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Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency

***UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCE
FERIZAJ***

***BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN
APPLIED INFORMATICS***

ACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

16 March 2021, Kosovo



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: 09 February 2021

Expert Team (ET) members:

- *Dr. Nana Dikhaminija*
- *Marija Vasilevska (student expert)*

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

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

Sources of information for the Report:

- *Self-evaluation report “Bachelor of Economics”, 2019 (no precise date) including course catalogue*
- *KAA Accreditation Manual 11.07.2018*
- *Syllabi*
- *Staff CVs (Full time, part time)*
- *Annexes: Code of Ethics, Industrial Board Meeting Minutes,*

Requested documents:

- *Strategic/Development Plan of the University from 2021 onward.*
- *Regulation on University Election Procedures*
- *Code of Ethics*
- *General regulations for student organizations*
- *Templates of the surveys for different stakeholder groups - graduates, students, employers*



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- *Analysis of all surveys for BA Industrial management for year 2019/2020*
 - *Access to UMS/SMU (student profile)*
 - *Access to USAHRE (academic staff profile)*
 - *Bachelor Studies Regulation*
 - *Master Studies Regulation*
 - *UASF Mobility Regulation*
 - *List of development activities provided to/attended by the teaching staff in 2020 (p. 30, SER)*
 - *Curricula of the BA Industrial management (by semesters; with responsible teaching staff members included)*
 - *Financial plan for the BA Industrial management study programme*
 - *Minutes of last three Industrial Board meetings*
 - *List of the active contracts with industry (company, purpose, duration, volume, etc)*
 - *Total number of laboratory assistants in 2018-2020*
 - *Research funding actually allocated to academic staff (2018-2020).*
 - *Financial plan for study programme Applied Informatics*
 - *Action Plan for academic staff for addressing the issues raised in the students` evaluations (they mentioned that after the evaluation, the professor is preparing an Action plan for addressing the issues raised in the evaluation)*
 - *Annual Calendar for utilization of tools in the process of evaluation*
 - *Structure of the management on a Faculty level;*
 - *Policy for internalization on University and/or Faculty level*
 - *Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the study program – Applied Informatics*
 - *Questionnaires for Students` evaluation of the program, university services and administration;*
 - *Analysis of questionnaires for Students` evaluation of the Applied Informatics program, university services and administration;*
 - *Policy for distribution of the funds for research, conferences, and others for the academic staff (for distribution of those 1000 Euro).*
 - *Minutes of the several meetings with IT Sector related to Applied Informatics (there is only provided one, but employers said during the interview that they have met several times).*
 - *Memorandums and agreements with IT Sector regarding Applied Informatics BA*
 - *Minutes of last three Industrial Board meetings related to Applied Informatics (there is only provided one);*



Received documents:

- *UASF General Election Rules and Procedures*
- *Code of Ethics*
- *Regulation on Student Elections at UASF*
- *Templates of questionnaires for different stakeholder groups - alumni, business, questionnaire for evaluation of academic staff by students, questionnaire for evaluation of students for study programmes, administration and infrastructure and questionnaire of academic staff for administrative and supportive staff of the University.*
- *Evaluation Reports: Administration evaluation report by the academic staff 2019-2020, Course evaluation report and teachers - Industrial Management 2019-2020; Evaluation report of the Industrial Management program 2019-2020.*
- *Industrial Board meetings minutes*
- *List of companies and other institutions that UASF has signed agreements with*
- *Staff development plan*
- *Academic Calendar for Quality Assurance*
- *Policy for International Cooperation*
- *Regulation for scientific research*
- *MoM with Industry in Applied Informatics*
- *MoUs with Industry in Applied Informatics*

Criteria used for program evaluation:

- *Standards & performance indicators for external evaluation according to the Accreditation Manual of KAA, July 2018.*

1.2. Site visit schedule

Expert Team

- Dr. Nana Dikhaminija
- Marija Vasilevska (student expert)

Coordinators of KAA



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- Naim Gashi, KAA Director
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 - Ilirjane Ademaj Ahmeti, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring
 - Leona Kovaci, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring

