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Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency

***UNIVERSUM COLLEGE
PROFESSIONAL BACHELOR IN PHYSIOTHERAPY***

ACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

22nd April



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: 22nd April 2021

Expert Team (ET) members:

Prof. Dr. Danica Zeleznik – Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, Slovenj Gradec, SI
Ms. Delia Gologan – University of Bucharest

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

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

Sources of information for the Report:

- *Self-evaluation report,*
- *Site-visit discussions,*
- *Additional documents provided by the university,*
- *Website of the university,*
- *Video with the premises of the faculty.*

Criteria used for program evaluation:

- *Standards and indicators of the KAA Manual,*
- *ESG,*
- *European Region - World Confederation for Physiotherapy (ER-ECPT). European Qualifications Framework and its relations to the Bologna Cycles and Directives on Professional Qualifications. 2016*
(https://www.erwcpt.eu/education/qualification_systems)



1.2. Site visit schedule

09.00 – 09.40	Meeting with the management of the faculty where the programme is integrated
09:45 – 10:25	Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff
10:25 – 11:15	Lunch break
11:15 – 12:15	Meeting with the heads of the study programme: Nursing/BA
12:20 – 13:20	Meeting with the heads of the study programme: Physiotherapy/BA Professional
13:25 – 14: 05	Meeting with teaching staff
14.10 – 14:50	Meeting with employers of graduates
14:50 – 15:00	Internal meeting of KAA staff and expert
15:00 – 15:10	Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and program

Expert team (ET) was involved in a discussion with the management of the institution, the head of the study programme, quality assurance representatives and administrative staff, teaching staff , students, graduates, and employers of graduates. Due to the international pandemic situation, the evaluation took place online, but the expert team consider that this has not hindered the quality of the evaluation process. The discussions were productive and helped the expert team to clarify some aspects from the SER.

1.3 A brief overview of the institution and program under evaluation

Universum College (UC) was established in March 2004, in Prishtina, the capital city, and Ferizaj, the second largest and one of the most economically developed cities in Kosovo. Universum College offers four Bachelor level and two Master level programs: BA in Business and Management, BA in Political Science, BSc. in Computer Science, BA in English and MA in Management and MA in Diplomacy. In addition to the above mentioned programs, Universum College also offers two professional programs accredited by Pearson Plc. – Level 5 in Nursing and Level 5 in Integrated Design (SER,p. 3-4). The site visit and review included meetings with members of the University’s management team, individuals responsible for designing particular study programs, teaching staff, students, graduates and employers.

This report has been compiled in response to all of the information presented to the ET during the meeting and in materials provided subsequently on request. The ET would like to mention



that the evaluation was done by comparing the current situation of the programme, as presented by the SER and the online discussions, with the KAA standards.

The BA Physiotherapy programme is a 3-year programme, with 180 ECTS linked to it. It intends to enrol 200 students/year. The Professional Bachelor in Physiotherapy program as well, uses a learner centred approach to teaching and learning that encompasses a variety of inquiry teaching and learning methodologies (SER, p.6).

1.3. Mission, objectives and administration

The mission of the higher education institution is written on the page 8 in SER. The mission of Universum College is to support students to become good citizens, successful and broad-minded leaders and thrive in the Revolution 4.0, the digital and globalized era.

The Mission of the proposed Bachelor Program in Physiotherapy is to produce highly qualified and competent physiotherapists to provide promotive, preventive and curative services to meet the health needs of the nation and the global community through world-class excellence in physiotherapy education, clinical practice, research and dissemination of knowledge. The mission of the Physiotherapy program is consistent with the Universum College position and its grounded in its mission of continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and academic programs, in striving to create efficient educational programs that reflect excellence in teaching, lifelong learning, applied research, and partnership, aiming to contribute to a healthcare and rehabilitation workforce responsible and caring for their communities (SER, p.11).

ET notes from the mission is clear that the higher education institution is focused on the education of leading staff, which is not in line with the vision and mission of the professional Physiotherapy program. The mission of a higher education institution is generally not oriented towards the medical professions. As ET understands this is caused by the large diversity of study programs offered by the college, but both of the program and the institutional mission should reflect it's focus on teaching, research and/or community.

The Universum College (UC) guarantees the availability of the teaching, administrative and technical personnel needed to meet the goals and requirements of the study program. The essence of didactic and research concepts is to develop Physiotherapy competencies in students using a student-centred approach. In the program various didactic methods are used, which were mentioned during the online discussions. Various teaching methods are used that encourage interactive and research-based learning, problem solving and creative and critical thinking. The



mission does not have a sufficiently obvious research concept of the program, as it is a new program.

