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*University of Prishtina  
Faculty of Education  
Primary Education, BA*

***REACCREDITATION***

**REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM**



*April 16, Prishtina*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Context

**Date of site visit (on line):** March 26, 2021

**Expert Team (ET) members:**

- Prof. Dr. Melita Kovacevic

**Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):**

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

**Sources of information for the Report:**

- Faculty of Education, Primaty Education, BA SER (Self Evaluation Report plus annexes);
- Meetings with management, staff, students, administrators, and graduates of the institution;
- Additional materials requested by the Expert

**Criteria used for program evaluation:**

- KAA Accreditation Manual



## 1.2. Site visit (on line) schedule

09.00 – 09.40	Meeting with the management of the faculty where the programme is integrated ( <i>no slide presentation is allowed, the meeting is intended as a free discussion</i> ) – joint session
09:45 – 10:25	Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff – joint session
10:30 – 11:10	Lunch break
11:00 – 12:10	Meeting with the heads of the study programme 1. Early Childhood Education (0-6 years), BA
12:15 – 13:15	Meeting with the heads of the study programme 2. Primary Education, BA
13:20 – 14:00	Meeting with teaching staff
14:05 – 14:45	Meeting with students
14:50 – 15:30	Meeting with graduates
15.35 – 16:15	Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders
16.15 – 16:25	Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts
16:25 – 16:35	Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and program

## 1.3. A brief overview of the institution and programme under evaluation

University of Prishtina is the main national higher education institution, while the teacher education has a long history starting 1958. Going through different developmental changes and transformations on a national level, but also following reform in European Higher Education Area, including the Bologna process, today, Faculty of Education is one of a leading faculties for a teacher education on all levels in Kosovo. This is an institution with a tradition, but also creating new modernised programmes and making educational advancements in the national higher education. The Faculty of Education offers programmes at bachelor and master level: three bachelor programmes, preschool, primary and pedagogy; and seven master programmes as well as a doctoral programme in Education Sciences.



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The Faculty has dean and three vice deans, covering different areas of institutional functioning. It is evident that the new governance and management of the faculty are well informed about modern teacher education and their efforts to introduce and implement changes that will contribute to the overall quality are well recognised.

Programme that is in the evaluation process is Primary Education, one of three bachelor programmes. It is a four year programme, and it holds a valid accreditation till September 2021.

## **2. PROGRAM EVALUATION**

### **2.1. Mission, objectives and administration**

The mission of the study programme, according to the SER, is in line with the mission of the University of Prishtina, as well as with the mission of the Faculty of Education. It is focused on providing education that will prepare teachers for different levels of education as well as other specialists in the field of education to work in different educational, research and societal settings.

The missions of the Faculty of Education is reviewed regularly every 3 to 4 years and the process is conducted in cooperation with different stakeholders. They have well defined long-term objectives, and presently they are in a process of developing a new Strategy, for the period of next three years. The Strategy is planned to be drafted in Autumn 2021. This is definitely positive approach, however, the institution should consider to work on little bit longer planning, instead of developing strategies for such a short period. Strategical planning for a longer periods will allow better monitoring and additional adjustments, and it will also require to develop adequate, applicable action plans, something that it does not happen presently. In other words, different approach would use time and energy of the faculty and its staff more efficiently and more effectively.

It has been noticed the the Dean also have well articulated programme for his mandate, something that could definitely have a positive impact on overall institutional development. Another positive step toward faster development is better connection with the Institute for



Development and Research in Education (IRDE), emphasizing the importance of Institute better functioning and providing an adequate setting for research activities.

The programme is align with NQF as well as it is in accordance with European Higher Education Area.

It does have well defined overarching didactic concept, though research is still weak and needs to be better blended with the curriculum. Most likely, the situation could change in a near future due to the fact that the Dean also has in his 4-year programme well articulated so called research clusters that should be reflected in more research activities of all the staff and their translation into teaching as well. Experience being supported financially by USAID and working on Transformational leadership program certainly triggered some positive changes.

