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***University „Haxhi Zeka” Peja
Business Management MSc***

RE-ACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

June 2022, Vienna-Bucharest



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: 16th June 2022

Expert Team (ET) members:

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- *Delia Lupescu (ex. Gologan), student*

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- *Shkelzen Gerxhaliu, SO for Evaluation and Monitoring*
- *Flamur Abazaj, SO for Evaluation and Monitoring*

Sources of information for the Report:

- *Self-evaluation report and its annexes;*
- *video of the campus;*
- *discussions during the online site-visit with different stakeholders;*
- *extra-documents provided by the college after the online site visit;*
- *the website of the institution.*

Criteria used for program evaluation:

- *KAA manual for accreditation (v. 2021)*



1.2. Site visit schedule

<i>Time</i>	<i>Meeting</i>
<i>09:00 – 09:45</i>	<i>Meeting with the management of the faculty where the programme is integrated</i>
<i>09:50 – 10:35</i>	<i>Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff</i>
<i>10:40 – 11:40</i>	<i>Meeting with the heads of the study programme</i>
<i>11:40 – 12:25</i>	<i>Lunch break (provided at the evaluation site)</i>
<i>12:25 – 13:10</i>	<i>Meeting with teaching staff</i>
<i>13:15 – 14:00</i>	<i>Meeting with students</i>
<i>14:05 – 14:50</i>	<i>Meeting with graduates</i>
<i>14:55 – 15:40</i>	<i>Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders</i>
<i>15:40 – 15:50</i>	<i>Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts</i>
<i>15:50 – 16:00</i>	<i>Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and program</i>

Observation: the meeting with graduates, initially scheduled between 14.05 - 14.50 p.m. did not take place, since there are no graduates from this program at the moment of evaluation. Therefore, the rest of the meetings were rescheduled almost an hour earlier. This, however, did not hinder the smooth process of the evaluation, as far as the ET is concerned.



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

„Haxhi Zeka” University (UHZ) in Peja is a public higher education institution, established formally in 2011 when it separated from the University of Prishtina into an independent university.

Currently, UHZ is the second largest university in Kosovo: it enrolls over 10.000 students in the 13 study programs offered by its 5 faculties. UHZ along with the University of Prizren are the only two HEIs offering education to students from the Bosniak Community (in Bosnian language).

The Business Management MSc is organized by the Faculty of Business, it lasts for 2 years and has allocated 120 ECTS. It is a program offered both in Albanian (for $\frac{3}{4}$ of its enrolled students) and in Bosnian language (for approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of its students). It is designed as a program that allows for the specialization of the enrolled students in the second year of study. They can choose from one of the three specializations available: Business Management, Banking and Finance, and Accounting and Audit.

“The Master study program in Business Management represents the equivalent combination of basic theoretical knowledge and specific professional skills.” [SER, p. 6] with a ration between the theoretical and practical part of 60:40 in most curricula [SER, p. 8]. According to the SER the faculty means to deliver this program in a dynamic and interactive manner [SER, p. 6].

The Master program has been first accredited in 2019 and is now evaluated for reaccreditation. In the future, the Faculty intends to apply for the accreditation of a PhD program in the same field, as a natural continuation of this program.

Starting from October 2021 there is no tuition fee for the students of public universities such as UHZ, according to the instructions of the Ministry of Education Administrative.



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2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

2.1. Mission, objectives and administration

In the SER, the university states in a general way that the “study mission of the Master of Science in Business Management program is to continue to developing research opportunity for teachers, students and graduates in order to contribute to the development of Peja and the country by creating a competitive environment and a transformative academic program of businesses in the conditions of knowledge economy” (p. 9). At a more concrete level, this mission includes

‘to support students in developing a range of conceptual and practical skills, which will prepare them to work in the management of various businesses, financial institutions, finance and auditing, and related fields’ (ibd.).

