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

UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES IN FERIZAJ

Professional Bachelor in Design and Constructions of Wooden Products

PROGRAMME RE-ACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

March 2021, Lisbon, Portugal



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: 23rd February 2021

Expert Team (ET) members:

- *Dr. Lina Nunes, Researcher, Laboratório Nacional de Engenharia Civil, Lisbon, Portugal*

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 (SER) of the University of Applied Sciences, Professional Bachelor in Design and Constructions of Wooden Products, Ferizaj, 2021;*
- *Staff CVs including List of Publications;*
- *Syllabuses;*
- *Code of Ethics;*
- *Quality Assurance regulation;*
- *Web-site (<http://www.ushaf.net/?lang=en>);*
- *Requested documents received by the 8th of March, 2021*
 - *Report of the previous accreditation*
 - *Copy of teacher evaluation questionnaire*
 - *Example of a MOU for industrial partners*
 - *Description of procedure for anti-plagiarism check*
 - *Admission requirements for students*
 - *Alumni numbers.*



- *Digital library resources*
- *Short description of the test-centre including existing equipment.*

Criteria used for program evaluation:

- *KAA Accreditation Manual (July 2018);*
- *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance;*
- *The Framework of Qualifications for the EHEA (revised in 2018)*

1.2. Site visit schedule

Programme Accreditation Procedure at University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj

Date of site visit: 23rd February 2021

09.00 – 09.40 Meeting with the management of the faculty where the programme is integrated (no slide presentation is allowed; the meeting is intended as a free discussion and this applies for each session)

Prof.Dr. Agron Bajraktari – Rector;
Prof.Dr. Bujar Pira – Vice Rector;
Prof.As.Dr. Fakije Zejnullahu – Vice Rector;
Armend Hysa – General Secretary.

9.45 – 10.55 Meeting with the heads of the study programme

Mr.Sc.Kushtrim Cukaj;
Mr.Sc.Lulzim Idrizi;
Mr.Sc.Agim Thaqi;
Mr.Sc. Ismet Malsiu;
Mr.Sc.Halit Mehmeti.

11.00 – 11.40 Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff

Prof.Dr. Bujar Pira – Vice Rector;
Armend Hysa – General Secretary;
Prof.As.Dr. Leonora Rudhani-Haliti – Academic and QA (ECTS) coordinator;
Fatime Musliu – QA office;
Besa Rexhepi – Student services.

11.45 – 12.35 Meeting with teaching staff

Prof.As.Dr. Sokol Krasniqi;



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Prof.As.Dr. Bislim Lekiqi;
Prof.As.Dr. Ismajl Mehmeti;
Mr.Sc. Etleva Blakaj;
Mr.Sc. Florit Hoxha;
Mr.Sc. Flamur Salihu.

12.35 – 13.10 Lunch break

13.15 – 13.55 Meeting with students

Erbolina Hasani;
Eurolinda Shabani;
Xhenetë Mjaku;
Festina Vranoci;
Endrit Ademi;
Endrit Sadiku;
Leona Jahiri.

14.00 – 14.40 Meeting with graduates

Lorita Rama;
Rinidon Bislimi;
Resul Qorrolli;
Rinore Caka;
Almir Osmani;
Fitim Sejdiu;
Arbnore Avdija.

14.45 – 15.25 Meeting with employers of graduates

Enver Haziri – EuroArt;
Nexhmendin Sadiku – Daqa;
Bujar Baliu – ANB Baliu;
Avni Bajrami – Oxa Group;
Arianit Kastrati – Nica Swiss;
Nehat Ademi – N.T.P. Doqi;
Fahri Bega – Veneta Tours.

