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Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

***UNIVERSITY “UKSHIN HOTI” PRIZREN
FACULTY OF LIFE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
AGRIBUSINESS MANAGEMENT MSc***

ACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

April 16, 2021, Vienna (Austria)



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: March 25, 2021

Expert Team (ET) members:

- *Hans-Peter Kaul, Univ.Prof. Dr.*

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- *Shkelzen Gerxhaliu, Senior Officer for Monitoring and Evaluation*
- *Arianit Krasniqi, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Accreditation*

Sources of information for the Report:

- *KAA Accreditation manual (dated July 2018)*
- *The manual for external evaluation of higher education institutions (dated February 2021)*
- *Self-evaluation report (SER) for accreditation of Agribusiness Management, MSc (dated January 2021)*
- *Course syllabi*
- *Staff CVs*
- *Evidences as listed in the SER on p. 123-125, except for the subsequent missing files:*
 - *2.1.1. Feasibility plan of the study program "Agribusiness management"*
 - *2.1.2. Regulation on determining the criteria for master studies*
 - *2.1.3. Decision on establishment of the Industrial Advisory Board (IAB)*
 - *2.2.4. Guidelines for the evaluation of academic staff, course evaluation, and the use of evaluation results*
 - *2.2.8. Report of the Commission for Quality Assurance at the Faculty Level*
 - *2.3.2. Evaluation report of the applicants on the call for job vacancy*
 - *2.3.4. Regulation on evaluation procedures for the engagement of foreign associates*
 - *2.3.5. Memorandum of cooperation with the Agricultural University of Tirana*



- 2.3.6. *Memorandum of Cooperation with the University of Prishtina*
- 2.3.8. *Guidelines for evaluation of academic staff, course evaluation, and the use of evaluation results*
- 2.3.12. *Manual of the package of legal acts for the academic and administrative staff*
- 2.4.2. *Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*
- 2.4.5. *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*
- 2.4.7. *Regulation on the definition of the master study criteria*
- 2.4.9. *List of cooperation agreements for practical work/internship*
- 2.5.3. *Regulation on the definition of the master study criteria*
- 2.5.4. *Public call for registration at the level of master studies*
- 2.5.6. *Regulation on personal income of academic staff, allowances for functions, honoraria and permanent commissions*
- 2.6.2. *University strategy for scientific research activities 2020-2024*
- 2.6.4. *Guidelines for the evaluation of academic staff, course evaluation, and the use of evaluation result*
- 2.6.5. *Evaluation report for scientific publications and conference attendance*
- 2.6.6. *Administrative instruction MEST 01/2018 on recognition principles and international magazines with reviews*
- 2.7.1. *Administrative Instruction MEST No.17/2014 on application of students' payment in public Universities*
- 2.7.4. *Questionnaire for student evaluation of study programs, administration services, faculty, library and infrastructure*
- *Link to Campus Video (via YouTube)*

Criteria used for program evaluation:

- *Standards & performance indicators for external evaluation according to the KAA Accreditation Manual (dated July 2018); the judgement on fulfilment of standards is indicated by letters A – D indicating full, substantial, partial on missing compliance*
- *Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact, Sustainability according OECD*

1.2. Site visit schedule

09.00 – 09.40 Meeting with the management of the institution

- 1. Isuf Lushi, Dean*
- 2. Albana Plakiqi-Milaimi, Vice-dean*
- 3. Nol Krasniqi, translation*

09.45 – 10:45 Meeting with the heads of the study program: Agribusiness / BSc

- 1. Isuf Lushi, head of the study programme*



2. *Sadik Maloku, head of the study programme*
3. *Shukri Maxhuni, head of the study programme*
4. *Nol Krasniqi, translation*

10:50 – 11:50 Meeting with the heads of the study programme: Agribusiness Management / MSc

1. *Ekrem Gjokaj, head of the study programme*
2. *Kushtrim Braha, head of the study programme*