The university emphasizes its aim to prepare “competitive students for the labor market in the field of business management”, realizing this aim “through innovative and supportive courses and research” which eventually shall ensure the curriculum’s orientation towards “market needs“ and foster students’ “active participation in local, national and regional economies” (p. 10).

While, at this general level, the program mission complies with the overall institutional mission, it remained less clear also during the site visit, which particular academic and professional advice was considered when defining the intended learning outcomes. No substantial information was provided which particular perspectives and demands were taken into account in designing the curriculum in the meetings with the representatives of the programme or faculty; some information could be obtained in the meeting with employers from which the ET concludes that some inputs could be used for programme design.

In the SER, the relation of the program to the NQF is explained only with reference to the qualification level. While the program is assigned correctly to level 7 of the NQF, the SER does not contain further explanation how the descriptors of level 7 are addressed in the learning outcomes and in the curriculum of the programme. In this way, the link to the program was explained by the representatives of the program, too. Therefore, the specific way of implementation of knowledge, skills, and competences in the program remained unexplained.

The study program does not have a well-defined overarching didactic and research concept. While this is missing entirely in the SER, the ET gained the impression in the site visit that some components of such a concept exist in a more informal way. When asking for explanation



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of the particular characteristics of teaching methodology in the faculty and in the programme, the ET was informed that “student-centered learning” is perceived as a predominant principle of teaching. During the site visit, this principle was associated with pedagogical elements such as interactive teaching to include teaching, encouragement of students to contribute their opinions and ideas and to propose topics. In addition, the combination of theory and practice parts in the courses was mentioned as an important principle governing the implementation of the curriculum. Strong emphasis is also given to providing both academic staff and research the opportunity of research. However, these and other potential ingredients are not yet assembled to a systematic teaching concept which would have been communication to the academic staff and linked to other relevant areas of program implementation such as quality assurance.

Regarding regulations of academic processes and issues, the university has adopted a range of relevant policies, guidelines and regulations. These regulations are made public at the website of the university in Albanian language and the vast majority of them in English language, too. One can also assume that staff and students are motivated to comply with ethical regulations in research, teaching, and assessment.

The policies and regulations which are published on the website of the university show actual dates, thus the ET concludes that important regulations and policies are regularly updated, modified and extended as required.

Standard	Compliance (yes/no/ partially)
Standard 1.1. The study program mission is in compliance with the overall mission statement of the institution	yes
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.	no
Standard 1.3. The study program has a well-defined overarching didactic and research concept.	no
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.	yes
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	yes



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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.	yes
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Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Elaborate in detail the specific linkages of the learning outcomes of the programme with the descriptors of the NQF.*
- 2. Develop a systematic and coherent overarching teaching concept.*
- 3. Communicate this concept to academic staff and students.*
- 4. Link the didactic concept with the quality assurance system and implement it in all quality assurance processes applied in the program.*

2.2. Quality management

Quality assurance is regulated within the „Haxhi Zeka” University (hereby called „University”/ UHZ) by the University Statute, the Regulation on QA and quality assessment system and the Quality Assurance Guide. Moreover, to complete these regulations, the University formally adopted a QA Strategy for 2020 – 2024 [SER, p.21]. All of these documents are publicly available on the university website [<https://unhz.eu/rregullore-2/>].

The QA procedures are implemented by the Council for Quality Management and Assessment (CQMA) and the Office for Quality Assurance and Assessment (this being the executive structure to implement the decisions of the CQMA). These two structures are helped by coordinators for QAA at the level of each academic unit and the deans. Ad hoc Committees can be appointed by the CQMA. The online site visit indicated that they are appointed for special themes, for a short period of time - e.g. the provision of education online, during the COVID19 pandemic imposed lock-down. The ET notes the trainings planned for the people involved in QA.

According to this regulatory framework, all staff participate in the QA system, which includes self-evaluations and cooperating in reporting. The QA processes deal with all aspects of



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program planning and delivery and are integrated in the calendar of the academic year [SER, P.23]. However, just like in many other HEIs in Kosovo, where the concept of learning outcomes has only recently been introduced and used, there is little to no monitoring of the progress of students towards the learning outcomes of a discipline and of a study program. More can be done so that the QA instruments also address this aspect of the student life.

