consulting hours, students can come and talk to them. Students confirmed the openness of the teachers. Learning outcomes are explained and discussed with students from the perspective of their relevance to the students' development.

Teaching methods are explained in the syllabi. The staff use a variety of teaching methods and they are connected to the course specifications. Different needs of students are solved during consulting hours. In addition, students found out at the beginning of semester, of their courses which are their obligations and benefit from a clear communication with professors. Although the consulting hours are helping students a lot, there is no clear procedure to monitor the students' achievement to prevent the cases when their achievements might be inadequate to quality standards.

“The Master level program currently does not foresee mandatory practical work as a condition for graduating. Students of the Faculty of Economics, during their third year of studies can engage in a practice for at least 1 month. However, due to the large number of students, practical work is not foreseen as mandatory. But, students who have the opportunity to complete a practice according to the specifications outlined below, this work practice can be considered as optional subject”, according to SER (page 40). Nevertheless, ET cannot consider this kind of work neither as practical work integrated within curriculum, nor optional subject. There are no formal agreements with companies to receive students from MSc in internship stages, as this kind of work is accepted only for the students at BSc, as optional.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Re-consider the title of some disciplines/subjects: instead of Microeconomics some suggestions: Advanced Microeconomics or Managerial Economics or Fundamental and Advanced Microeconomics; instead of Macroeconomics, some suggestions: Macroeconomic Policies and Practice;*



2. *Update annually (or at least every 2 years) the syllabi, especially regarding the content of teaching and the literature; in banking and finance area, theory and practice are very dynamic; English literature can also be considered as additional to motivate students to read international literature;*
3. *Create a procedure to monitor the students' achievement in order to avoid/prevent situations where standards of student achievement are inadequate.*

2.5. Students

In SER (page 48) it is mentioned that: *“There are formal institutional procedures that the study program respects during the organization of student recruiting. Admission requirements are applied consistently and fairly to all students. After evaluating the preliminary competitions and the graduation reports, and after evaluating the application for studies at the Faculty of Economics, the dean of the academic unit, in consultation with the heads of departments, drafts the proposal for quotas for admission of regular students with correspondence for Master degree”*. In addition, for the current context, Guidelines for online applications have been set up at institutional level with clear messages to potential students: [https://apliko.uni-pr.edu/Downloads/UdhezuesiP%c3%abrAplikimOnlineStudent\(1\).pdf](https://apliko.uni-pr.edu/Downloads/UdhezuesiP%c3%abrAplikimOnlineStudent(1).pdf). Therefore, ET considers that admission requirements are consistently and fairly applied for all students. *“Candidates who have completed pre-degree studies in a study program may apply for enrollment in master studies in another program. In case of admission, the Academic Unit's Study Committee sets out differential exams to be submitted to the candidates in advance”* (SER, page 48).

According to SER (page 49), study groups are of 150 students (first year), 50 students (second year) and, there is a trend to make the group smaller, of 25 students; therefore, effective and interactive teaching and learning process is ensured. *“Every professor at least twice a week for two hours keeps the schedule of student consultations as students need to be consulted about seminar papers, diploma works, master works, doctoral studies, etc. Also, for each colloquium (test) and exam held, consultations with students are held. Consultations on colloquia and exams are held at least three days after the announcement of the results for each subject, in which case the students have access to their tests evaluated by the faculty”* – SER (page 53). This means that feedback is provided only to those students who come to consultation and enter into a dialog in this manner with the teacher. There is no clear mechanism by which all students can get feedback on their performance and results of assessments, unless this is asked by them.



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They might get feedback through the electronic system if this allows this from a technical point of view. In addition, there is a possibility to take an exam 3 times; students also benefit from a flexible treatment in special situations, with respect to deadlines and formal requirements in the program and to all examinations.

“The student assessment results are placed in the Electronic Management System for Students (SEMS)” and there are clear established documents for graduation – SER (page 49). The results obtained by the students throughout the study cycles are certified by the academic record.

At institutional level, a manual for monitoring the attendance was approved and started to be applied in 2018 (<https://ekonomiku.uni-pr.edu/getattachment/Vendimet/Manual-on-the-use-of-management-and-monitoring-of-attendance-at-the-University-of-Prishtina-Hasan-Prishtina.pdf.aspx>). Therefore, records of student completion rates are kept for all courses, in an electronical manner. The specific master regulation provided by the faculty and the regulation adopted at institutional level (<https://ekonomiku.uni-pr.edu/getattachment/Vendimet/RRegullore-per-Master-2019.pdf.aspx>) describe other procedural issues for the master program.