11:50 – 12:30 Lunch break

12:30 – 13:10 Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff

1. *Albana Plakiqi-Milaimi, coordinator of the quality assurance commission*
2. *Faruk Bojaxhi, member*
3. *Nol Krasniqi, member*
4. *Nexhmedin Krasniqi, member*
5. *Lirije Koqinaj, member*
6. *Nora Rada, administrative student service staff*

13:15 – 13:55 Meeting with the teaching staff

1. *Mirvjena Kellezi, full-time teaching staff*
2. *Nol Krasniqi, full-time teaching staff*
3. *Liridon Buçaj, full-time teaching staff*
4. *Anera Alishani, full-time teaching staff*
5. *Festim Tafolli, full-time teaching staff*
6. *Kadri Krasniqi, part-time teaching staff*

14:00 – 14:40 Meeting with students



- 1. Bleona Buduri, student 1st year*
- 2. Endrita Bytyqi, student 1st year*
- 3. Andi Ademaj, student 2nd year*
- 4. Lirije Koqinaj, student 3rd year*
- 5. Flora Krasniqi, student 3rd year*
- 6. Gresa Llapatinca, student FLES parliament representative*

14:45 – 15:25 Meeting with graduates

- 1. Fatjona Parallangaj, graduate*
- 2. Arta Krasniqi, graduate*
- 3. Erblin Mahmuti, graduate*
- 4. Leotrim Dakaj, graduate*
- 5. Mirsad Bobaj, graduate*
- 6. Erjon Kryeziu, graduate*

15:30 – 16:10 Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders

- 1. Besim Loshaj, representative of the company “Agroproduct”*
- 2. Labinot Shulina, representative of the company “Labiwine”*
- 3. Nebi Duraj, representative of the company “Stone Castle”*
- 4. Hasan Malokaj, representative of the company “Ekofarm”*
- 5. Skender Bajrami, representative of the Ministry of Agriculture, DEASB*
- 6. Agron Limani, representative of the Prizren Municipality*

16:10 – 16:20 Internal meeting – Expert Team and KAA

16:20 – 16:30 Closing meeting with the management of the institution



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

The University “Ukshin Hoti” Prizren was founded as a state university and first accredited in 2010. The headquarter is in the city of Prizren. Currently there are about 4,800 active students. It sees its mission as “an academic and competitive institution oriented towards the provision of quality education by conducting scientific research and contributing to innovation, in accordance with the labour market demand and the contribution to community where it operates locally, nationally and beyond”. Academic fields are IT, agribusiness and environment, business management and administration, justice, linguistics and education.

Within the University, the Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences (FLES) was founded in 2016. Its mission is “to provide quality education and scientific research in the field of Agribusiness and Forest and Environmental Sciences, as well as to contribute to the local community, country and beyond.” The initial objective was to satisfy a market demand for specialists in the field of agribusiness management. Based on that, today’s strength of FLES lies in the close connection with manufacturing, agro-processing, management and trade, forestry and environmental protection industries. Thus consultancy services play an important role for FLES. In 2016 FLES started a full time BSc study program “Agribusiness” as one out of two initial programs. Currently, 149 mostly young students are enrolled in FLES, among them 75 students in the BSc program of Agribusiness. The granted maximum number of yearly new enrolled students is 80.

Now the faculty applies for accreditation of a 2-year/4 semester full time MSc study program “Agribusiness Management” in Albanian language, which shall become later a double degree program with Agricultural University of Tirana. The yearly admission shall be limited to a number of 50 students. Admission shall require a BSc degree or similar university qualification with an average grade of at least 8. An entry exam is scheduled for students with a lower average grade. It is expected that most of the students originate from the region, some also from northern Albania. Obviously the total agribusiness sector in Kosovo is of pivotal importance for the national economy and grows rapidly. The teaching staff strives for its own advanced training, quality teaching and professional education, which makes students highly competitive on the labour market. Besides, scientific research is conducted in different fields of individual specialization.



2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

2.1. Mission, objectives and administration

I would like to state in advance that the evaluation is to some degree hampered due to several missing annexes, among them the Feasibility Plan (2.1.1). (In the framework of comments on the draft report a feasibility plan was handed in, but was due Albanian language not accessible for me.) Furthermore I want to question two strengths that are mentioned in that section 2.1, i.e. “objectives are realistic as achievable” and “sufficient academic ... and financial resources”. More will be said in other sections.