The programme follows institutional policies and regulations and assures to have them available for staff and students. There are also ethical regulations assuring ethical conduct in teaching, research and all activities within the Department and Programme. The Faculty, has a set of documents and regulations on different levels in order to review the study programmes, and in principal, as stated in the SER, number of those decisions and regulations and responsibilities surpasses the competence of the Faculty and they are centralised, on a level of the whole University. However, it has been noticed that the Faculty, and its programmes trying to, within their limits, to develop number of activities to enhance a quality of teaching and staff performance. Nevertheless, it is not clear that the Programme is reviewed at least every two year. Additional information provided by the institution claim that there is a plan, within a new policy framework, to review all the programmes annually. This approach and regularity in reviewing the programme will facilitate quality assurance as well as it would accelerate to implement necessary changes.

**Compliance level:** Substantially compliant

**ET recommendations:**

- 1. Reconsider the necessity to better integrate research and to further develop its research concept relevant for the Programme in particular*
- 2. Implement programme reviewing annually or biannually, not only regarding quality of teaching, but the content of courses as well*



## 2.2. Quality management

Quality management meets majority of the standards as specified in the KAA accreditation manual. There are responsible staff for the quality management, there are procedures and all the staff as well as other main stakeholders are regularly involved in quality assuring processes. Quality office is in charge of implementing procedures, and to prepare and administer internal evaluation and student's evaluations. However, there is no evidence of regular self-evaluation of all the staff. Postively, the Faculty started to develop some of their internal actions, independently from the university, that might speed up some positive changes. This change and new planned activities would probably have a positive impact, in between other effects, on standard 2.9.

It has been also reported that among new activities of the Faculty, and within a new Policy framework, there is introduction of a regular survey of graduates. This activity has already started this year along with a few other planned activities, such as regular data collection (which is at the moment definitely very weak spot), staff performance appraisal, regular monitoring of international cooperation etc.

According to the SER and interviews, it has been noticed that staff participate in formal and informal reviews of student data and curriculum design. They also confirmed that the student evaluation processes were consistent and understood by both staff and students, and that they had personally benefitted from these quality assurance mechanisms. The missing aspect is continuous and regular analysis of all the element of the process (not only being focused on students' evaluations) which will significantly contribute to regular adjustments in the programme. For example, it has been reported by some of the participants during the interviews that the content of some courses is not adjusted to the overall content of the curriculum-programme and finally targeted audience – e.g. children in a primary school. It seems that the content of teaching is more the result of teachers' expertise per se. Definitely, regular evaluations and follow up, monitoring will allow faster and better adjustments.

However, the results from the evaluations are not fully available publicly and the data from the graduates and employers are not collected and analysed sufficiently. On a declarative level, there is a regular communication between teachers and employers or those stakeholders where students have a practical work, however in practice this does not work always this way. In addition, there is not sufficient monitoring and follow up of activities performed outside the

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Department. Again, each student doing a practical work would be monitored on site both by staff from those schools-institutions, but also by one designated teacher from the Faculty. Unfortunately, some students are never visited/monitored directly by his/her designated teacher while performing a practical work.

**Compliance level:** Partially compliant

**ET recommendations:**

1. *It is important to apply regular monitoring and follow up of all QA processes*
2. *It is necessary to implement regular staff self-evaluations*
3. *Special attention should be paid to the content of the courses and their complementary with the overall programme*
4. *Survey data collection must include employers and graduates as well*

**2.3. Academic staff**

Faculty of Education, being a part of University of Prishtina, does not have issues with a number of full time staff employed and their basic academic qualifications. Faculty, as a member of the University of Prishtina, has established procedures for selection as well as academic promotions, followed with adequate regulations and standards.