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



Study programs	Experts	Responsible persons of study programs
Professional Bachelor in Design and Constructions of Wooden Products Re-accreditation	Dr. Lina Nunes	Mr.Sc.Kushtrim Cukaj Mr.Sc.Lulzim Idrizi Mr.Sc.Agim Thaqi Mr.Sc. Ismet Malsiu Mr.Sc.Halit Mehmeti

Other information

Overall instructions for HEIs:

1. Each meeting should be attended by maximum 6 persons;
2. The students selected for the meeting should reflect a diversity in terms of study cycle, year of study, students with special needs if any, etc;
3. The teaching staff selected for the meeting should reflect a diversity in terms of full-time and part time, local and international, etc;
4. The students, graduates and employers of graduates should not be employed at the institution;
5. Anyone whose attendance won't be agreed in advance with KAA and the Expert Team will be asked to leave the interview session;
6. Nametags are to be provided for all people attending the meetings.

Contacts of the participants from KAA:

Shkelzen Gerxhaliu – 044 836 831

Arianit Krasniqi – 045 499 951

Ilirjane Ademaj Ahmeti – 044 169 225

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

The tradition of academic and scientific work in Ferizaj dates back to 1976, and later – linked to the Higher Technical School (HTS) - with the machinery and wood industry section set up in 1988. The present-day *University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj* (UASF) was established by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and was ratified by the Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo on July 16, 2015.



The current vision of the University for its aim is described as follows:

- “National model of a modern, innovative university and integrative education, where practice complements theory and develops professional and research skills for the benefit of society”.

According to the university website of and the self-evaluation report, the University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj has nine study programmes divided by five faculties:

- Faculty of Engineering and Informatics;
- Faculty of Tourism and Environment;
- Faculty of Architecture, Design and Wood Technology;
- Faculty of Management;
- Faculty of Applied Arts.

The University currently has 1450 full-time students of which 1249 are in bachelor studies and 201 are in master studies. It employs 59 people of which 47 directly involved in teaching (32 professors and 15 lecturers). Extra staff is hired for semesters with particular needs.

The present report deals with the re-accreditation of the programme of **Professional Bachelor in Design and Constructions of Wooden Products** from the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Wood Technology. There are 438 students studying in this Faculty of which 97 (49 females + 48 males) are studying in the programme under evaluation. Considering the limited time of the programme, the students are divided by the different years of study and a first group of students have graduated or will be graduating soon.

2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

The programme evaluation follows the numbering of the standards in the KAA Accreditation Manual. There is a table at the end of each section that lists the compliance assessment for each standard.

2.1. Mission, objectives and administration

The UASF defines, in general terms, its mission as “*We are committed to providing quality education to prepare qualified professionals, dedicated researchers and educated and*



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responsible citizens, to develop a professional career and lead a productive life” based on five equally important pillars: Learning, Ethics, Collaboration, Excellence and Diversity.

Within that framework the aim of the program *Professional Bachelor in Design and Constructions of Wooden Products* is to develop specialized staff of professionals in the field of Design and Constructions of Wooden Products of interior and exterior uses, using modern technologies and the latest applications, which easily adapt to the demands of the labor market. This goal is clearly within the mission of the institution.

The professional study programme was clearly designed with the focus on future employment in the country most relevant wood industries and that is a clear strength of the degree though maybe extra care should have been given to the research component of the studies (and staff formation). That is fundamental to improve the Excellence of the Faculty and will ultimately improve the quality of the industrial partners by increasing the competencies of their future employees.

According to the strategic plan of the University (as presented in Annex 5 of SER), a test institute is planned within the Faculty. The staff will be involved in commercial activities, using workshop and laboratory facilities, as well as various other services, answering the specific needs of the industry. Once the test centre is fully operational, there will be more opportunities for the involvement staff member as well as students in research and commercial activities.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were developed at the level of the study program taking into account the opinion of the relevant stakeholders. The data they provide is reviewed at least annually with overall performance reported to the decision-making structures that are well defined on the SER.

Systems are established for central recording and analysis of course completion, program progression, completion rates and program evaluations, with summaries and comparative data distributed automatically to senior administrators and relevant committees. Some doubts were raised during the meetings on the effective data treatment of the recorded information.

The regulations of the University are public, and all staff are familiar with them, also they are presented to students through the Student Parliament. In addition, all university staff, students and stakeholders are informed of any changes to any regulations and/or the introduction of new regulations adopted at the University which are also published on the website and on U-SHARE which is the internal platform of the University.