Standard 1.1. The study program mission is in compliance with the overall mission statement of the institution.

There is evidence presented that the study program is aligned with the mission and strategic planning of the university. I was astonished to read that the graduates should be potential leaders only on the national level (p. 17). An MSc degree should prepare graduates also for job opportunities beyond the national border. (B)

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.

For all courses, learning outcomes are defined that fit to a large degree with the defined objectives. Also the course organization and evaluation methods are clearly defined. The requirements of national and European qualification frameworks are considered. I got a bit puzzled by finding two lists of learning outcomes (p. 19: 12 items and p. 37: 11 items), which are somehow related but definitely not the same. (B)

Standard 1.3. The study program has a well-defined overarching didactic and research concept. The program was developed based on best-practice examples from established universities, which is a solid basis for a well planned and combined course framework. From the interviews with teaching staff and students, however, it became obvious that teaching is still much focused on the individual own course, while team teaching and interdisciplinary course design is an issue for some younger staff members, but so far not a widespread approach. (B)



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.
The policies and regulations of the university and of FLES with regard to teaching, research and administration issues are transparently communicated. (A)

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.
Although it is impossible to judge on the complete compliance of all staff and students with proper ethical behavior in all teaching, learning and research situations, there was no evidence of any misconduct. (A)

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.
There are obviously regular reviewing and revising procedures in place for policies and regulations that are relevant for the proper management and delivery of the program. (A)

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. The faculty should define the learning outcomes once and use them consistently.*
- 2. The management should encourage teachers to have the common objectives and learning outcomes of the whole program more in view, and to use increasingly team teaching and interdisciplinary teaching approaches.*

2.2. Quality management

I would like to state in advance, that the quality management efforts and the staff responsible for execution gave me an impression of high commitment and engagement. At some instances I felt that the quality management procedures might even be too many or performed more often than necessary.

Standard 2.1. All staff participate in self-evaluations and cooperate with reporting and improvement processes in their sphere of activity.



There was no evidence found for missing cooperation of staff with evaluation and reporting processes. (A)

Standard 2.2. Evaluation processes and planning for improvement are integrated into normal planning processes.

Evaluation processes and reports are regularly scheduled, executed and used as basis for further improvement. (A)

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.

Quality evaluation and assurance are focused on (i) individual courses and (ii) individual staff. The overarching evaluation of the program with special regard to the interactions between individual courses (e.g. learning outcomes of one course as precondition for a later course) or teachers could be strengthened. (B)

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.

As mentioned above (2.3) the evaluation scope could be widened from individual teachers/courses to an overall view on the program. (B)

Standard 2.5. Quality assurance processes ensure both that required standards are met and that there is continuing improvement in performance.

The quality management checks on several levels (teacher, course, peers, graduates etc.) the level of compliance with defined standards. This information is made available to the management bodies of university and faculty for continuing improvement as well as to the public. E.g. a recent evaluation by students resulted in two distinct subjects for improvement, i.e. training of academic staff and more attention in courses on research methodology. (A)

Standard 2.6. Survey data is being collected from students, graduates and employers; the results of these evaluations are made publicly available.

Cf. standard 2.5 (A)



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.

Cf. standard 2.5: results of quality evaluations are available and used for improvement as well as for the drafting of the proposed new MSc program. The theoretical student workload (25 h per ECTS) is defined. The representatives of alumni in the interview emphasized their strong interest in the proposed MSc study on Agribusiness Management. (A)

Standard 2.8. The institution ensures that reports on the overall quality of the program are prepared periodically (e.g. every three years) for consideration within the institution indicating its strengths and weaknesses.