However, as it has been also reported in the SER, with no doubt, one of the weaknesses is the ratio of students-teacher, on one side, and the total number of teaching hours per teacher, on the other. Number of teachers, due to the fact that they teach at too many programmes, have 20 hours, number of them around 30, and there are example with more than 40 hour of teaching! Although such high workload of teaching staff is in accordance of the institutional regulations, it should be emphasized that such a workload does not leave the space for other academic activities, in particular research. In addition, this kind of teaching load could question the quality and level of teaching, as well as it does not allow other performances and sufficient engagement in research or fulfilment of other academic roles as well. Also, it has been identified, that the table with the staff teaching load per programme did not include the existing programme Preschool education which will keep teaching for the enrolled students after the two programmes merge into one. Taking into account all the evidence, number of programmes, number of students, old and new programme-s, although, formally according to the institutional





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regulations academic staff is not allowed to be engaged in other institutions-programmes, and this does not happen, standard 3.3. is evaluated negatively because of too big teaching load per person, which in number of cases is equivalent as to be employed/teach at least at two institutions. This aspect of functioning asks for careful rethinking how to manage all the programmes with the available staff. The present situation surely does not contribute to the overall quality of teaching and the programmes.

Nevertheless, it seems that the majority of academic staff selected for this programme is committed individuals who are devoted to programme development and also create good atmosphere working with the students. Still, it has been noticed during the interviews that there are some generation differences, some staff members being more type of 'ex catedra' teachers and a bit more conservative, keeping distance from the students, and those who are more flexible and lowering the distance between them and students. There is a sufficient balance between younger and more experienced staff on the program, however the main concern is with number of available staff and the number of students in total

It also appears that the Programme meets the basic minimum standards required in Standards 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.9 and 3.10 in the KAA Accreditation Manual.

Staff professional development it has been developed, in particular through implementation of some European projects and collaboration with other international universities, in particular is relevant support by the University of Indiana, USA. Up to now the institution has organised trainings and courses mainly with the support of others, which a significant positive impact as reported in the SER. However, it would be of the utmost importance to develop those courses/trainings with their own capacities and to make them regularly available in order to avoid a gap that might happen once the support of others stops.

In light of Standards 3.8, it seems relevant to stress the importance for internal quality to do staff evaluations regularly involving different stakeholders and to make them publicly available.

**Compliance level:** Substantially compliant

**ET recommendations:**

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1. *To rethink how to lower the number of teaching hours per staff member in order to enhance quality and open possibility for other academic activities as well*
2. *To organise their own more frequent and fit to the specific needs trainings for staff*

#### **2.4. Educational process content**

The programme is relatively well composed, having the balance between obligatory and elective course, but still some improvements should be taken into consideration. It is not fully logical, for example to have a course such as *Strategies and methods of reading and writing* as elective (one of the first skills child needs to acquire and it is essential for other school achievements), while some other courses, such as mathematics, are present in almost each semester. Although it seems that there is a wide range of electives, student shave very limited space to choose some (at the beginning, only one). In addition it would be good to increase number of courses that cover some generic skills. Still, it has been noticed that students receive training in different domains and they acquire different skills. Maybe it is relevant to report that during the site vist, students, but also employers, point to a need to have more courses related to research skills. Students were in particular stressing their preference to have courses on inclusive edication earlier in their curriculum, and probably it would be worthwhile of considering to ad some more courses from this area of education.

The study programme is in compliance with NQF as well as EHEA and complies with the Erasmus Subject Area Codes (ESAC). The programme follows Bologna scheme, although it is 4 year programme with 60 ECTS per year.

Standards 4.4 to 4.10 are met, As previously commented upon, the program is well offering among obligatory and elective courses, it has good distribution of ECTS and it offers students to choose courses that will build up their skills and competencies. The programme has listed 13 learning outcomes. However, regarding the standard 4.5 there are some difficulties, articulated both by teaching staff as well as students. Although students entering the programme have an opportunity to choose course for Enlglish learning, absorbing literature in English still might be an issue, at least for some students. Since the institution provides a possibility to learn language in the American Advising Center and following the ten years of provision pf english language courses for Faculty students, it would be beneficial both for the students and programme to find a way to additionally motivate students.