Site Visit Program

9th of February

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 and this applies for each session</i>)
09.45 – 10.55	Meeting with the heads of the study programme
11.00 – 11.40	Meeting with quality assurance representatives
11.45 – 12.35	Meeting with teaching staff
12.35 – 14.45	Lunch break
14.45 – 15.25	Meeting with employers of graduates
15.30 – 15.40	Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts
15.40 – 15.50	Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and program



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

The University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj (UASF) was established in July 2015. The University offers two levels of studies Bachelor and Master through its five faculties: Faculty of Management, Faculty of Engineering and Informatics, Faculty of Architecture, Design and Wood Technology, Faculty of Tourism and Environment and Faculty of Applied Arts. In the meeting with the Heads of programmes and as declared in the Self-evaluation report, the experts were informed that there are 1.450 full time students currently studying in the particular University, most of them in bachelor studies.

The University's vision is to be a national model of a modern, innovative university and integrative education, where practice complements theory and develops professional and research skills for the benefit of the society. The mission of this University is to commit towards providing quality education to prepare qualified professionals, dedicated researchers and educated and responsible citizens to develop a professional career and lead a productive life.

The Faculty of Engineering and Informatics offers two levels of study: Bachelor and Master studies. As part of this evaluation process, the University has applied for re/accreditation of six programs, out of which two are from Faculty of Engineering and Informatics. The program BSc in Applied Informatics which is subject on this report is a new program that seeks to be accredited.

During the site visit, the Management of the Faculty declared that this program is a unique program developed based on the needs identified by the industry with whom the Faculty declared to have a good cooperation. Indeed, the cooperation with the industry was shared as one of the greatest assets of the Faculty, during the site visit. The objectives of the program are addressing and covering the needs declared in other national educational policies and regulations and was based on the international practices in this field.

Finally, during the site visits the participants shared the Faculty's challenges such as: the need for additional technical equipment and internationalization of staff and students.



2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

2.1. Mission, objectives and administration

The BSc of applied informatics intends to transmit knowledge through interactive teaching and research on applied informatics with specific emphasis on the development of information technology in solving concrete problems and applying them to the industry for development of qualified human resources. On the other side the University's mission is in general oriented into ensuring quality education for qualified human resources. Having this in mind, we can conclude that the both missions are in the same line.

From the SER and the discussions during the site visit it can be concluded that the program is in line with the National Qualifications Framework and Level 2 of the Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).

The SER declares that the following documents were taken in consideration while developing the program and defining the learning outcomes of it:

- The National Strategy for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (2019-2023)
- Electronic Governance Strategy 2009-2015
- Analysis of labor market needs in Kosovo
- Identification of labor market needs in the ICT sector
- National Development Strategy (NDS) 2016-2021
- "Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021" and
- "Economic Reform Program 2019-2021".

On the other side, there are several evidences showing that the Faculty has taken in consideration the opinion and feedback from the industry's representatives for the development of this program. On the meeting with the heads of program, the experts were informed that the industry representatives were asked about their opinion regarding the particular program. This can be concluded also through the meeting minutes from the Industry Board provided to the experts as additionally requested documents. However, the experts did not get evidences whether the industry provided their opinions and needs through a formal procedure, such as market analysis conducted by the particular Faculty.

The management of the Faculty and the Heads of the program proudly highlighted that this program is based on the experiences from the Lithuania Business University of Applied Sciences and the University of Applied Sciences in Salzburg. Moreover, the SWOT analysis presented in the SER explains that one of the program's strengths is the application of theoretical learning to practice through university-owned workshops and business interactions.



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The Faculty, as administrative unit from the UASF has a well-positioned structure, as it can be concluded by the SER. The academic staff are familiar with the regulations, as they declared during the site visit. In addition to this is the University Management System that according to the representatives of the management is a great way of informing and managing the study programs according to the settled regulations. However, on the website of the University all regulations are not easily reachable and cannot be found.