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Policies and procedures include actions to be taken to deal with situations where standards of student achievement are inadequate or inconsistently assessed. Statistical data on indicators, including grade distributions, progression and completion rates are retained in an accessible central database and regularly reviewed and reported in periodic program reports.

The concepts of gender justice and the promotion of equal opportunities for students in special situations such as, for example, students with health-related impairments, students with children, foreign students, students with an immigrant background and/or students from educationally disadvantaged families are well explained on the SER and seem to be of quality. These issues are dealt with individually with participation of students' representatives, academic staff and the quality management department.

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: Substantially compliant



ET recommendations:

1. Continue the strategic implementation of the test facilities in order to reinforce the objective of learning by practice and to improve the research quality and the level of services to the community.
2. Develop a strategic plan and objectives for the development of applied research.

2.2. Quality management

The SER provides the required information about the participation of staff and students in the process of self-evaluation thus the program evaluation mechanisms include the information of graduates, employment of graduates, employer feedback and subsequent performance of graduates. Extensive surveys are conducted (at least annually), and survey data is being collected from students, graduates and employers. Nevertheless, the results of these evaluations are not yet made publicly available. The review of the questionnaires with which the evaluations are performed is done by the quality assurance commission.

This information obtained is used to improve the learning outcomes. The reports are provided to program administrators per course. Appropriate adjustments are made in plans for teaching according to the course reports annually or in the beginning of each semester, as appropriate.

The reassessment of the programs has been made in periods of three to five years. The University has changed the practice and will carry out a self-assessment report at least once every three years regardless of the accreditation process (according to Article 38 of the regulation for quality assurance procedures). Policies and procedures for conducting this reassessment are published. The Program review involves experienced faculty members from other institutions. Students participate in the design and implementation of quality assurance processes.

The University has established, in 2019, an Alumni network and during 2021 plans to complete the Alumni virtual platform through which it aims to create a triangle between University, graduates and industry. This can be a substantial contribution to the quality management of the Faculty though some resistance of staff and students in supporting the digital platforms of communications is identified in the SER has a challenge (threat).



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 or these evaluations are made publicly available.		X
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: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Treated results of periodical surveys with students and staff should be published on a regular basis.
2. Students should be encouraged to improve their language skills and to participate in international exchange programmes. That will give them extra tools to be more actively involved in the program improvement.
3. Digital networking should be further implemented.



2.3. Academic staff

According to SER there are 19 listed academic staff members working full time and a large majority of those have a Doctoral degree (including several foreign universities) and a relatively young age which is seem has very positive. The members of academic staff have their contracts with the written responsibilities. The number of academic staff is sufficient for teaching and for the established collaborations with companies. The importance of practical competencies is increasing and therefore the staff has to be flexible to teach also in an industrial environment. The teaching staff are encouraged to develop strategies for the improvement of their own teaching and maintain a portfolio of evidence of evaluations and strategies for improvement.

There are a number of internal and external training courses to improve the competencies of the staff in the university. Additionally, the possibilities to join teacher exchange programs are given to the staff. The planning of these activities is done together with the head of faculty based on the self-report. Annually, a meeting between the head of faculty and every teacher to develop an individual action plan is organized. The action plan is the guideline for the annual activities of the teacher. To give the staff the possibility to join scientific conferences or write scientific publications a budget of approximately €1000, is given to every professor per year. Development of innovative products according to market demands is possible taking into account the opportunities offered by the laboratories and workshops of the University.

Training programs in teaching skills are provided for both new and continuing teaching staff including those with part time teaching responsibilities; these include effective use of new and emerging technology. The extent to which teaching staff are involved in professional development to improve quality of teaching is being monitored and discussed annually with the head of faculty. The results of the academic staff evaluation are taken into account for promotion purposes and renewal of contracts. In the program under re-accreditation, there are no staff over the 65 years old engaged in the full-time teaching process.

The present COVID pandemic has forced the use of new digital teaching platforms (e.g. Teams) with the necessary adaptations of the teaching habits and even programmes. That was described as a challenge during the site visit but also as an opportunity to develop new skills and competences.