The syllabi produced are reasonable, and meet the expected standards. Sometimes there are occasional areas of re-using certain phrases or sentences in different courses, but this is a minor objection. Distribution of hours-students workload sometimes is not well adjusted and it would need revisiting. Learning outcomes through all the syllabi is not well adjusted, sometimes they are learning results, sometimes learning results but they also appear under different headings, and as much as it sounds as taking care of the form, it seems that some care of the content is also needed. However, the overall distribution of ECTS across courses seems well done.

Standards 4.6 - 4.9 appear generally to be met. The students and staff mentioned that the atmosphere in classes is positive and encouraging, and students mentioned that they felt comfortable with the student-teacher interactions. They also noted that they felt comfortable with the basic assessment mechanisms used. But, as noticed earlier, some differences in style and accessibility is linked to different generations of teachers.

Standard 4.11 is not met, mainly due to missing reliable, consistent monitoring of students performing practical work. Although each student gets two mentors, one from the field-institutions where she-he does the practice and one from the programme. However, it has been recognised that some students receive little or scarce mentorship. In other words, all the students do not receive the same level of monitoring and attention by their designated mentors, although formally this criterion is met.

**Compliance level:** Substantially compliant

**ET recommendations:**

1. *Revisit the structure of the Programme, in particular balancing the disciplines and distribution of courses in obligatory vs. electives*
2. *Put more emphasis on learning foreign language (English)*
3. *Consider to offer and-or introduce more courses re to research as well as generic skills, i.e. academic writing*
4. *Assure actual monitoring by the designated staff and a quality monitoring with an adequate feed back.*

**2.5. Students**



The students who participated during the on-line site visit were supportive, satisfied and generally very positive about the study programme they are enrolled. They were positive about the curriculum, but also teachers, and fielded in general. As it has been already mentioned, students did express their interest to have some courses better fitted to the need of a Programme (and the targeted recipients of education – children of certain age), they identify the need for more courses-experience related to research, and to receive monitoring and feed back related to their practical work.

The admission procedure seems to be clear, but it seems that it is still an issue to have well organised and available data on enrolment, completion etc. According to number of students and available staff, it seems that the intake is still too big (or too many programmes in total).

Students reported that they receive the feed back from their teachers and that they can approach teachers with no problems., though some differences among different generations of teachers are noted.

Students and staff agreed that the assessment mechanisms and grades are understood and are fairly applied. (Standards 5.4. and 5.5).

Standard 5.8 has not fully met yet. Although there are institutional regulations and committees dealing with misconduct, it appears to be no clear system to examine the originality of student work, and that burden falls upon teacher, primarily. It has been reported that the institution purchased a tool for plagiarism and this is an important step. It is still not operational, but hopefully the tool will be soon available to all the teaching staff.

Students and staff both verified that the students' rights and obligations were clearly understood, and that these were consistently upheld and supported. The students (and graduates) expressed an understanding of how to appeal disputed grades.

Academic staff expressed an understanding of, and willingness to comply with, requirements for student consultation and staff availability. Academic staff and students' statements matched.

**Compliance level:** Substantially compliant

**ET recommendations:**

1. *Assure technical support for plagiarism detection, preferable by purchasing a software*



2. *Motivate students to study English*
3. *More closely follow the completion rate and assure data for the cohorts of students*

## **2.6. Research**

Research objectives of the study programme follow the institutional strategy and it is intertwined within the programme, on one side, and reflected in staff activities on the other. It is also relevant to add that the research objectives are also specified in Dean's programme. It seems that the Faculty and the Programme are trying to improve research activities that exist, but more collective and institutional efforts are needed.

Academic staff are required to participate actively in the research community, usually as demonstrated by attendance at conferences or the publication of scholarly articles. The academic staff all seemed aware of this requirement and did not express any particular objections to this requirement. They noted that this is an almost universal expectation in higher education employment.