Procedural and academic issues in the UC are regulated by formal policies, guidelines, and regulations. All regulations and guidelines relating to procedural or academic matters in the UC are available for all staff and students on the internal platform the UC is using. All participants in the visit are familiar with this and according to their statements, they are all considered.

Teachers, associates, staff and students are obliged to comply with the provisions of the Code of Professional Ethics and Conduct on the basis of ethical principles of the Code. Online discussions revealed that the members of the academic community were aware of their responsibilities derived from them.

The Physiotherapy Program curricula is developed and contextualized from the European School of Physiotherapy and LUNEX International University of Health, Exercise and Sports evidence based programs reflecting a well-defined didactic and research concept, offering students qualifications with clear progression routes, whilst sharing core units across the qualifications focused on the professional values, knowledge and behavior required in the sector; designed to embed a more professionalized and sophisticated awareness of integration in Physiotherapy practice and research staff (SER,p.12).

The learning outcomes of the program, content and teaching methods are based on the Kosovo Qualifications Framework.

The program curricula fall under the Framework of National Qualifications and European Qualifications of Higher Education.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Mission needs to be adapted to the study program physiotherapy.*
2. *Reduce the number of admissions per year to a maximum of 50.*
3. *Consider motivating academic staff to involve physiotherapy students in their research projects and offer them special opportunities.*

1.4. Quality management



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Quality management is an integral part of Universum College strategy and benefits of the support of the management and the entire community. The processes linked to QA are universal for the entire college and will also apply to the new programs including the one evaluated now.

Evaluation processes and planning for improvement seem to be integrated in normal planning processes and include different reviews, assessments, focus groups, writing reports etc. The programs are periodically – every 3 or 5 years, depending on the external evaluation - reviewed through a self-assessment process guided by the KAA manual [SER, p.18]. *The ET recommends that these self-assessments should be internalised by the college and detached from the external evaluation, as it should serve the internal purpose of improving the programs first of all.*

The SER presents **Stakeholder's involvement in feedback** as practiced in general in the Universum College – suggesting that these practices will also be applied for the new programs. In the Universum College **students** offer feedback on the academic aspects of the study program (e.g. evaluating each course and teacher individually twice a semester) they follow and on the administrative staff's performance. The results of these evaluations are discussed with the teachers and students, in order to identify ways to improve the teaching-learning processes, but no reports are published on the website.

Graduates are invited to fill in online surveys about their `employment status, training time spent at the job etc.` [SER, p.20]. They could also be asked about their satisfaction with the overall program, student workload and ECTS distribution.

Employers also receive a survey addressing the skills of the graduates and their preparedness for the job-market. There is a practice of the College to establish an **Industry Advisory Board** created and it usually meets at least twice a year to provide the industry perspective over the programmes offered by the college. However, the Industry Advisory Board for this program will meet only after the accreditation of the program. The faculty management could consider implementing surveys dedicated to the industry representatives in the meantime.

There is no reason to believe that these will not happen/happen in a different way for the Nursing BA program.

According to the SER, the evaluation of the quality of the teaching-learning process includes self-assessments, peer-to-peer evaluations and evaluations of the students (which is described



to be comprised from survey and focus groups). However, it is not clear to the ET whether the self-assessment process described in the SER means that all teaching staff are evaluating their own activity (self-assess themselves) or whether the text referred to an institutional internal assessment.

Periodic evaluations of the programmes are conducted after a clear methodology. The evaluation includes elements about the *`program goals, course offerings, rationale for content, staffing resources, and student data in order to assess how the program is fulfilling the program mission by remaining current and relevant with market needs and trends in the sector`* [SER]. *`attendance, teaching methodology, assessment, passing rate, problematic courses, tuition payment`* are also monitored but during some meetings between the Academic Director of the Program, the Program Coordinator and the administrative staff. All these elements should be referred to by the surveys for students, academic staff, graduates and employers, and discussed in the reports prepared at the end of the analysis of these data. Moreover, reports of these evaluations have to be made publicly available – the ET recommends that published reports include a short presentation of the results of the evaluations, with an overview of the strong and weak points, as well as a plan of the management regarding the improvement of the current situation.

The described processes – including those related to the Pearson BTEC centre presented in the SER at page 23 – refer to inputs and process, but not much about outcomes of the program. The QA structures and the Student Service and the Career and Wellness office collect data – e.g. attendance, admissions, matriculation, student progression and retention etc. [SER, p.23]. The college should consider verifying, through appropriate QA instruments, that the learning outcomes are also met. For example: a sample of the final thesis should be checked by a special committee to see if they meet the required standards of quality and professionalism.