<i>Standard</i>	Compliance	
	Yes	No
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	
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.		
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: Fully compliant



ET recommendations:

1. Elaborate clear and understandable objectives for the development of research capabilities of the teaching staff.
2. Consolidate the opportunities of co-operation with foreign universities.

2.4. Educational process content

Although the main body responsible for the development and review of study programmes is the Teaching/Scientific Council, in the case of the programme of the Professional Bachelor in Design and Constructions of Wooden Products, it was clearly developed with the support of the Industrial Boards and taking into account the special needs of the national industry. That is visible on the SER and was even more evident on the meeting with the “employers of graduates” and is, obviously, a positive aspect of the programme. The specific Programme Committee also involved alumni and students on the programme development.

As stated in the SER “In the development phase (drafting) of the teaching results of the program, the businesses of the respective sector, part of the Industrial Board, were consulted, from which the competencies and skills for fulfilling their requirements are clearly defined.”. The described learning outcomes (10) fit perfectly with this objective and the disciplines within the curriculum are provided in a logical flow and meet the definition and precise determination of the general and specific competencies.

The SER identifies a reasonable number of future areas of work for graduates though somehow restricted to the most common needs of the present-day industry. Nevertheless, the SER also mentions “The program also aims to build general competencies that enable graduates to adapt more easily to changes in the labor market and industry.” And this is crucial not only to strengthen the chances of employment within the country but also to foster innovation and to ease the necessary circulation of students at least within the Europe.

The programme is offered only in Albanian language though courses in English and German (three levels each) are part of the curricula in the first two years. The students domain of foreign languages is of the utmost importance to ease the access to digital databases of scientific information and to promote their participation on international exchange programmes.



The SER describes the teaching strategies and methodology for each subject as well as materials used in teaching and the assessment forms. The teaching in the program will consist of lectures (theoretical and numerical) followed by their connection with the practical aspect, either through case studies (by local and international companies), in seminars, or through laboratory work and the Innovation Centre of University.

Teachers use modern equipment and technologies such as Smart Boards, scanners and 3D printers as well as Virtual Reality Headsets and other relevant equipments. As described before, the present COVID pandemic has forced the use of new digital teaching platforms and the development of e-learning systems.

The student-teacher relationship is well defined, and the assessments explained. Learning outcomes are explained and discussed with students from the perspective of their relevance to the students' development and adjusted if need arises. Appropriate, valid and reliable mechanisms seem to be in place for verifying standards of student achievement. The SER fully describes the policies and procedures to be taken when dealing with situations where standards of student achievement are inadequate or inconsistently assessed.

The University has signed a significant number (over 80) of cooperation agreements with companies in various fields of industry and that path should continue to be followed. Necessary adjustments were made or might have to be made to the content, teaching and assessment mode of some courses to comply with the specificity of the practical work in the industry. These details are not fully described on the SER but the meetings with teachers, students and industrial partners showed high levels of satisfaction of all parts involved.

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	X	



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.		
Standard 4.3. The disciplines within the curriculum are provided in a logical flow and meet the definition and precise determination of the general and specific competencies, as well as the compatibility with the study programs and curricula delivered in the EHEA. To be listed at least 7 learning outcomes for the study program under evaluation.	X	
Standard 4.4. The disciplines within the curriculum have analytical syllabuses which comprise at least the following: the discipline's objectives, the basic thematic content, learning outcomes, the distribution of classes, seminars and applicative activities, students' assessment system, the minimal bibliography, etc. The full course description/ syllabuses of each subject/ module should be attached only in electronic form to the self-assessment report for the study program under evaluation.	X	
Standard 4.5. If the language of instruction is other than Albanian, actions are taken to ensure that language skills of both students and academic staff are adequate for instruction in that language when students begin their studies. This may be done through language training prior to the commencement of the program.	X	
Standard 4.6. The student-teacher relationship is a partnership in which each assumes the responsibility of reaching the learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are explained and discussed with students from the perspective of their relevance to the students' development.	X	
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: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Update the literature recommendations particularly on the technical subjects to include recent (less than 10 years) references. A large part of these references should be in English or German.
2. Promote the discussion of relevant recent papers (for instance, published in international referenced journals by Faculty Professors) whenever adequate. That can be part of the assessment.
3. Promote, whenever possible, the harmonization of the curricula with similar international institutions.