UHZ has adopted a QA strategy for 2020 - 2024. In order to achieve the strategic goals included in this document, several stakeholder categories are surveyed periodically: students, academic staff, employers and graduates. The results from these surveys are integrated in reports and further used to `increase the effectiveness of the learning process and to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement in the future`, while also being published on the institutions' website [SER, p.23].

The reports (or their summary) are published on the university website along with an action plan regarding the observations made within the reports [SER, p.22]. All these actions have the intention to contribute to the constant improvement of the program. However the discussions during the site visit indicated that it was not clear to all stakeholders what the institution does with the results of the internal assessments. This should be clarified in order to increase relevance and participation in the QA processes.

Students are involved in the QA process, both as a stakeholder category providing feedback through the surveys, but also as part of the QA structures where they are involved in decision-making (e.g. design of the surveys, analysis of the results /data collected etc.).

Standard	Compliance (yes/no/ partially)
Standard 2.1. All staff participate in self-evaluations and cooperate with reporting and improvement processes in their sphere of activity.	yes
Standard 2.2. Evaluation processes and planning for improvement are integrated into normal planning processes.	yes
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.	yes
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.	yes



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Standard 2.5. Quality assurance processes ensure both that required standards are met and that there is continuing improvement in performance.	partially
Standard 2.6. Survey data is being collected from students, graduates and employers; the results of these evaluations are made publicly available.	yes
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.	yes
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.	yes
Standard 2.9. The quality assurance arrangements for the program are themselves regularly evaluated and improved.	yes

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Consider developing QA instruments for checking whether the learning outcomes are met.*
- 2. Consider developing QA instruments for monitoring the quality of research and the quality of teaching - e.g. develop criteria for defining excellence in teaching from the point of view of the institution.*

Continue the efforts of transparentizing the QA processes and clarify to all internal stakeholders the institutional follow-up for the results of the internal assessment and the way they contribute to the improvement of the quality of education.

2.3. Academic staff

The faculty staff formally consists of full professors, associate professors, assistant professors, teaching assistants and lecturers. The revised table provided on academic staff upon request of the ET shows 24 full-time (regular) and 14 part-time academic staff was reported, which is contradictory to the information provided in the SER, which showed 25 full-time and 27 part-time members of the academic staff in the programme. While part-time staff usually has one-year contracts, contract duration for full-time academic staff is between 3 and 5 years. The



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majority of courses are held by regular academic staff and formal qualifications of the regular staff fully meets the requirements.

Staff appointment is determined by educational, scientific, research and service criteria.

Enhancement of the academic strengths of the faculty is intended to be achieved through training in “contemporary teaching methods”, which was often emphasized as a key principle for the faculty. Since references to these in the SER are very vague and not much more precise information could be obtained in the site visit, the institution submitted lists of training activities upon request of the expert team.

Asked about further training in teaching methodologies accomplished within the last two years, half of the participating academic staff mentioned such training, especially in teaching with digital tools, gamification and developing learning outcomes. These subjects are definitely among the most important in the further training of academic teachers and the ET praises these efforts. However, neither in the SER nor during the site visit, a systematic staff development plan in teaching was presented. The additional list of academic staff participating in further training in teaching methodologies since the beginning of 2020 requested by the ET could resolve the impression that such a plan does not yet exist to a certain degree but not fully. Two additional documents submitted did not meet the particular interests of the ET, since the information in one of these referred to publications and the other referred to “intense training” without any specification of the particular teaching methodologies. The third additional document finally showed that in 2021, a three-day training on teaching methodologies such as organizing distance lectures, usage of the learning management system, usage of EBSCO and usage of MS Office applications was organized. According to this list, 30% of the academic staff attended at least one of these topics. Following the information given by the institution, this means that the majority of the full-time staff did not attend such further training in teaching methodology, although the opportunity to do so at least punctually was provided by the university. During the site visit, representatives of the university also referred to the HERAS project, however, this project pursues different objectives, but not the advancement of teaching methodologies.