The QA processes described use as a benchmark the standards and indicators of the KAA manual, which is understandable and inevitable. But the ET, recommends the college to consider adapting these standards and indicators to the characteristics of its study programs, to make the internal evaluations more relevant.

The ET appreciates the dedication shown by the academic community and the college management towards QA and constant improvement. In order to maximize this dedication,



the self-evaluation reports should be used for constant improvement of the study programs, the learning processes and the facilities (and resources), not only for external accreditation.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- Address questions about the learning resources to students;
- Make sure that the instruments for collecting feedback from graduates (alumni) and employers;
- Develop QA instruments to check if the learning outcomes have been achieved;
- Considering developing internal performance indicators (even if they derive from the KAA manual, they should reflect the particularities of the study programs);
- Publish periodical reports containing results of all QA instruments and processes as well as the intended plans of the management to improve the current situation.

1.5. Academic staff

The selection of academic staff is done in a transparent way, based on the public tender, which is published by the UC Senate. It was clearly indicated in the self-evaluation report in a table (according to standards of KAA accreditation manual) the name of academic staff, full time or part-time contract, academic title, qualifications, duration of contract and labour load. These all fulfil the standard specified by KAA accreditation manual and the needs of the programme at its current dimensions.

The staff engaged in the Program of physiotherapy is listed in the courses of the curriculum. The physiotherapy program is covered by full-time and part-time staff. None of the academic staff covers within an academic year, more than two teaching positions (one full-time, one part-time), regardless of the educational institution where they perform their activity.

The total number of academic staff indicated above in the table (SER, p. 11-12) is 24. Only 4 staff members are part-time staff. Whereas 20 other members are full-time staff at Universum College. Subsequently, 83.3% of the staff accounts to full-time members. This program in total has 180 ECTS and has five leading staff to comply with the Administrative Instruction of KAA. In the case of Physiotherapy programs, HEIs are not required to hire full-time staff with a PhD in the field, but qualified staff with relevant MA/MSc will suffice,



as long as the HEI has signed an agreement with another institution with more experience. UC has signed an agreement with Kajaani University of Applied Science (Finland).

The teachers from the physiotherapy program have been detailed in a list provided to the accreditation team. Overall, the teaching staff is competent, and the number of teachers is sufficient, but continued education of teaching members will be essential to adapt more modern teaching that enhances the learning effects. The person in charge of the physiotherapy program says that teachers will be constantly encouraged to update curricula, teaching materials and teaching literature, in which case they must include the most up-to-date and relevant findings in this field (and related fields), information and knowledge about their research and activities.

In addition to the academic staff stated in the KAA, the Physiotherapy program collaborates with international staff (Kajaani University of Applied Science - Finland) who are with PhD, who will also hold lectures in English for Physiotherapy students, but ET suggests additional employment of competent higher education teachers in the field of physiotherapy. The academic staff of the Physiotherapy program is also engaged not only in participating in various local and international conferences, but also in organizing local conferences.

Teachers take care of the teaching quality strategy and regularly update their curricula, including contemporary literature. Moreover, during the online discussions, training opportunities offered to the academic staff members were mentioned.

UC adheres to criteria and standards imposed by the law. In the discussion, they say they don't have teachers retired at age limit.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Increase employment of academically educated higher education teachers in the field of physiotherapy.*
- 2. Encourage teachers to continue to write books and scripts for students in Albanian.*
- 3. Continue to financially support teachers involved in doctoral studies.*

1.6. Educational process content



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The study program Physiotherapy 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 study program complies with the National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. The study program comprises 6 semesters over 3 years of full-time studies (180 ECTS). One (1) ECTS is equivalent to thirty (30) hours of studies. All courses are graded by ECTS values. The allocation of ECTS is appropriate and justified and the assessment/examination methods are adequate.

The professional program in Physiotherapy is consisted of several mandatory (23) and elective courses (4), which are combined in a way to best achieve the specified qualification objectives and provide for adequate forms of teaching and learning. The program also includes practical education and diploma work. The group of experts found that the list of electives is missing as is the legend. The whole curriculum does not have enough electives. 3 ECTS electives are missing. The curriculum must have at least 10% of electives, which means 18 ECTS.