Quality reports are prepared on a regular basis and analyzed for further improvement of processes. Frequencies, however, are not always clear. (B)

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

The quality management procedures are updated if any adaptations seem necessary. (A)

Compliance level: Substantially to fully compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. I suggest to think about the necessity and/or frequency of the individual quality assurance processes. E.g. staff evaluation could be done only every second year with 50% of staff each year in alternate, or course evaluation could be sent initially only to the pertained teacher, and only in case of results below standard the Dean/quality management might be informed.*
- 2. The quality management team might develop procedures to evaluate existing and future programs with regard to the interactions of individual courses and teachers in order to attain the learning outcomes on program level.*

2.3. Academic staff

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.

Job vacancies are obviously announced and offered in a proper way. The required table is presented, but relevant details (workload for teaching in total, consulting, administrative activities, research) are not included. There is no full professor appointed at the faculty, but four Prof.Dr. shall be engaged part-time from Agricultural University of Tirana. There are six staff members who are already teaching in the BSc program Agribusiness, and it is not clear how they can add the additional obligations (lecturing, exams, consultation...) to their present work load. The program seems to rely much on the “imported” capacities of foreign associates, while such a program should be mainly grounded in own abilities. (C)

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. There was no evidence found that teaching staff does not fulfil the legal requirements for their positions. (A)

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.

The SER shows the complete full-time and part-time academic staff, but it does not provide evidence of possible occupation of teachers at any other institutions. (C)

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.

These quota are obviously fulfilled. (A)

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.

This requirement is obviously fulfilled. (A)

Standard 3.6. Opportunities are provided for additional professional development of teaching staff, with special assistance given to any who are facing difficulties.

In the interviews there were possibilities for training and further professional development mentioned, but the funds for that are limited (mentioned as weakness and threat in the SER).(C)



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.

There was no evidence that these responsibilities are disregarded by staff. For the significant inputs in teaching activities by foreign associates, however, their availability for students and engagement in local community services will be limited due to their main occupation at their home university. (C)

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.

These evaluations take place regularly once per year. I question whether it is necessary to do the complete evaluation each year and suggest (already above) to think of a reduction e.g. to every second year. (A)

Standard 3.9. Strategies for quality enhancement include improving the teaching strategies and quality of learning materials.

The quality management is working also on a strategic level on improvement of teaching methods, however the resources are limited. The supply with up-to-date textbooks and contemporary literature or outdated video projectors are explicitly mentioned as a weaknesses. (B)

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.

There was no evidence for a violation of that rule. (A)

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. The program needs to be grounded in own capacities, which is not evident despite the formal fulfilment of the numerical thresholds for accreditation. As soon as a double-degree program with universities in Tirana, Foggia and/or Sofia is more than an issue of "preliminary discussions", an application for accreditation is encouraged.*



2. *With view to international practice it seems necessary to appoint a few full professors for pivotal subjects and affiliate young staff members to them as assistants, thus creating “chairs”.*
3. *The teachers work so far much on an individual basis, although the interview with teaching staff revealed that a younger generation of teachers is coming up, who are open for team teaching and interdisciplinary teaching approaches. I strongly encourage the academic staff to think about their attitude towards the teaching process as a team effort instead of the prevalent approach to take care only of the contents of the own course.*
4. *In future hiring of new academic staff and promoting teachers, the share of females should be increased.*

2.4. Educational process content

I want to declare in advance that my own specialization is not in the area of agricultural economics and social sciences. Thus I can evaluate the individual course contents only superficially. But knowing that the whole study program was designed based on examples of recognized universities makes me confident that the overall composition of the program is appropriate.

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.

The program defines distinct qualification objectives and learning outcomes, although the learning outcomes are stated twice in different formulations. These include also interdisciplinary, methodological and personal/soft skill aspects. (A-B)

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.

The program was developed based on best-practice examples from established universities, which is a solid basis for a well planned and combined course framework. However, I want to



state that the adaptation of a recognized curriculum does not implicitly guarantee the same content quality. (A-B)

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.

Cf. standard 4.2. For the program in total 11 learning outcomes are defined on p. 37. Yet, on p. 19 other 12 items are listed, which follow also the scheme of learning outcomes and are not closely related to those on p. 37. (B)

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.

For all courses syllabi are presented, which include the above mentioned items and are in general well elaborated. (A)

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.