Participants to the meeting admit that there is a lot room for improvement in order to ensure that work submitted by students is original, as there is not software to fight against plagiarism. Professors, based on their experience try their best and use internet checking. This has also considered as a main weakness in SER (page 45): *“Lack of plagiarism tracking software makes it difficult to verify the submitted works by students of master studies”*.

Students’ rights are described in the university Statute and this is a public document. According to Article 78: *“The Students’ Council shall review and decide on all issues relating to students’ rights and obligations in the Faculty; The Students’ Council shall realize their own interests, regarding the progress of the teaching process, through their representatives in the Faculty Council”*. (<https://ekonomiku.uni-pr.edu/getattachment/Vendimet/Statute-of-UP.pdf.aspx>). These students’ rights also include the right to academic appeals (Art. 114).

In 2017 a regulation for academic student mobility was adopted as an institutional document. In addition, in SER (page 52) it is stated that: *“For the Economics department, the Faculty of Economic has the Agreement for the exchange of the students and its staff in the Bachelor,*



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Master and PhD which are financed from the European Commission through the ERASMUS+ program, University Cote d'Azur and the University of Applied Science HAMK”.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Create a mechanism for providing feedback to students on their performance and assessment, apart from consultations (students do not use this much);*
- 2. Try to develop internally a simple tracking system to fight against plagiarism, beginning to check the Master thesis (for instance comparative to previous thesis in previous years from the internal data base).*

2.6. Research

Professors teaching at Banking and Finance MSc are specialists in their field and publish articles in their field of expertise. This means that the academic staff has a proven track record of research results on the same topics as their teaching activity. They have the opportunity to participate in their Scientific Conferences and to publish in journals; the conferences are publicly announced at: <https://ekonomiku.uni-pr.edu/isc.aspx>.

According to SER (page 58), the Faculty of Economics has established in 2013 *The Economic Research Institute of the Faculty of Economics*, “with the aim of promoting and advancing scientific research work, motivating the educators to increase creative capacities for fruitful and effective work based on scientific research”. The list of scientific research papers and conferences (Annexes 10, 11, 12) at SER shows that research interest of the staff is diverse and not yet based on a research development plan of the faculty. In addition, staff faces a lot of challenges due to weaknesses, among which are stated in SER (page 68): “Discrepancies between expectations and support of research; Lack of financial support for staff for conducting research activities, including participation in conferences”. Therefore, at the time of visit, the study program does not have defined scientific/applied research objectives and a connection between objectives and resources cannot be determined, due to national and institutional characteristics, including lack of autonomy in deciding on financial issues.

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In the “REGULATION ON SELECTION PROCEDURES REGARDING APPOINTMENT, REAPPOINTMENT AND ADVANCEMENT OF THE ACADEMIC STAFF AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRISHTINA "HASAN PRISHTINA" adopted in 2019 there are clearly stated condition for staff evaluation and criteria (<https://ekonomiku.uni-pr.edu/getattachment/Vendimet/Regulation-on-Selection-Procedure-of-Staff.pdf.aspx>) ; the document is public and include the Appendix II called “FORM FOR RESEARCH, SCIENTIFIC AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY”. Therefore, clear policies are established for defining what is recognized as research, consistent with international standards and established norms.

The academic staff validate their research through research publications. These have been provided to ET in Annex 10,11,12 Scientific research, papers, conferences to SER. Some of the publications are co-authored with researchers from abroad. In addition, academic and research staff publish under the name of the institution of University of Prishtina. As for the conferences organized internally: “the Faculty of Economics has so far published two volumes of the conference in ISBN number in the attached scientific journal as attached as appendices” to SER (page 59).

The set of CVs provided include publications, in general. Unfortunately, not all of them are up to date. Example: Driton Balaj CV-en – scientific publications almost absent in the CV and no year of the publication mentioned for the few ones. As for the Albanian version of the CVs - they are published on the website (<https://ekonomiku.uni-pr.edu/Personeli/Personeli-akademik/Profesor-te-rregullt.aspx>), but not up to date either. In the additional documents, it is mentioned that “Everything is based in individual activities”. Professors are performing research work individually publishing individually thus there is no program development plan” – document called “Current research projects in the field of banking and finance”. In addition, in SER (page 64) it is stated that: “*Possibly, students are engaged in research projects and other activities, although the number of projects is a few but through various tasks students are provided with such opportunities*”. Therefore, it is difficult to consider that students are engaged in research projects, but it a lot of room for improvement in this area.