The program is designed for a full-time study form. The teaching methods seem to be understandable and acceptable in given circumstances; there is a mix of larger as well as smaller groups used during the teaching process (lectures/seminars), it seems. One of the stronger aspects of the program is practice that students undergo in institutions across the whole region. The amount of practice is satisfactory and the system of organizing practice as well (there is involved a supervisor from the Faculty, a mentor from the pre-school institution site during the process of practice).

As it is a common practice in the European space, the graduates of this programme have to undergo an internship and then pass the exam of the professional body before receiving the right to practice. The disciplines within the curriculum have analytical syllabuses which comprise at the following: the discipline's objectives; the basic thematic content, learning outcomes; the distribution of classes, seminars and applicative activities, students' assessment system, bibliography.

The program is in Albanian language. The UC offers a wide range of classes in English, but is not intended to be exposed to the Physiotherapy program.

The Physiotherapy program and its specifics are modelled based on the standards, specifics and recommendations of the European Framework of Skills, Competences and Professions

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(ESCO) giving special importance to the connection of education and training with the labour market.

In the Physiotherapy program, the disciplines within the curriculum are organized in such a way as to enable students to understand and learn the logical flow of professional preparation for the chosen profession. Thus, teaching begins with general preclinical medical courses in the first semester, more clinical courses in the second semester, and then moves on to more professional courses in the following semesters. The same logic is followed with professional courses, in which case it starts with the basics of professional courses in the first semesters and goes deeper at the level of professional sub-fields. Practical experience is an integral component of the program and each student is required to undertake and satisfactorily complete 810 hours of practical experience, which are translated into ECTS. Students in the physiotherapy program begin clinical experience during the first semester and complete in the third year.

Graduates of the Physiotherapy program will be able to:

- describe and argue theoretical and practical knowledge in basic sciences, humanities and professional sciences.
- identify professional (professional) and personal values (of the patient, companions, health professionals and other members of the rehabilitation team);
- identify the health determinants and health needs of the individual and different groups within the community using the “biopsychosocial” approach.
- define and apply different models of concepts, together with their benefits and limitations in different hospital and non-hospital settings.
- formulate short-term and long-term objectives of the rehabilitation process.
- plan, design, describe and direct the physiotherapeutic process.
- carry out the physiotherapeutic process in accordance with local and international laws in force;
- assist in the establishment of support staff and cooperate directly in improving their professional role and in research.

Each teacher is obliged to discuss learning outcomes with students and accommodate their incorporation. Interactive learning activities such as problem-based learning, sharing information, flipped classroom and virtual simulation, workshops, group work and seminars with discussions are used. In some courses, oral presentations of students' research findings



in a clinical setting are highlighted as an important part of the teaching and learning strategy (SER, p.63).

Compliance level: Substantially compliant.

ET recommendations:

- 1 Add the appropriate number of electives to the curriculum.
- 2 Add a list of electives.
- 3 Increase the number of competent teachers in the program.

1.7. Students

The UC has formally adopted procedures that include the admission (described at page 91 in the SER). Admission tests, qualifications and admission procedures are appropriate and only allow the enrollment of students who graduated from high-school and successfully passed the Matura Exam. They will also apply to the new program, but the ET recommends that they are adapted to the needs of these programs (including the one evaluated now) – for example: including an admission exam from subjects connected/relevant to the Physiotherapy. This could overcome the weakness identified in the SER: *‘ Limited knowledge of students in healthcare sciences ’* [SER, p.114] At this point it was not clear whether an exam was planned or whether the admission only considered grades from the matura exam or from high-school. The ET commends on the commitment of the faculty management for ensuring diversity within the program – both among students, and teachers.

The formally adopted procedures include procedures for transferring students from other accredited institutions from similar programs: „ The transfer is enabled only if the previous academic program is relevant, includes courses of similar nature and the relevant courses are acknowledged by the respective academic staff in consultancy hours dedicated to current, incoming and transfer students” [SER, p. 91].

Students have rights and responsibilities. They are published on the internal platform of the college, and the students are informed about them during the orientation day, when they also receive handouts with most relevant details. Among these rights, there is the right to appeal if the student feels disadvantaged during the assessment process. The ET recommends that the appeal procedure includes a re-evaluation of the students exam paper, by an objective



committee. The procedure should ensure that the student does not lose his/her right to a grade in the respective exam session.

The College offers a series of services for students: career guidance, tutoring, counseling, health care etc. However, even though the program was built based on the high demand of the workforce market, one of the threats seen by the SER is „the lack of employment opportunities” [SER, p.114].

Students are organized in a Student Association and different student clubs and organizations. They get involved in decision making processes and there is no reason to believe it will not also happen for the students who will enroll in the new program.