Any language training in advance was not mentioned, but English is obviously not a familiar language for many students in the region (which is declared as a weakness) as well as for several of the teachers. There are three courses scheduled that shall be taught in English, i.e. 18 ECTS, which seems to me at the lower limit. I like to add that translation of English textbooks to Albanian is a quite inefficient approach. (B)

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.

There was no evidence from interviews with either students or staff that would discount the assumption of that partnership relation. However, students talked about many very much



engaged teachers but some few with less devotion to their teaching obligations – as could be assumed everywhere. (A-B)

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. The learning outcomes are all addressed by different courses of the program. There is a suitable mix of lectures and exercises. The superficial impression from a virtual site visit, however, does not allow for a judgement on how flexible this is implemented in daily teaching. (A)

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. The students are initially informed about assessment procedures. The typical mix of written and oral examinations, home assignments and seminar work seems quite appropriate. There were no complains raised about unfair treatment of students. (A)

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. What can be assessed from the interviews and SER, there are proper methods scheduled to evaluate students' performance, which are in line with other well established universities. Again, it is rather impossible from a virtual site visit to judge how this is implemented in comparison among courses or teachers. No procedures are described to evaluate students' workload. (B)

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. There are procedures in place how students can appeal against unfair assessment treatments and results. (A)

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.

There is an internship scheduled in the 4th semester and 5 ECTS are assigned. I found no further information or an explicit syllabus, but one teacher is designated as course lecturer, who will presumably act as a supervisor. (B)

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.

There was an organisation established, the Industrial Advisory Board (IAB), that works as liaison with the industry and supports the university in finding places for internships. Additionally agreements with companies/institutions have been signed, but annex 2.4.9 is missing. (A)

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. The teaching staff should be encouraged to introduce team teaching and interdisciplinary teaching approaches.*
- 2. The offer of courses in English should be increased, which needs a sufficient knowledge of English by both students and teachers.*
- 3. For students it might be good to have a minimum requirement of English proficiency proven by common tests like TOEFL, IELTS or an internal test (as sometimes the tests are costly).*
- 4. The number of elective courses (3 out of 6 can be chosen) is small and does not allow much for an individual profiling of students' education. I recommend to make the program more variable for students.*
- 5. A certain number of ECTS (I think of about 6-8) should be included into the curriculum as "free electives" that can be obtained from any university or study program nationally or abroad. Thus students would be encouraged to widen their scope. This would also require a larger offer of electives in order to supply students who want to stay within their program at home.*



2.5. Students

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.

The possible enrolment to the program shall be announced by a public call for applications. Admission requires a BSc degree or similar university qualification with an average grade of at least 8. An entry exam is scheduled for students with a lower average grade. Thus it is transparently and fairly decided on admission. (A)

Standard 5.2. All students enrolled in the study program possess a high school graduation diploma or other equivalent document of study, according to MEST requirements.

There was no evidence for a violation of that rule. (A)

Standard 5.3. The study groups are dimensioned so as to ensure an effective and interactive teaching and learning process.

The number of students at 50 per year allows for an acceptable group size in lectures and a division to suitably smaller groups for exercises or seminars. There are rules set for the maximum number of students in different forms of instruction. (A)

Standard 5.4. Feedback to students on their performance and results of assessments is given promptly and accompanied by mechanisms for assistance if needed.

There is a very strict rule that examination results have to be announced to the students after max. 3 days. In case of students' complains about the result, they may contact the teacher during consultation hours or even appeal against the decision. (A)

Standard 5.5. The results obtained by the students throughout the study cycles are certified by the academic record.

The faculty/university holds a database documenting students' academic record. (A)

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.

The superficial impression from a virtual site visit does not allow for a judgement on how flexible students with special needs are treated in daily operation. I did not find explicit rules how to implement such a flexibility. (A-B)



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.

Student completion rates – including drop outs - are transparently documented in the quality report. (A)

Standard 5.8. Effective procedures are being used to ensure that work submitted by students is original.

Written work of students, especially thesis work, is obviously checked against plagiarism by a software. (A)

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.