Policies have not been yet established for ownership of intellectual property; there are no clear procedures set out for commercialization of ideas developed by staff and students. Staff is aware of the importance of such regulations. This should be set up at institutional level.



Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Make The Economic Research Institute of the Faculty of Economics operational and visible: create a webpage, publish its strategy, participate to call for projects, develop some internal projects and create competitions that address to joint teams of professors and students; for the master level, the Institute will be an important resource/unit to support the research development;*
2. *Motivate academic staff to publish in teams, mainly including authoring with staff from other universities in Kosovo or outside;*
3. *Create a session at the Conference organized by the faculty addressed to students and allow them to present a paper based on research and based on a teachers' coordination; this can be their Master thesis as a work on progress paper.*

2.7. Infrastructure and resources

According to SER (page 70):

- *“The Faculty of Economics has about 3,500 m² of physical space, excluding corridors and staircases. About one third of them are classrooms.*
- *All the academic staff is located in cabinets / offices which are solid spaces for independent scientific work which are equipped with computers, internet, printer/scanner”.*

Faculty of Economics has resources to allow students to benefit from a high level of education, especially in terms of human resources and specific categories of staff. Students have access to students services managed by Central administration (<https://www.uni-pr.edu/page.aspx?id=2,13>).

According to SER (pages 71-72): *“According to the Statute of the University of Prishtina (Art. 60 and Article 61), the Faculty of Economics likewise, as other academic units have available a percentage of the financial resources that come from student fees to improve educational quality as well as to cover unforeseen expenditures educational staff. This percentage is decided by the Steering Council of the University of Prishtina. This implies that the Faculty of Economics has no legal competencies for independent financial planning and management.”* As a consequence, there is no financial plan at the level of the study program that would



demonstrate the sustainability of the study program; this analysis could be done at institutional level but including all programs.

“Currently, Faculty of Economics provides space for 150 students at one time to utilize facilities for learning”, as stated in the additional document called “Report, written or visual about resources like library capacity etc”. “Each teaching classroom has capacity for up to 100 students. Small amphitheatre has capacity for student groups up to 150, while the large amphitheatre is available for groups up to 300”, according to SER (page 72). Plus, SER (page 72) states that:

- “The faculty also has its own library and reading room, however, it has very little room for the large number of students who are admitted each academic year. The number of places in the reading room is 100. The Faculty of Economics library has over 2200 exemplars;
- At present, economic infrastructure is not adapted to meet the needs of students with disabilities”.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Diversify the sources for financing the library acquisition;
2. Contribute to an institutional decision on increasing financial resources and transparency for the faculty level;
3. Consider the website as a resource for internal and external stakeholder not only to promote events; make publicly available more documents to attract different partners and potential candidates to study programs. In other words, make the website more active and the faculty more transparent.

3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

The site visit (organized partially at the university and partially online) went very well. ET appreciates the effort put on providing proper answers and pertinent comments on questions and the participants willingness to explain issues raised during the discussions; this effort is much more valuable in the current pandemic situation when the availability of people to take part at such meetings as those requested by the re/accreditation procedures might be much reduced. Nevertheless, the university website and the faculty pages provided useful

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information, but many of the pieces of information were not easily accessible or were missing especially in the English version. Main recommendations are:

1. Finalize the establishment and functionality of The Economic Research Institute of the Faculty of Economics; it will be a valuable institutional unit to support research in the economic field;
2. Work on making more visible and clearer the differentiating elements of the program than others in the field (including BSc and other master programs at the same faculty);
3. Public on the website as many documents and information as possible; entire academic community and both internal and external stakeholders will cooperate more efficient when the information will be easily accessible;
4. Encourage students to research and create a session for them to communicate their research papers; this can be done as a simulation for the Master thesis;
5. Consider the standards-based recommendations and implement proper measures to accomplish them.

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the study program *MASTER OF SCIENCE IN BANKING AND FINANCE* is *Substantially compliant* with the standards included in the *KAA Accreditation manual* and, therefore, recommends *to accredit* the study program for a duration of *3 years* with a number of *120* students to be enrolled in the program.

4. APPENDICES *(if available)*

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Expert Team

Member

	Magdalena Iordache Platis	17 July 2020
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)