2.5. Students

Student admission is done in accordance with the call for enrolment which is announced on daily newspapers in Kosovo as well as on the official website and social media sites of the University. The student selection and admission criteria are dictated by the University Statutes and are published along with the call for enrolment. All applicants must fill in the online application form and submit hard copies of the necessary documents to the university. The university administration along with the admissions committee are responsible for the verification of information submitted to the system by students. The electronic system automatically ranks students in accordance with the criteria dictated by the university senate.

As described before, there are 438 students studying in this Faculty of Architecture, Design and Wood Technology of which 97 are studying in the programme Professional Bachelor in



Design and Constructions of Wooden Products. So, the number of students divided by the three years is well within the capacity of the teaching, laboratories, and workshops spaces.

The proposed number of admissions per year is 60. Considering the information of the SER and gathered during the evaluation meetings, the study groups are dimensioned to ensure an effective and interactive teaching and learning process and the academic staff that participated in the evaluation meeting demonstrated a very good understanding of student-centred learning as well as interactive teaching. Nevertheless, it is recommended to plan the number of students in practical (workshop) classes not larger than 20 students instead of 30 as described in the SER.

Feedback to students on their performance and results of assessments is given promptly and accompanied by mechanisms for assistance if needed. Flexible treatment of students in special situations is ensured with respect to deadlines and formal requirements in the program and to all examinations. Academic staff is available at sufficient scheduled times for consultation and advice to students. Tutorial assistance is available on academic issues and has been introduced in the University also for non-academic issues and will likely spread to all programmes from 2022.

The results obtained by the students throughout the study cycles are certified by the academic record (online Management System – SMU). However, it seems that the records of student completion rates are not well kept due mainly to the fact that only a small number of students have so far completed the programme. Considering the information gathered during the evaluation meetings, systems (institutional mechanisms) established for monitoring year-to-year progression rates and program completion rates seem to be lacking or under development. The University does not have an automatized way of monitoring student work in a specific subject in the study program. The dean monitors the passing statistics in each subject and takes the necessary measures to address student difficulties in passing certain subjects.

According to the SER, effective procedures are being used to ensure that work submitted by students is original: “The University is part of the Erasmus+ Capacity building funded project ReaserchCult through which University has secured access to anti-plagiarism software for staff and students for the next three years”. However, it is crucial to ensure that the software for detecting plagiarism is available at all times, not just for a limited period.



Students' rights and obligations are made publicly available (Statute and Student handbook), however, the Statute stipulates the right of appeal only in case of exclusion. The students' transfer between higher education institutions and study programs as well as recognition rules for foreign qualifications are regulated by Statute, however, it was not possible to confirm that recognition rules for qualifications obtained outside higher education institutions (informal education, experience, etc.) are defined.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
<i>Standard 5.1.</i> 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	
<i>Standard 5.2.</i> All students enrolled in the study program possess a high school graduation diploma or other equivalent document of study, according to MEST requirements.	X	
<i>Standard 5.3.</i> The study groups are dimensioned so as to ensure an effective and interactive teaching and learning process.	X	
<i>Standard 5.4.</i> Feedback to students on their performance and results of assessments is given promptly and accompanied by mechanisms for assistance if needed.	X	
<i>Standard 5.5.</i> The results obtained by the students throughout the study cycles are certified by the academic record.	X	
<i>Standard 5.6.</i> Flexible treatment of students in special situations is ensured with respect to deadlines and formal requirements in the program and to all examinations.	X	
<i>Standard 5.7.</i> Records of student completion rates are kept for all courses and for the program as a whole and included among quality indicators.		X
<i>Standard 5.8.</i> Effective procedures are being used to ensure that work submitted by students is original.	X	
<i>Standard 5.9.</i> 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	
<i>Standard 5.10.</i> The students' transfer between higher education institutions, faculties and study programs is clearly regulated in formal internal documents.	X	



<i>Standard 5.11.</i> 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	
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X	
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Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Establish procedures for monitoring year-to-year progression rates and program completion rates. Collect student completion rates at the study program level and include this aspect among quality indicators.
2. Establish procedures for monitoring and coordinating student workload across courses.
3. Design recognition rules for qualifications obtained outside higher education institutions (informal education, experience, etc.).
4. Ensure that the software for detecting plagiarism is available at all times, not just for a limited period.
5. Plan the number of students in practical (laboratory and workshop) classes not larger than 20 students.