UASF has developed a detailed Code of Ethics. The Code's purpose is to establish rules of professional conduct for all members. It covers different aspects of the academic life, such as personal obligations for every participant in the academic life; anti-discrimination policy; confidentiality; sexual harassment; personal relationships; students' behavior and among the others are the bodies responsible for its implementation on University level. However, it would be beneficial if the Faculty has undertaken regular measures for promotion of the Code among the new students that will enroll in the program that is a subject of accreditation of this process.

The SER covers explanation regarding the Key Performance Indicators as part of the program management. They cover the graduate and employer satisfaction. In addition to this, is the University Management System that the Faculty is using as a tool for management and delivery of the program. Finally, the student satisfaction check is conducted annually. However, according to the SER, since this is a new program the first review from the business and Alumni can be technically conducted after three years. Nevertheless, the experts strongly encourage the Faculty to think of other formal and nonformal tools and methods of keeping the business in loop regarding the delivery of the program and requesting their opinion about its learning achievements.



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	
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.	x	

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *The Faculty should undertake regular measures for promotion of the Code of Ethics, especially among the new students that will enroll in the program that is subject of this accreditation.*



2.2. Quality management

Quality assurance procedures are regulated by the University's internal regulation on quality assurance, which was updated and approved by the UASF senate on 18/02/2020.

The following self-assessment mechanisms are used for quality assurance of the program:

- Student evaluation of the program;
- Student assessment of university services and administration;
- Student evaluation of academic staff;
- Peer review;
- Assessment by the manager;
- Self-evaluation;
- Assessment by academic staff of university services and administration;
- Alumni evaluation;
- Assessment by Businesses / Employers.

The university is using these mechanisms to evaluate the teaching staff, student support services, material resources, teaching methodology, teaching process and employability of the graduates. Evaluations are mostly done through the questionnaires and templates of these questionnaires were provided by the university. UASF was using manual questionnaires before, but they digitalized the process that helps to analyze the questionnaires better. Recently the university decided to assess the student work for each course, that will help to assess the learning outcomes better. Student passing rate of the course is also analyzed to use in learning outcome assessment. Before every semester each syllabus is reviewed by program committees and academic staff.

The university has established an alumni network and currently is working on the communications platform with alumni. This will allow the university to include the graduates in the evaluation of the program.

The Applied Informatics study program was developed according to the following stages:

- Academic Staff of UASF initiated the program development;
- The initiative was inspected by program committee, educational and scientific committees and approved by the senate;
- The working group was formed by the professors and lecturers of UASF;
- Quality Committee monitored the preparation process of the new program;
- New program was sent for review to business partners;



- After changes, the new program was approved by Education/Scientific Council and the UASF Senate.

The university presented the documents verifying the discussion and approval meetings. However, the documents do not fully show the discussion about the program, proposed and implemented changes from employers and students during the program development. Changes proposed from the professors and employers were clearer from the interviews. In the same time, students are represented in all activities and organizational structures of the university, such as: Senate, Educational and Scientific Council, Program committee, Quality Assurance Commission, Ethics Committee, Disciplinary Commission, Complaints Commission, Working groups for strategy preparation, Scientific research Commission.

It will be beneficial to clearly see the involvement of the students in the program assessment process through their initiatives and remarks. Also, it will be useful to keep track of all suggestions by every stakeholder and corresponding changes to the program.

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	
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.	x	



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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.	X	
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.	X	
Standard 2.9. The quality assurance arrangements for the program are themselves regularly evaluated and improved.	X	

Compliance level: Full Compliance

ET recommendations:

- 1. The University should keep a track of all suggestions bby the stakelholders, especially students, and corresponding changes in the program. Students should be involved more actively in the program improvement, not only based on the surveys.*



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2.3. Academic staff

SER of the study program contains a table of academic staff, showing that three professors, seven associate professors and two lecturers are involved in the study program. The CVs and interviews with the academic staff proves that they have sufficient qualification for teaching the corresponding courses.