The responsibilities and duties of the academic staff comprise a proportion of 10% of work time which is supposed to be spent for community work. Academic staff is expected to be available for students for consultation at only two hours per week which is the same for all staff categories based on both full time and part time appointment.

Academic staff evaluation is conducted regularly through self-evaluation once a year and course evaluation. The results of the evaluation are made publicly available. While the



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participation rate of academic staff in self-assessment is 100% as the representatives of the university emphasized in the site visit, not much of the results seem to be systematically used for advancement of teaching skills. However, this is not surprising since the self-assessment questionnaire for academic staff, which could serve as a valuable source in identifying needs and interests in further training in teaching methodologies, does not contain any concrete question regarding teaching skills. The ET could not determine distinct strategies for quality enhancement which include improvement of teaching skills and quality of learning materials. Given a number of 300 students per year and a significant teaching load for full time and even more for part time teachers, the number of consultation hours is low.

Standard	Compliance (yes/no/ partially)
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.	yes
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.	yes
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.	yes
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.	yes
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.	yes
Standard 3.6. Opportunities are provided for additional professional development of teaching staff, with special assistance given to any who are facing difficulties.	partially
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.	yes



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Standard 3.8. Academic staff evaluation is conducted regularly at least through selfevaluation, 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.	yes
Standard 3.9. Strategies for quality enhancement include improving the teaching strategies and quality of learning materials.	no
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.	yes

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Include open questions in the self-assessment questionnaire to identify difficulties in teaching and individual needs and interests of academic staff in further training on teaching and assessment methodologies.*
- 2. Develop a systematic training plan in teaching methodologies based on the results of self-assessment of teachers and course evaluation of students.*
- 3. Make a distinct amount of training in teaching methodologies per year obligatory for all academic staff.*
- 4. Delimit teaching methodologies clearly from research skills, office application skills and institutional capacity building.*

2.4. Educational process content

The master programme “Business Management” consists of two semesters of general studies followed by a choice of three specialisations starting in the third semester - Business Management, Bank and Finance, Accounting and Audit - and a final semester devoted to development of master's thesis in the chosen specialisation. The programme comprises 180 ECTS and is designed for a number of 150 enrollments per year. It is organized in Albanian and Bosnian languages.



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In the SER, the qualification objectives are outlined in a very general way by stating that the “program is designed to meet the requirements and standards for the preparation of managerial and professional staff in the field of business, economy, banking, finance, accounting and auditing in Kosovo” (p. 47). Later in the SER (p. 48f.), the university provides a more detailed account of the “expected results” of the programme which is indeed a collection of very generic formulations which could be used for other programmes (also in other faculties) if the subject-specific terms are replaced. These formulations are not wrong, but rather generic and therefore do not provide detailed information on the specific subject-related qualifications students are supposed to acquire during the study.

As was already mentioned before, unfortunately no explicit explanation of the alignment of the program with the NQF is provided. Also, the descriptions of qualification objectives do not contain detailed information on the particular skills and competencies to be acquired in the specializations although this is a key characteristic of the programme. Here, the ET recommends a rigorous revision of the linkages to the European Qualifications Framework instead of formulations such as “the study program is fully compliant by respecting the rules and procedures required by the qualifications framework of the European Higher Education Area by providing a broad framework and adequate combination of activities offered in teaching and learning” (p. 47f.) which really do not provide an elaboration on the particular implementation of EQF respectively NQF descriptors.

This is all the more regrettable since the majority of syllabi do contain well developed learning outcomes at the course level addressing skills levels appropriate for a master programme which the ET appreciates much.