2.6. Research

Although a well-defined research strategy is not presented in the SER, the academic staff has demonstrated their ability to produce valid research (even with limited financial resources) by publishing, from 2018 to 2020, 31 articles in national and international referenced scientific journals and by presenting 15 papers in national and international conferences. From 2019, each member of the academic staff is required to publish at least one scientific paper per year.

This objective will be made easier by the planned establishment of the Institute of Applied Sciences including the workshops where students will do practical work in the institution; the laboratories for research in various fields, where both the staff and the students will be able to participate in research projects of the University and the industry; the innovation centre with cutting edge equipment for the development and design of products, physical models, printing of various designs such as: 3D printers and 3D scanners, as well as VR Headsets. Machines such as CNC, Printer/Plotter, and other modern equipment. In parallel, commercial projects will be also developed, where “both the staff and the students will be involved in real commercial



activities which will not only keep the staff’s commercial knowledge updated, but also provide students with a closer look to industrial experience”.

The present COVID situation makes travelling difficult but can also be seen as an opportunity to participate in relevant conferences that have lately changed to either online or hybrid online/onsite modes. Typically, the costs to participate online are lower than onsite and therefore interesting for organizations with lower research budgets.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
Standard 6.1. 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	
Standard 6.2. 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	
Standard 6.3. 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
Standard 6.4. The academic staff has a proven track record of research results on the same topics as their teaching activity.	X	
Standard 6.5. 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	
Standard 6.6. Research is validated through: scientific and applied research publications, artistic products, technological transfer through consultancy centres, scientific parks and other structures for validation.	X	
Standard 6.7. 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	
Standard 6.8. Academic and research staff publish under the name of the institution in Kosovo they are affiliated to as full-time staff.	X	
Standard 6.8. Academic staff are encouraged to include in their teaching information about their research and scholarly activities that are relevant to	X	



courses they teach, together with other significant research developments in the field.		
Standard 6.9. Policies are established for ownership of intellectual property and clear procedures set out for commercialization of ideas developed by staff and students.		X
Standard 6.10. Students are engaged in research projects and other activities	X	

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Develop a comprehensive strategic research development plan with clear objectives, actions and measurable indicators.
2. Encourage staff to publish at least one paper per year and support junior researchers to improve their competences.
3. Optimize the testing institute use to improve the applied research component in research and lecturing.
4. Develop international cooperation through common research projects and teachers exchange, when possible.

2.7. Infrastructure and resources

The University campus is large and the University building well equipped in terms of conventional lecture rooms. Moreover, it has a Library, two IT rooms, two workshops of significant areas and four laboratories among other student rooms. This includes the already described new Institute of Applied Sciences.

The University is a Higher Education Public Institution and its financial stability for the next three years is guaranteed by the Medium Term Expenditure Framework under Ministry of Education and Science. The University owns the spaces which it uses, including the laboratories and workshops, and has licenses for the use of educational software, with a free license for academic purposes. The University has appointed the vice-rector for Budget, Finances and Infrastructure, and therefore responsible for the development of infrastructure policies and monitoring its fulfilment.

Nevertheless, some flaws were detected during the meetings (and also mentioned in the SER) on the number of titles available in the Library, and particularly the limited access to



international databases of scientific journals. The exact numbers of seats and reading rooms were not checked due to the nature of the site visit. The SER also identifies procurement procedures for receiving needed materials for practical teaching as a weakness of the programme.