Each academic staff has assigned the portfolio containing all his/her annual evaluation reports from students, peer, manager and self-assessment. The portfolio is updated along with conducting the student semestral surveys on the courses taught by the academic staff and peer reviews. Analysis of the surveys and reviews are used to develop improvement plan for the academic staff if necessary. The reports are analyzed by the faculty deans. Deans and academic staff manager are meeting with the staff twice a year to discuss their professional development.

Academic staff is selected through job announcement. When the new academic staff is joining the university, they have short trainings to understand all the requirements under the regulations of the university. Contract with the university contains all the obligations related to teaching, communication with students, research, extracurricular activities, etc. The contract also implies that the full-time staff cannot have teaching job in more than two institutions. Academic staff submits statement confirming that to the university. The statements are submitted to an E-accreditation Portal made by Kosovo Accreditation Agency where they can be confirmed by all the universities and KAA.

The university has some activities for the professional development of academic staff. However, in 2020 AUSF only provided training in three areas: SPSS, Microsoft Office Teams and Forms, and the eLearning Moodle. These trainings are not enough for professional development on the academic staff. It will be beneficial to have various trainings related to novel teaching methodologies, not only usage of platforms.



<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	
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	



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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.	X	
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.	X	

Compliance level: Substantial Compliance

ET recommendations:

- 1. University should pay more attention to professional development of academic staff, offering various trainings at the university and surveying the academic staff to determine the trainings they need.*



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2.4. Educational process content

The study program “Bachelor of Science in Applied Informatics” is a three-year program with 180 ECTS credits, offered in Albanian language. The program is mostly based on the local job market needs and covers the topics related to desktop, web and mobile programming, basic database topics, software engineering, algorithms and computer networks. The study program also includes the subjects developing soft skills – communication, management and entrepreneurship for IT field. The program contains 37 mandatory courses and 4 elective ones (students have to choose 2 out of this 4). Elective courses are offered in the fifth semester (2 courses) and the sixth semester (2 courses). As the field of Applied Informatics is very wide and constantly evolves, it would be beneficial to have more elective courses such as Machine Learning, NLP, Software Quality Assurance, System Programming, Data Analysis, NoSQL Databases, etc. The program includes AI course, but this is more general and do not sufficiently discuss Machine Learning algorithms. In the programming direction, students are mainly learned C#, and they would benefit to have also elective courses in Python and Java.

The study program has the structure of subjects spread across the semesters, but there is no information in the general table of courses or in the syllabus about prerequisites. For example, if the student fails „Programming“ course, it is not clear if he/she is not allowed to “Object Oriented Programming”. Prerequisites for each course should be defined either in the program structure or in each syllabus.

The program has mandatory internship course that will help the student to prepare to future jobs. UASF already signed 80 collaboration agreements with various companies and their representatives assured during the interviews that they gladly accept student interns. The University has the “Regulation on student practice, approved on 09/01/2020” and the manual which includes the duties and responsibilities of students who do their experiential learning in specific enterprises. However, syllabus of internship is not very clear and needs to specify all the steps of the internship – what kind of companies will offer internship to the students, what will be student’s responsibility as an internt, how his work will be assessed during internship.

The study program also mandatory students project, but no syllabus is defined for this 5 ECTS course. SER says that “students will complete their studies in the “Applied Informatics” program by carrying out a project, which should be worked on individually (in the sixth semester) by demonstration that they are able to successfully utilize their theoretical knowledge gained

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throughout their studies to solve practical problems in the field of IT”. The syllabus for the student project should contain detailed information on how the IT project topics are selected, what kind projects student can work on, how their work will be assessed. Also, it is usual practice in foreign universities to do the student project as a team, as this helps the students to develop team work skills that are so important in IT field. It would be beneficial to transfer this practice to UASF.

The study program was developed by initiative of academic staff, approved and reviewed on several stages by university education/scientific committees and quality assurance and was developed with the help of local Tech companies that is confirmed by the minutes of industrial board meetings. The interest and involvement in the development of the program also was greatly emphasized during the interviews with the employers. They are sure that the graduates of the program will be demanded and well-paid on the job market. The program complies with the Level 6 of the National Qualifications Framework and Level 2 of the Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).