Regarding the subjects in the curriculum, the ET was surprised that several topics and subjects which dominate the contemporary business world are covered only in a very selective way. This is most striking when searching for topics such as digitalization and virtualization of business and economics. There is no course which would provide an introduction into these topics nor do syllabi in other areas provide any information about the linkages of the respective subject to these megatrends. In fact, there is only one course where digitalization is explicitly addressed and this course, Digital Finance, is a course in one of the three specializations. (SER, p. 100f.). The same applies for innovation as a distinct subject, which is only addressed in one (!) course, i.e. Entrepreneurship and Innovation, in the Business Management specialization. It is hard to understand that a master programme in Business Management does not address subjects like these in a more fundamental way. Another topic which should be covered in a master programme of this kind is Big Data and its conceptual and practical relevance in the three specializations.



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As the programme is organized in Albanian and Bosnian language, the faculty provisioned division of language groups for 120 students in Albanian and 30 students in Bosnian language.

According to the description of teaching methods in the syllabi one can assume that the student-teacher relationship is a partnership where students are assigned a certain degree of responsibility for reaching the learning outcomes. In the site visit, the ET learned from teachers that explanation of learning outcomes seems to be a rule at the beginning of courses.

The teaching strategies as described in the syllabi at the course level can be regarded appropriate for the different types of learning and student groups. From the students' representatives, the ET did not hear complaints about unfair assessments. This information corresponds with descriptions of assessment methodologies in the syllabi which meet standard requirements in terms of providing information on the most important assessment methods and evaluation criteria.

Students are obliged to complete an internship within the specialization chosen in the third semester comprising 6 ECTS, which the ET considers reasonable. Following the syllabus, this practice stage is partly organized in "economic units and business organizations" in order to assess "the skills required in the job market" (SER, p. 84). Thus, the internship is of the kind of field work with reflection of the experiences and results in the course at the university. While this concept might not meet the traditional meaning of an internship due to the lack of specification of work time in companies or organizations outside the university, it seems fair enough to support the advancement of students' awareness of career requirements.

Standard	Compliance (yes/no/ partially)
Standard 4.1. The study program is modeled 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.	partially



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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.	no
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 list at least 7 learning outcomes for the study program under evaluation.	no
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	yes
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.	yes
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.	yes
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.	yes
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.	yes



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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.	yes
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.	yes
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 organizations is monitored through activity reports; students during practice stages have assigned tutors among the academic staff in the study program.	partially
Standard 4.12. In order to facilitate the practice stages, the higher education institution signs cooperation agreements, contracts or other documents with institutions/organizations/practical training units.	yes

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Clearly define the subject-specific and professional knowledge, skills and competencies the students are supposed to acquire in terms of qualification objectives at the programme level.*
2. *Clearly describe the linkages of the programme with NQF and EQF by explaining explicitly the implementation of NQF-/EQF-descriptors at the level of the qualification objectives of the programme.*
3. *Integrate essential contemporary subjects such as digitalization, virtualization, innovation and big data in the introductory courses and in the relevant fields of application within each specialization.*
4. *Explain the logical flow of the disciplines in the curriculum.*
5. *Explain the concrete work done by students in the internship in more detail.*



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2.5. Students

The admission of new students is done through a public contest and follows the procedures formally adopted by the institution through the Regulation of Postgraduates studies, in accordance with the institution statute and the Law on Higher Education. The admission procedure takes into account the admission exam (70%) and the results from previous levels of education (30%).

The number of positions opened depend on the sufficiency of staff and the needs of society and the labor market [SER, p.119]. The program has enrolled 149 - 159 students in the last two academic years and intends to enroll 150 students in the next. The 150 regular students will be split: 120 in the Albanian section and 30 in the Bosnian Section. The Albanian section will comprise of 3 groups of 40 students both for lectures and for the practical activities, while the Bosnian section will only have a group of study. This way of dimensioning the groups ensures the premises for interactive and efficient teaching-learning processes.