As all regulations, also those pertaining students' rights and obligations are publicly available. There are procedures in place how students can appeal against unfair treatments. (A)

Standard 5.10. The students' transfer between higher education institutions, faculties and study programs is clearly regulated in formal internal documents.

I found no information about the conditions and rules that apply for students who change between universities or study programs. During the interviews that situation was no issue. (B)

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.

The SER emphasizes the availability of academic staff to students for consultation and individual support whenever necessary. (A)

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. The strict class attendance requirement sound more like a school than a university. For course parts that are costly, e.g. laboratory exercises or excursions, the compulsory attendance is reasonable. But for lectures I would not strictly request attendance, because other ways of learning should also be possible.*



- I appreciate the increasing number of female students at the faculty during the last years and encourage the faculty to accept about equal percentages of male/female applicants.*

2.6. Research

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.

The study program itself has no research objectives defined – but I would also not expect that from a study program. The “Strategic Plan” of FLES is an impressive document with ambitious aims. However, the therein (p. 6) documented research plan is a collection of individual research subjects of (presumably) individual staff members. And I miss a focus on a few strategic highlights. The resource situation also forces to pool resources for only few integrating research fields, which would also help to bring the staff closer together in cooperative, interdisciplinary projects. (C)

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.

There are standards set and checked for teaching staff at yearly evaluations (SCI/SSCI/SCOPUS papers, conference attendance) as well as for promotion along the tenure track. (A)

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.

Especially for publications, which are the main output of research, the rules for acceptance are clearly defined (SCI/SSCI or SCOPUS listed journals). However, the submitted list of publications does not reflect awareness of these standards. (C)

Standard 6.4. The academic staff has a proven track record of research results on the same topics as their teaching activity.



The papers listed in the SER prove that the research subjects of the publications are widely in line with the contents of the study program. The number of papers does not completely confirm the minimum requirement of one paper per staff member per year, but would be on an acceptable level. However, (i) the publication output is strongly influenced by the foreign associates and (ii) some few staff members appear quite often (e.g. D. Imami, E. Gjokaj), while others do not show up at all. Also the list of papers in the SER does not show whether papers are included in SCI/SSCI/SCOPUS. From a rough screening I assume that not more than 70% of them comply with that quality standard. (C)

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.

Cf. standard 6.4. There are activities of publication and conference presentation nationally and abroad, but the activities among the FLES full time staff should be increased. (C)

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.

Cf. standard 6.4. (C)

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.

This standard is definitely not met and the number of scientific publications is not a strength of the academic staff (as indicated on p. 115). (C-D)

Standard 6.8. Academic and research staff publish under the name of the institution in Kosovo they are affiliated to as full time staff.

There is no evidence that full-time staff publishes without mentioning the affiliation to the university. (A)

Standard 6.8. 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.



During the interviews with staff there was some evidence of such research driven academic teaching, including also their own study results and publications. However, the basis in terms of publications and projects is small. (B)

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. In the SER and during the interviews intellectual ownership and patent filing or commercialization were not mentioned. They seem not to be an issue in the present research situation of the faculty. (B)

Standard 6.10. Students are engaged in research projects and other activities. Students are involved in mainly applied research in cooperation with industry partners. I found no evidence of students participating in more fundamental research projects, which would be a necessary condition for MSc studies. The list of projects (p. 95) – which lacks any information about timescale, funding budget, sometimes funding agency – shows only one (H2020) typical research project, while the others are devoted to organizational matters of universities. (C)

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. The faculty should define only few integrating research fields and encourage academic staff to initiate cooperative, interdisciplinary projects in these fields.*
- 2. Research needs a structural foundation in competitively gained research projects.*
- 3. I urgently recommend to focus on papers published according to the own quality standards, i.e. in SCI/SSCI/SCOPUS journals. A simple supporting act is to list these papers always separated from other publications with lower standards, which makes them easily visible.*
- 4. Although I understand the importance of close contact and good connections with the local/national industry, I recommend not to overstress advisory services for these companies as research outputs at the cost of scientific papers.*
- 5. The payments of incentives for scientific publications, which are now paid “ad personam” to the author, might be substituted/amended by payments for research purposes (e.g. equipment, student workers) given to academic units (I mentioned “chairs” or working groups already above).*



2.7. Infrastructure and resources

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.