University has the mechanism for the students to discuss their grades with the instructor in case they are not content with the results. They can also file a complaint to the faculty Dean, who sets up a committee with three members. The decision of the committee is final. If the instructor does not comply to the rules, it is subject to “Code of Ethics Regulation in UASF”. The student has the right to be re-examined up to three times in the courses which they have failed. A fourth re-examination can be allowed by the dean, if the student files a complaint and is able to present a convincing argument.

As this is a new program, it is difficult to evaluate how student assessment mechanisms will work when the program starts. The syllabi contain only the general info about each course, listing the main teaching methods, that include lectures, seminars, practical work. The teaching process is using Moodle with Microsoft Teams. Each syllabi also lists assessment methods as homeworks, tests, activity assessment and final exam, but it does not specify how assessment is distributed through the semester. The syllabi usually says “Test 1, Test 2, Attendance and Activity. Final exam 100%”. It is important for the students to know exact weight of each assessment for the final assessment.



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.	n.a.	
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	
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.		x
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 to 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 ETCS 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: Substantial Compliance

ET recommendations:

1. *Add more elective courses to the program, such as Machine Learning, NLP, Software Quality Assurance, System Programming, Data Analysis, NoSQL Databases, Python, Java.*
2. *Prerequisites for each course should be defined either in the program structure or in each syllabus.*
3. *Elaborate the syllabus for internship to specify all the steps of the internship – what kind of companies will offer internship to the students, what will be student’s responsibility as an intern, how his work will be assessed during internship.*
4. *Convert student project as a team project to help the students to develop teamwork skills and create the syllabus of the student project with all the specific details related to IT projects.*
5. *Specify the assessment distribution in each syllabus, in order for the student to understand the weight of each assessment in the final assessment.*



2.5. Students

The experts did not meet students as part of the site visit having in mind the fact that the program subject of this accreditation is a new program and there are no students yet enrolled. Conclusions shared in this part are made based on the information provided in the SER and all provided documents active on a University and Faculty level.

The admission of students is a formally adopted procedure based on the regulations defined by the University in line with the ones prescribed by the respective Ministry. The procedure for enrollment, according to the University policies is a public one. The Regulation of Undergraduate Studies in the article 3 specifies that all candidates that pass matura exam have a right to apply to the University. The ones who have completed secondary education without matura exam have to pass an entrance exam for enrollment in the University. The same rules apply for the particular program- subject to this accreditation.

The number of students that might be enrolled in this program on a yearly level is 100, as decided by the University Senate. The SER declares that the University of applied science is attractive for the students since in the last three years all open places for students are fulfilled.

The study groups are different depending on whether there are theoretical or practical subjects covered, as reported in the SER. In cases of theoretical subjects, the groups are bigger, and when practical subjects are organized the groups are smaller. The management of the Faculty during the site visit shared that they plan to have a small number of students, due to the number of staff and resources with which they are operating. *“We want to ensure the quality of teaching and learning in small size groups and to ensure the quality for the students”*- a representative from the management team shared during the site visit.

Interactive teaching and learning processes are ensured. From the shared courses ‘descriptions provided in the SER, the experts can conclude that the academic staff is using different teaching methods, such as lectures, group, and individual work, presentations, lab work, and others. From the video sent by the Faculty, it can be concluded that the students will give the opportunity to use the labs part of the University for research and there is a plan that they will be even involved more in the academic staff’s researches.

The University Management System (UMS) is a place where all records are kept. The System is used on a University level in terms of collecting information and data. However, the University does not have a matrix to track the evaluation of teaching outcomes, as reported in the SER. Different types of evaluation are used for the assessment of the academic staff.

The University does not have a mechanism to guarantee the originality of the students’ work. The SER shares information about Erasmus + project through which the University will secure access



to anti-plagiarism software. However, the experts' team is on opinion that the University should assess different options for anti-plagiarism software, in case the results out of the project are not effective.