The publication rate does not meet Standard 6.7, which specifies at least one publication per year. While reading all the documents that accompanied the SER, it was a bit irritating to notice documents not prepared following the usual academic standards, and being among self-contradictory. For example, CV's did not follow the same format, and not necessarily updated. In some cases, there was no recent literature added at all. At the same time, list of staff teaching at this Programme was mixed with all other staff and required a lot of time to sort them out. Still, after analysis, a significant number of staff (11 of them) are not listed with the recent literature at all. Among others who are listed, number of links do not work, or there is significant number of publications in so called 'predatory journal that do not count in relevant academic environment etc. Number of papers/contributions are recycled, and not transparently related to disciplines, topics thought in the Programme. All this should warn the Faculty/Programme management that asks for attention. Energy and time should be focused and to enable system to develop and to provide institutional/individual quality instead of trying to find short-cuts to meet the criteria perceived as external criteria. Standard 6.8 was not really confirmed, at least not completely, because authors primarily publish under their names. And the institution is mentioned if required. Evidently, an institutional policy is missing to raise the awareness how important is to always cite the name of the institutions as one of the main indicators of the institutional visibility.



Although there are institutional regulations for ownership of intellectual property, procedures are still not fully developed. At the same time, very little is focused on possible innovations and intellectual property in social sciences, and although students in their Programme can choose a course related to entrepreneurial skills, it requires further clarifications and work on possibilities to be innovative in the field.

Students do participate in research, they also do it as a part of their study work, and it is evident that academic staff translate their research into teaching activities and work with students, although there is still a space to intensify these activities (standard 6.9 and 6.11).

Recently, Faculty allocated a special budget for some research activities and, most likely, some concrete positive outcome will be able to be noticed in next accredited period. It seems that faculty management as majority of staff members identified research as weak, but important area of their performance.

**Compliance level:** Partially compliant

**ET recommendations:**

1. *Consider developing mechanisms for raising research productivity, by defining more focused research topics, form small research groups (instead individual approach) and develop internal criteria, in addition to the institutional*
2. *Pay a special attention to publish in recognised international publications*
3. *Consider small, but publishable research with students and/or graduates*

**2.7. Infrastructure and resources**

Faculty of Education as a part of University of Prishtina has adequate facilities and staff, human resources. It has multiple classrooms appropriate to the programme, furnished with necessary equipment and reasonable class sizes. Students also have on disposal a library and computers, although it should be noted that availability of literature has been issue for many years, not only for this Programme. This is an area for which the whole system, within the institution and outside, will have to pay more attention and find a way to resolve this problem. The administrative and management offices are located in the same building, making assistance easy for student or staff. The staff and administration are adequate to support the programme.





Department, and programme, do not have a three-year financial planning, but this is due to the centralised institutional system in which University is responsible for assuring regular sustainable financing. Apparently, the Programme has this support, but still missing this kind of financial transparency.

It appears that resources are not adequate to meet the basic requirements envisioned in Standard 7.3. As previously noted there should be immediate investment in plagiarism detection software and database subscription. As, in many other instances, there is always a challenge for a programme to have enough recent literature, both books and journals, that all the student's access. The system still relies significantly on individual efforts and individual staff arrangements. Standard 7.4 is met, in that the lecture rooms are comfortable and well structured.

Infrastructure and other facilities respond to the program implementation requirements for students with special needs (7.6)

**Compliance level:** Substantially compliant

**ET recommendations:**

- 1. Focus on increasing number of relevant titles, and decreasing the literature availability depending on individual teacher*
- 2. Be proactive in plagiarism software purchase via available communication channels with the University*
- 3. Identify a research database that is appropriate for the program's support and development.*

### **3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET**

The ET would like to thank the main Programme representatives, especially to the Dean, Vice Deans and programme responsible staff. The ET would also like to acknowledge the time, insights, and contributions of the programme staff, students, and graduates.

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In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the BA programme Primary Education is substantially compliant with the standards included in the *KAA Accreditation manual* and, therefore, recommends to accredit the study programme for a duration of 3 years with 70 students to be enrolled annually.

### Expert Team

#### Chair

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	<b>Melita Kovacevic</b>	<b>April 22, 2021</b>
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

#### Member

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(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)
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#### Member

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(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)
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**Member**

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