The improvement of the Library is strongly recommended not so much in terms of books and scientific journals made available on paper to students but on digital access to online resources which are fundamental for academic staff and research. Most of these resources will be available in English and that should give the students and staff an extra incentive to develop their foreign language skills.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
Standard 7.1. The adequate long-term implementation of the study program is ensured in quantitative terms as regards premises, human resources and equipment. At the same time, it is guaranteed that qualitative aspects are also taken into account.	X	
Standard 7.2. There is a financial plan at the level of the study program that would demonstrate the sustainability of the study program for the next minimum three years.	X	
Standard 7.3. The higher education institution must demonstrate with adequate documents (property deeds, lease contracts, inventories, invoices etc.) that, for the study program submitted for evaluation it possesses the following, for the next at least three years:	X	
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. Improve the Library. More computer access and adequate software or licences are a priority as digital access to information is easy and fundamental.
2. Develop short courses for staff and students on the use of online scientific data bases (e.g. Web of Science, Research Gate, Elsevier or MDPI).
3. Develop a clear plan to integrate the testing facilities with research and teaching needs.

3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

The SER details the recent evolution and developments of the programme since the previous evaluation. The recommendations of the previous External Review Report were all taken into account and implemented as far as possible within the limitations of the University and the country.

Several questions were raised on the general quality of teaching and on the modest publication record of the academic staff. The recruitment of new academic staff with higher qualifications, commitment to research and a different vision of the teacher / student relationship introduce a



distinctive rise on the overall quality of the study programme. The improvement of the facilities and infrastructures is also noted with satisfaction.

The following table summarizes the recommendations of the expert team for the following accreditation period and defines the final compliance level.

Standard	Compliance Level	Recommendations
1. Mission, objectives and administration	Substantially compliant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Continue the strategic implementation of the test facilities in order to reinforce the objective of learning by practice and to improve the research quality and the level of services to the community.- Develop a strategic plan and objectives for the development of applied research.
2. Quality management	Substantially compliant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Treated results of periodical surveys with students and staff should be published on a regular basis.- Students should be encouraged to improve their language skills and to participate in international exchange programmes. That will give them extra tools to be more actively involved in the program improvement.- Digital networking should be further implemented.
3. Academic Staff	Fully compliant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Elaborate clear and understandable objectives for the development of research capabilities of the teaching staff.- Consolidate the opportunities of co-operation with foreign universities.
4. Educational Process Content	Fully compliant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Update the literature recommendations particularly on the technical subjects to include recent (less than 10 years) references. A large part of these references should be in English or German.



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote the discussion of relevant recent papers (for instance, published in international referenced journals by Faculty Professors) whenever adequate. That can be part of the assessment. - Promote, whenever possible, the harmonization of the curricula with similar international institutions.
5. Students	Substantially compliant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish procedures for monitoring year-to-year progression rates and program completion rates. Collect student completion rates at the study program level and include this aspect among quality indicators. - Establish procedures for monitoring and coordinating student workload across courses. - Design recognition rules for qualifications obtained outside higher education institutions (informal education, experience, etc.). - Ensure that the software for detecting plagiarism is available at all times, not just for a limited period. - Plan the number of students in practical (laboratory and workshop) classes not larger than 20 students.
6. Research	Substantially compliant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a comprehensive strategic research development plan with clear objectives, actions and measurable indicators. - Encourage staff to publish at least one paper per year and support junior researchers to improve their competences. - Optimize the testing institute use to improve the applied research component in research and lecturing. - Develop international cooperation through common research projects and teachers exchange, when possible.
7. Infrastructure and resources	Substantially compliant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve the Library. More computer access and adequate software or licences are a priority as digital access to information is easy and fundamental.



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		<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Develop short courses for staff and students on the use of online scientific data bases (e.g. Web of Science, Research Gate, Elsevier or MDPI).- Develop a clear plan to integrate the testing facilities with research and teaching needs.
Overall Compliance	Substantially compliant	

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the study Professional Bachelor in Design and Constructions of Wooden Products offered by Faculty of Architecture, Design and Wood Technology of University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj is **substantially compliant** with the standards included in the *KAA Accreditation manual* and, therefore, recommends to re-accredit the study program for a duration of 5 (five) years with a number of 60 (sixty) students to be enrolled in the program.

Expert Team

Chair

Lina Nunes

30th March 2021