The contest is opened to potential candidates who have already completed bachelor level studies (BSc) in a relevant field (Economy, Business Administration, Bank, Finance and Accounting, Control and Audit or similar fields), and their bachelor degree contains at least 180 ECTS credits [SER, p.119]. The contest consists of a written entrance exam in general economic topics with special emphasis on business management and successful candidates must obtain a minimum of 7.5 grade. The general average points from the BA level studies is also taken into account. Students with a lower grade than 7.5 in the entrance exam can be admitted if not all places are filled by students with a grade higher than the threshold, but they have to go through extra qualifying exams. The ET recommends on the practice of opening the admission for students who have graduated abroad in a university recognized by EAU.

There is a complex assessment system of the student progress that includes verbal and written exams, as well as on-going evaluations thorough seminar papers, scientific research, practical exercises and tests. However, there is no mention of feedback to students being given in a proactive formative way that might help the student understand where he/she stands in relation to the pre-set learning outcomes and what he/she can further do to improve their progress. No intervention mechanisms were mentioned.

Most of the exams are organized through the SEMS platform and results are recorded in the student record. Students have the right to reject a grade in 48 hours from its public announcement. Students who participate in internships abroad or exchange programs benefit from special treatment (flexibility in scheduling the exams).



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Other rights and responsibilities of students are regulated by the Regulation for postgraduate students and can be found in the guidebook for young students [SER, .126]. The ET recommends the university to publish a list of the rights and responsibilities of its students on the website of the institution (at least on the internal platform).

Transfers are allowed and regulated by the statute of the university. They are ultimately approved by the Dean of the Faculty with the proposal of the Collegium of postgraduate studies and the approval of the Council of relevant departments according to the dispositions provided by the Statute [SER, p.127].

Students' rights and responsibilities are defined by the rules and regulations of the university, which are all published on the UHZ website and were included in the student handbook each student received at the beginning of the program. They include both the right to reject a grade (if not satisfied with it), and the right to appeal. There are two appeals procedures: one for the admission process and one for the regular examinations.

The students also mentioned an induction week/day but it was unclear whether it was only dedicated for students in the 1st year of BA programs or also for the 1st year Masters' students. The ET recommends the university to organize these events for students in the 1st year of the master programme, too.

Among the responsibilities of the students is: attending the classes (attendance is mandatory, though the discussions during the online site visit indicated that sometimes teachers make exceptions). When a student is in a personal special situation that determines him/her to miss a class/a practical lecture, they can announce the teacher and recover the missing parts through the online platform (thanks to the materials uploaded there). However, if attendance is not perfect (according to the standards announced by each teacher at the beginning of the course) the students are penalized (points are subtracted from the final grade). Nevertheless, the ET observed that students who are working managed to meet their expectations just fine, proving that there is some flexibility shown to the students.

Standard	Compliance (yes/no/ partially)
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.	yes



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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.	yes
Standard 5.3. The study groups are dimensioned so as to ensure an effective and interactive teaching and learning process.	yes
Standard 5.4. Feedback to students on their performance and results of assessments is given promptly and accompanied by mechanisms for assistance if needed.	partially
Standard 5.5 The results obtained by the students throughout the study cycles are certified by the academic record.	Yes
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.	partially
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.	yes
Standard 5.8. Effective procedures are being used to ensure that work submitted by students is original.	yes
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.	yes
Standard 5.10 Standard 5.10. The students' transfer between higher education institutions, faculties and study programs is clearly regulated in formal internal documents.	yes
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.	Yes

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Develop mechanisms to help students achieve the learning outcomes (interventions should depend on the results of ongoing feedback offered to students regarding their progress towards achieving learning outcomes);*
- 2. Consider ensuring more flexibility to students in special situations (e.g. involved in car accidents or whose members of the family got sick and determined them to miss lectures/practical activities/exams). This could mean not penalizing those who motivate their absence.*



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2.6. Research

As can be learned from the SER, from related documents and from information obtained during the site visit, the faculty and program representatives claim a high level of student integration in research activities and the special significance of research skills. In one of the generic qualification objectives of the program, the university defines the objective that students are supposed to be able “to write, present research papers and prepare research projects” in one of the specializations and “to gain the ability to continue academic or research studies in the field of business management and economics at a higher level of education” (SER, p. 48f.). In the site visit, the ET was told that up to 80 % of publications are prepared in collaboration with students which is indeed an indicator for high student involvement. Apparently, this high percentage referred to the publication of masters’ theses.