The students can be organized in different student organizations. Students' interests are represented at the University through Students Parliament. The University has a special regulation on students' election. As reported in the SER, students are represented in all organizational structures of the University. Moreover, the students' regulations and rights, and obligations are made publicly available on the University's website and through the UMS.

In its strategic plan, the University has also introduced a personal supervising system, where a tutor will be assigned for each student in the capacity of a personal tutor who must meet with the student at least once a year and follow its development at all times of study. That tutor will be academic or non-academic, as reported in the SER.

The academic staff are required to be available to the students, at least twice a week with a schedule set for both academic and advisory type advisors. This leads to a conclusion that the Faculty had formally ensured opportunities for feedback to students by the academic staff at least twice a week, which might include different forms of feedback of assessment or advices.

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 posses 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	
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.		x
Standard 5.8. Effective procedures are being used to ensure that work submitted by students is original.		x
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: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *The University should develop a matrix for tracking the evaluation of teaching outcomes.*
2. *The University must continue with its efforts for integration of anti-plagiarism software should be intensified. If the Erasmus+ project do not result with the wanted outcome in this regard, the University should consider different options and software for checking the originality of students' work.*
3. *The introduction of the planned personal supervising system should be accelerated even before the enrolment of the students in the program subject to this accreditation.*
4. *The availability of academic staff for students' consultation and advice should be included in the Questionnaire for students for study programmes, admin and infrastructure.*



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2.6. Research

Currently the research structure of the university is actively being developed. UASF is establishing the Institute of Applied Sciences, that will cover the following components:

- Workshops for the practical works of students
- Research Laboratory for different areas to involve the academic staff and students in the theoretical and industry research projects
- The Innovation Centre with the equipment to prototype and design of tech products: 3D printers and 3D scanners. It is also planned to equip the center with VR and CNC machines
- Commercial direction, where academic staff and students will engage in real-life commercial research that will help to commercialize the staff research and give the students industrial experience.

Currently there is no clear record showing Bachelor level students' participation in the research, as this is a new program, however university is planning all the necessary steps to involve students at least in industrial research.

At present UASF has two computer labs for teaching, as well as labs of Chemistry, Physics and Renewable Energy. It is necessary to add labs for computer networks and IOT. Also, for research in IT field, it will be beneficial to have Data Center and subscription to Cloud services.

The academic staff contracts and university regulations require from academic staff to engage in research. There is defined list of scientific magazines and journals whose publications are considered as valuable research. However, the study program does not have a scientific/applied research objectives. Also, university does not have yet assigned sufficient financial resources to motivate and help the academic staff in research activities. It is beneficial that UASF participates in a few Erasmus projects for capacity building. To strengthen the research activities, university should search local and foreign research institutions to partner with them in international research projects. Also, special attention should be paid to improve research commercialization structures at the university that can bring additional funding for research activities. The university has not yet established intellectual property policies, but plans to work on them over the next year.

Currently the academic staff involved in the Applied Informatics study program has 32 scientific publications, but only third of these publications are related to the Applied Informatics. It is necessary to specifically define the research objectives of the study program and encourage the academic staff do research in the fields they are teaching.



<i>Standard</i>	Compliance	
	Yes	No
<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 6.8.</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 6.9.</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 6.10.</i> Students are engaged in research projects and other activities	X	

Compliance level: Substantial Compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Add labs for computer networks and IOT, as well as Data Center and subscription to Cloud services for the academic staff and students.*
2. *Define clear plan for the research objectives of the Applied Informatics study program and involvement of students of these programs in research;*
3. *Elaborate a plan for increasing research capacity of the university through collaboration with the local and foreign institutions with the proven research record and international research grants;*
4. *Encourage the academic staff involved in Applied informatics study program to do more research related to the subjects they are teaching;*
5. *Allocate some financial resources to motivate and help the academic staff in research activities;*
6. *Strengthen the research commercialization structure of the university in collaboration with industry partners;*



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2.7. Infrastructure and resources

The SER shares specific information regarding the infrastructure and resources available for usage by the particular Faculty. The overall numbers are showing that the University has over 7000 m² of space including workshops and labs. The new University's building is functioning since 2014 with an average space of 5m² per student, as the experts learned from the video sent by the Faculty. The same video is showing well-equipped premises, modern laboratories for different programs covered within the framework of the University, equipped spaces with ICT equipment for teaching and studies, and a library. The University is assessing different possibilities for building dormitories as can be learned by the previously mentioned video.