The goal of UC to include 200 students per year in the program is impossible given the conditions of education (working in small groups, clinical training, the number of mentors, etc.). ET proposes that the KAA be the maximum number of students allowed per year in the 50 per year.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- Implement QA procedures to ensure that admission procedures are applied objectively and fair to all candidates;
- Consider adapting the admission procedures to the specificities of this program;
- Consider adapting the orientation day to the present pandemic context so that not to deprive students from the right of being acquainted with the rules and regulations of the college;
- Encourage new students (from the new program) to get involved in student clubs and organizations and ensure their participation in decision – making processes.
- Enrol only 50 students for the first years, until the material and human capacity of the study program is increased.

1.8. Research



The development of research activities in the Physiotherapy program follows the objectives set out in the UC strategic plan and is based on academic competence, infrastructure, and internal and external co-operation. Universum is currently implementing an integrated teaching, research and staff development policy, by making it obligatory for staff to spend a greater proportion of their time conducting research.

The undergraduate curriculum at UC includes research activities that are designed to move students from being recipients of knowledge to becoming collaborators in its production.

UC has no developed research strategy in the physiotherapy program. On page 99 in the SER, they mention the possibility of physiotherapy students participating, but too flat, nothing concrete. In this direction, they will have to supplement their research plan.

Teachers reshape their lectures and program every year by involving their new professional understandings and practices of research to enrich the quality of academic curriculum in the context of workgroups.

According to the regulation for scientific research activity, the academic staff of the university is obliged to do scientific research and research work in accordance with their professional skills and obligations arising from the strategic documents of the UC.

A list of publications is presented. ET suggests that the results of research done as part of the diploma work should be published at scientific conferences and symposia.

During the meeting the responsible person for program Physiotherapy say, that, there are a considerable number of physiotherapy research project with very high potential ongoing, from the physiotherapy staff doing their PhD in International Universities. The group of experts suggests that it will be necessary to allocate start-up funds for research in the field of physiotherapy.

Publication in scientific journals depends on each individual and research area. Some have more publications, others less. The publication of physiotherapy has been increasing in recent years, which is a good thing.

When publishing, academic staff cite the name of UC.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Consider research topics in the physiotherapy program for physiotherapy research.*
2. *The results of research done as part of the diploma work should be published at scientific conferences and symposia.*



1.9. Infrastructure and resources

For the Bachelor Professional in Physiotherapy, UC is sought to create spaces students need to practice, research, engage, learn, and succeed. Key features include active learning classrooms with built-in information technology, inviting nooks and crannies for individual or group study sessions.

UC management in close cooperation with the Board of Trustees and financial office has allocated sufficient financial means and developed a strategic financial plan as requested in standard, this plan is consisting of practical milestones in ensuring the sustainability of the program physiotherapy (SER, p. 106).

UC owns sufficient space for the delivery of the program. Spaces available are fully complying with the requirements stated in the standard.

The facilities adequate for the development of this program are: adequate number of rooms, seats and laboratories. All the labs in the campus are furnished with the latest equipment necessary for research & certification purposes. Licensed software automatizing learning, study processes as well as other administrative matters and library with literature both in Albanian and English.

The library is computerized with a rich collection of latest reference books, journals, periodicals, newspapers, magazines and e-journals in Albanian and English. There is a computer lab with internet facilities. ET have not been able to check the specific literature for the physiotherapy program, but they still have the option to purchase it.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Acquire modern literature for the needs of physiotherapy studies*
2. *Provide modern appliances and equipment for practical exercises in the cabinet*

2. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the study program BA Physiotherapy offered by Universum College is *Substantially compliant* with the standards included in the *KAA Accreditation manual* and, therefore, recommends *accrediting* the study program for a duration of *3 years* with a number of *50* students to be enrolled in the program.

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The ET has received UC comments and understand management that they need a certain quota of students to make the program worthwhile to implement. UC wants to include 87 students/year in the Physiotherapy program in order to ensure the program sustainability. There is no mention of a curriculum that needs to be supplemented. Health programs are specific, and their implementation requires special care. Running a program for the first time without experience means flirting with shortcuts that we, the ET, can't approve of. It is necessary to start with a smaller number of students so that the program can be implemented and developed with quality. In accordance with what has been written above, ET remains with its opinion.

3. **APPENDICES** (*if available*) – *not the case*

Expert Team

Chair

Prof. dr. Danica Železnik

(Signature)

(Print Name)

(Date)

Member

Ms. Delia Gologan

(Signature)

(Print Name)

(Date)