In the Strategy of Scientific Research 2019-2024, the university defines creation and development of research programs as a distinct strategic objective. One important measure to achieve this is the obligation of individual academic staff members to submit an “individual development plan” where

“the number of scientific papers that will be published in international scientific journals with impact factor, the number of international scientific conferences where they will participate, number of research projects and other scientific and research activities” (SER, p. 132)

to be produced or implemented within the next academic year must be defined in detail.

The main instruments to support research activities of teachers are monetary incentives. Members of the academic staff do get significant financial rewards for publications in acknowledged publication platforms and for research projects. Obviously, the university maintains sufficient financial provisions to ensure a significant level of publications and participation in conferences. Less evidence could be obtained regarding funding of research projects, be it from public or private sources.

It would have been interesting to get an explanation of the criteria for internal financial support and financial incentives for research activities, however, no information on this topic was submitted. Taking a closer look into the research strategy, one can learn that creating and developing research programs is exclusively tied to the establishment of PhD programme which, however, have not been implemented yet. The Research Strategy does not determine the development of independent research programs based on strategically relevant topics as a distinct objective. This corresponds to the information obtained in the site visit that research is treated as an individual task and no explicit research program exists.



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It became clear that there are no provisions at the faculty or program level how the academic staff of the program will be systematically involved in research activities which follow a strategic plan which defines key topics for research and which makes staff members agents of the implementation of this plan. Furthermore, no clear policies in defining research and how it would correspond with international standards are implemented.

The academic staff has demonstrated that it is capable of producing significant publications and the ET praises these achievements. It is all the more regrettable that there is no conceptual and institutional framework (either faculty based or programme based) which could integrate individual actions into a coherent, overarching research programme. Development of such a framework would be a predominant task of the faculty.

The study program has defined scientific/applied research objectives only in general that can be applied to every kind of faculty and even the entire university. The self-evaluation report does not contain information on the research development plan of the business faculty nor does it give information on the research programme of the study program regarding the reflection of scientific / applied research objectives. While the Strategic Research Plan 2019-2024 contains other provisions aimed at the advancement of research for the entire university such as “establishing international collaboration” and “creating sustainable infrastructure” for research, which is undoubtedly important, the alignment of this strategic plan on specific research areas which would address the key dimensions of the programme is entirely missing. A clear concept for ethics in research, good scientific practice and intellectual property rights is not existing, too. Here, distinct regulations about sanctioning of plagiarism, and on falsification and fabrication of data would be important components.

Furthermore, there is no distinct strategy to integrate teaching, learning and research in terms of research-guided didactics. It is interesting that research as a didactic element can be found in several syllabi, yet is not a part of an overarching didactic concept. Thus, it must be concluded that research activities are vastly contingent and dependent on individual activities.

A real lack must be stated with regard to master thesis regulation: In the “Regulation for Postgraduate Studies (Master)” only formal requirements but no scientific requirements and methodical standards of master theses are explained. This is surprising since the curriculum has three specializations in the third semester which partially imply the use of very distinct research methods and, furthermore, students are supposed to develop their theses in one of these specializations.