The students and the academic staff are asked to share their opinion on the infrastructure and resources through the questionnaires. The questionnaires were shared with the experts as part of the additionally requested documents.

Three years of financial sustainability is guaranteed for the University since it is a Public Institution of Higher Education. The provided budget for 2021 does not show much in terms of stability and the future plans of the Faculty in terms of long term financial planning. The Vice-Rector for Budget, Finance and Infrastructure is responsible for developing infrastructure policies and overseeing its implementation. However, the experts' team thinks that the university should assigned sufficient financial resources as a support for helping the academic staff in research activities.

The building and all places within are owned by the University having in mind the fact that it is a Public Institution of Higher Education and under the umbrella of MEST. This information is provided in the SER and both shared videos.

The library has 1433 different publications, some with more than one copy, accessible for the academic staff and students, as declared in the SER and confirmed in the video. However, the SER declares the modest number of titles in the University library as one of their weaknesses. The University has planned easier access to e-resources through cooperation with the Association of Electronic Libraries in Kosovo. The University has access to several electronic platforms such as Science Direct, Cambridge Core, ASTM Compass, Elgar online, Perlego, and few others. Each staff has their own office and place for conducting their work and research.

There are 53 rooms for teachers. In addition, the visiting professors have available places. The information provided by the Faculty does not consist in terms of the number of seats in the reading rooms. The video presents information that there are 30 seats and the SER declared that there are 40 seats corresponding to 40% of the total number of students planned for the particular study program (100 study places, as reported in the SER). However, if we consider the overall

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number of students, to whom these spaces are intended -1450, the number of seats corresponds to 2,75%. Taking into account existing resources of the university and number of practical components in the study program, it can serve no more than 60 students for this program.

The video presents two amphitheatres that as the SER specifies have around 500 seats. In addition to this are the 15 classrooms for up to 75 students, two IT cabinets, two industrial workshops, four lab spaces (two computer labs for teaching, as well as labs of Chemistry, Physics and Renewable Energy), and many other accompanying spaces. For properly teaching the subjects as Computer Networks, IOT and AI, it is necessary to have computer networks lab, IOT lab and Data Center.

U-Share is established for easier and more effective communication among the staff. On this system all regulations are posted and the documents are easily accessible. The staff is trained for the usage of this system. In addition to this is the University Management system where there is a place for e-antiplagiarism and e-learning system that will be soon operational. Microsoft teams and Moodle are used, as the academic staff shared during the site visit.

The University has installed access for people with disabilities on all floors of the building, according to the SER. The video sent by the Faculty to serve as an explanation for the infrastructure and resources shows that there is elevator access in the University. However, there are no evidences showing the accessibility of the entrances within the University.

<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	



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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	



<p>Standard 7.5. The education institution’s libraries must ensure, for each of the study programs:</p> <p>a) a number of seats in the reading rooms corresponding to at least 10% of the total number of students in the study program;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>e) a sufficient number of subscriptions to Albanian and foreign publications and periodicals, according to the stated mission.</p>	x	
<p>Standard 7.6. The infrastructure and facilities dedicated to the implementation of the program is adapted to students with special needs</p>	x	

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Faculty should find a ways to invest in more students` spaces for learning or request so that it can ensure enough spaces for its own students.*
2. *Ensure regularly and adequate update of the books in the library, from both Albanian and foreign literature.*
3. *The Faculty should assess and identify different ways and mechanisms for making their own income from commercial activities, such as renting the labs, the amphiteaters and other.*
4. *Add Computer Network and IOT labs, as well as Data Center.*