The necessary rooms, staff and equipment for a successful implementation of the study program seem to be available also on the long run, but they have to be shared with the ongoing BSc program. It is not clear to me, how six of the teachers can add the additional obligations (lecturing, exams, consultation...) to their present work load in the BSc program. As far as possible despite budget restrictions, qualitative improvements are intended. (B)

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.

The feasibility plan is missing, but a financial plan is included in the SER. This plan shows that the program can be self-supporting, but it is based on the extremely optimistic assumption that always 50 students per year are enrolled and also graduated. With view to the actual student number in the BSc program, that seems not realistic. And insufficient funds and budget limitations are indicated as weakness and threat. This raises some concern about the sustainability of the program, although I would like to state that education at a state university can hardly be a profitable business but will inevitably need substantial financing by the state. (C)

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.

All indicated room, laboratory, software and library equipment is mentioned as available in the SER. However, legally binding documents were not submitted. The library obviously suffers



from restricted budget funds, thus being not always able to keep the literature stock completely up to date. (B)

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 specialty disciplines included in the curricula are carried out in laboratories equipped with IT equipment.

The available space/seat numbers in lecture rooms and labs is obviously suitable for the student group size. An IT computer lab is also available. (A)

Standard 7.5. The education institution's libraries must ensure, for each of the study programs:

a) a number of seats in the reading rooms corresponding to at least 10% of the total number of students in the study program;

b) a number of seats in the group work rooms corresponding to at least 10% of the total number of students in the study program;

c) their own book stock from Albanian and foreign speciality literature, enough to cover the disciplines within the curricula, out of which at least 50% should represent book titles or speciality courses of recognised publishers, from the last 10 years;

d) a book stock within its own library with a sufficient number of books so as to cover the needs of all students in the cycle and year of study the respective discipline is provided for;

e) a sufficient number of subscriptions to Albanian and foreign publications and periodicals, according to the stated mission.

The library has 100 m². Assuming that much of the space is occupied with literature, the space for reading for 10% of students (today 8, but up to finally 24 BSc plus 10 MSc) seems limited. (Additionally I assume that the same resources are also provided for the students of the second study branch at the faculty.) A dedicated group work room is not mentioned in the SER.

About the limited supply with recent literature, cf. standard 7.3. On the other hand I would see that as a minor drawback, as today libraries in the traditional sense are losing importance because most and recent information is more and more obtained from the internet. (B-C)

Standard 7.6. The infrastructure and facilities dedicated to the implementation of the program is adapted to students with special needs.

Obviously there are proper facilities supporting the access for disabled persons, like elevators or toilets. (A)



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

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Instead of striving too much for having a lot of new books in the library, I suggest to invest the money in computers and internet availability. Also journal subscriptions should be made preferably for online versions.*
- 2. The faculty management should seriously check the own financial and facility situation and secure the long term financial survival of such a new study program additional to the ongoing BSc studies, which must also be supported by the university management and in the end by the state.*



3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

I unfortunately found that the conditions of the study program are not satisfying. Research is the weakest point, as for a MSc study program a certain level of research activities is necessary that allows the students to come in touch with up-to-date research projects and methodologies on an international level. In addition I urgently recommend to stabilize the situation of the ongoing BSc program Agribusiness and fill that program with the envisaged number of students, also in order to have a sufficient number of own graduates, among whom the best performing students may then continue with such a MSc program. I encourage the faculty to resubmit the accreditation request after suitable adaptations in a few years.

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the study program **AGRIBUSINESS MANAGEMENT, MSc**, offered by **UNIVERSITY “UKSHIN HOTI” PRIZREN, FACULTY OF LIFE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES**, is **PARTIALLY COMPLIANT** with the standards included in the *KAA Accreditation manual* and, therefore, recommends **NOT TO ACCREDIT** the study program.

4. APPENDICES (if available)

none

Expert Team

Chair

HANS-PETER KAUL

April 16, 2021

(Signature)

(Print Name)

(Date)