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Standard	Compliance (yes/no/ partially)
Standard 6.1. The study program has defined scientific/applied research objectives (on its own or as part of a research center 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.	no
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.	partially
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.	no
Standard 6.4. The academic staff has a proven track record of research results on the same topics as their teaching activity.	partially
Standard 6.5. The academic and research staff publish their work in specialty 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.	yes
Standard 6.6. Research is validated through: scientific and applied research publications, artistic products, technological transfer through consultancy centers, scientific parks and other structures for validation.	partially
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.	yes
Standard 6.8. Academic and research staff publish under the name of the institution in Kosovo they are affiliated to as full-time staff.	yes
Standard 6.8.(1) 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.	yes



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.	no
Standard 6.10. Students are engaged in research projects and other activities.	yes

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Define basic and applied research objectives based on the priority areas of research for the program and for the faculty.*
- 2. Develop and implement a research programme based on subject-related research priorities at the faculty level and at the program level.*
- 3. Develop differentiated research methodologies for specializations and for master theses.*
- 4. Provide clear policies for defining what is recognized as high-quality research, consistent with international standards and established norms in the field of study of the program.*
- 5. Integrate research, teaching and learning in the didactic concept of the master program.*

2.7. Infrastructure and resources

The Faculty of Business has allocated for the evaluated study program 13 classrooms with a capacity of 1049 seats in total, 2 informatics cabinets (with 60 seats) and 10 cabinets for professors (with a total of 30 seats). The students enrolled in this program can also use the faculty library that has 84 seats. The spaces dedicated to this program are equipped with 119 PCs, 21 printers, 6 scanners, 3 photocopying machines, 14 projectors and voice systems in rooms bigger than 50 seats.

The university is a public institution whose main financial source is represented by the Ministry of Education, especially since starting with the 2022-2023 academic year, the university will not collect student tuition fees (as per the decision of the MEST). As far as the ET understands



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this comes with the benefit of a certain financial security in time, but with the downside of not being able to get a budget increase (not even when the number of enrolled students rises) as it depends on a political decision at national-level and on the budget of Kosovo. As far as the Faculty of Business is concerned, the responsables estimate that the general costs with this program will remain constant in the next three years, thus not being a problem to ensure the financial sustainability of the program if the public allocation stays the same.

The library that the students enrolled in this program can use is shared with all the students in the faculty of Business. It has 84 places and in the period January - March 2022 was used by 474 readers. The number of available reading seats fulfill the requirement of covering 10% of the students that use it - from the evaluated program and not only.

The online site-visit indicated there are not sufficient copies of the books in Albanian, in the library. Moreover, they are not the latest titles either - the library should develop internal mechanisms to ensure that the latest/newest books in the field are acquired for the book stock of the university. However, both students and teachers underlined that this aspect does not affect the quality of teaching and learning as the students receive their learning materials in electronic format, from their professors, through the online platform of the university.

Only one of the three facilities of the program has access to facilities for people with physical disabilities. The ET recommends that the faculty starts ensuring access to the campus and learning materials for students with other types of impairments (e.g. visual or hearing impairments). The students also indicated that they would be happy if the infrastructure could undergo some modernization processes.

Standard	Compliance (yes/no/ partially)
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.	yes
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.	partially



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

Compliance level: Substantially compliant



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ET recommendations:

1. *Identify potential financial resources for modernizing the infrastructure (e.g. research projects, providing paid services to the community, collecting donations from the alumni or employers etc. - could be just some of the ideas that could be considered);*
2. *Purchase books that are the newest in the field - in so many copies that they cover a minimum of 10% of the enrolled students (e.g. for 150 students, each book in the bibliography of the courses in this program should be bought in 15 copies);*
3. *Encourage students to use more the online resources of the library - e.g. the subscription to EBSCO or similar international databases;*
4. *continue the efforts of making both the infrastructure and the learning resources accessible for students with different impairments (not only physical).*



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3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

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

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the study program Business Management MSc by Haxhi Zeka University, Peja, is **substantially compliant** with the standards included in the *KAA Accreditation manual* and, therefore, recommends **to accredit** the study program for a duration of **3 years** with a number of **150 students** to be enrolled in the program.

4. APPENDICES (if available) – NA

Expert Team

Chair

Dr. Dietmar Paier

05.07.2022

(Signature)

(Print Name)

(Date)

Member

Delia Lupescu (ex Gologan), student

05.07.2022

(Signature)

(Print Name)

(Date)