3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

The Panel would like to commend the programme development team for their proactive engagement with the Panel during the accreditation visit. There was a very strong sense of teamwork and ownership exhibited by the programme development team. It is evident that a good level of care and attention has been given to the development of the new programme. for the upcoming cohorts of students. Having considered the documentation provided and discussed it with the programme development team, the accreditation Panel recommends the following:

Standard	Compliance Level
Mission, objectives and administration	Fully compliant
Quality management	Fully compliant
Academic Staff	Substantially compliant
Educational Process Content	Substantially compliant
Students	Substantially compliant
Research	Substantially compliant
Infrastructure and resources	Substantially compliant
Overall Compliance	Substantially compliant

The overall compliance is assessed by the experts at the level of **Substantially Compliant**.

However, the following recommendations need to be considered in relation to programmes re-accreditation:

1. The Faculty should undertake regular measures for promotion of the Code of Ethics, especially among the new students that will enroll in the program that is subject of this



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- accreditation.
2. The University should keep a track of all suggestions by the stakeholders, especially students, and corresponding changes in the program. Students should be involved more actively in the program improvement, not only based on the surveys.
 3. University should pay more attention to professional development of academic staff, offering various trainings at the university and surveying the academic staff to determine the trainings they need.
 4. Add more elective courses to the program, such as Machine Learning, NLP, Software Quality Assurance, System Programming, Data Analysis, NoSQL Databases, Python, Java.
 5. Prerequisites for each course should be defined either in the program structure or in each syllabus.
 6. Elaborate the syllabus for internship to specify all the steps of the internship – what kind of companies will offer internship to the students, what will be student's responsibility as an intern, how his work will be assessed during internship.
 7. Convert student project as a team project to help the students to develop teamwork skills and create the syllabus of the student project with all the specific details related to IT projects.
 8. Specify the assessment distribution in each syllabus, in order for the student to understand the weight of each assessment in the final assessment.
 9. The University should develop a matrix for tracking the evaluation of teaching outcomes.
 10. The University must continue with its efforts for integration of anti-plagiarism software should be intensified. If the Erasmus+ project do not result with the wanted outcome in this regard, the University should consider different options and software for checking the originality of students' work.
 11. The introduction of the planned personal supervising system should be accelerated even before the enrolment of the students in the program subject to this accreditation.
 12. The availability of academic staff for students' consultation and advice should be included in the Questionnaire for students for study programmes, admin and infrastructure.
 13. Add labs for computer networks and IOT, as well as Data Center and subscription to Cloud services for the academic staff and students.
 14. Define clear plan for the research objectives of the Applied Informatics study program and involvement of students of these programs in research;
 15. Elaborate a plan for increasing research capacity of the university through collaboration with the local and foreign institutions with the proven research record and international research grants;
 16. Encourage the academic staff involved in Applied informatics study program to do more research related to the subjects they are teaching;



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17. Allocate some financial resources to motivate and help the academic staff in research activities;
 18. Strengthen the research commercialization structure of the university in collaboration with industry partners;
 19. Faculty should find a ways to invest in more students` spaces for learning or request so that it can ensure enough spaces for its own students.
 20. Ensure regularly and adequate update of the books in the library, from both Albanian and foreign literature.
 21. The Faculty should assess and identify different ways and mechanisms for making their own income from commercial activities, such as renting the labs, the amphiteaters and other.
 22. Add Computer Network and IOT labs, as well as Data Center.

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the Bachelor of Applied Informatics study programme offered by University of Applied Science Ferizaj **substantially compliant** with the standards included in the KAA Accreditation Manual and, therefore, recommends to accredit the above study programme for a duration of **three** years with **60** students to be enrolled on the programme.



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Expert Team

Members

Prof. Dr. Nana Dikhaminija

.....
Signature

Nana Dikhaminija

17.03.2021

Marija Vasilevska (student expert)

.....
Signature

Marija Vasilevska

08.03.2021

4. APPENDICES (if available)

None