



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES IN FERIZAJ

INSTITUTIONAL

FINAL REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

March 6, 2023



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	2
1. INTRODUCTION	3
1.1. Context	3
1.2. Site visit schedule	4
1.3. A brief overview of the institution under evaluation.....	7
2. INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION	8
2.1. Public mission and institutional objectives.....	8
2.2. Strategic planning, governance and administration.....	9
2.3. Financial planning and management	11
2.4. Academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability	13
2.5. Quality management.....	15
2.6. Learning and teaching	18
2.7. Research	21
2.8. Staff, employment processes and professional development	23
2.9. Student administration and support services	26
2.10. Learning resources and facilities	28
2.11. Institutional cooperation.....	30
3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND JUDGEMENTS OF THE EVALUATION PANEL.....	33



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: February 8th, 2023

Expert Team (ET) members:

- *Prof. Milan Pol, Masaryk University, Czech Republic*
- *Prof. Peeter Normak, Tallinn University, Estonia*
- *Mr. Christoph Back, student expert*

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- *Ilijana Ademaj Ahmeti, KAA Officer*
- *Leona Kovaci, KAA Officer*

Sources of information for the Report:

- *Self-evaluation report (SER)*
- *Other documents provided by the university upon the request*
- *Data from the interviews (site visit)*

Criteria used for institutional and program evaluations

- *KAA Accreditation Manual*



1.2. Site visit schedule

Time	Meeting	Participants/Comments
09:00 – 10:30	Meeting with the management of the institution (<i>no slide presentation is allowed, the meeting is intended as a free discussion</i>)	<u>Rector</u> Prod.Dr. Agron Bajraktari <u>Vice Rectors</u> Prof.Dr. Bujar Pira Prof.Asoc.Dr. Rrahim Sejdiu Prof.As.Dr. Fakiye Zejnullahu Prof.As.Dr. Arben Terstena Lect. Flamur Salihu <u>General Secretary</u> Armend Hysa
10:35 – 11:35	Meeting with: 1. Quality assurance representatives 2. Administrative services	Prof.Dr. Bujar Pira – Vice Rector for International relations and Quality assurance Armend Hysa – General Secretary Fatime Musliu – Quality Assurance officer Besa Rexhepi – Students services Ismajl Mehmeti – Academic development and quality assurance Coordinator at the Faculty level



11:40 – 12:40	Meeting with Deans of Faculties (Head of programmes in case of smaller colleges)	Prof.Asoc.Dr. Sokol Krasnniqi Prof.As.Dr. Petrit Hasanaj Prof.As.Dr. Bashkim Cerkini Prof.As. Florit Hoxha Lect. Bujar Jashari <i>Translator: Etleva Blakaj</i>
12:40 – 13:40	Lunch break (to be provided at the evaluation site)	
13:40 – 14:30	Visiting tour of the facilities and infrastructure	
14:30 – 15:20	Meeting with teaching staff	Prof.As.Dr. Leonora Haliti Rudhani Lec. Anyla Shala Prof.As.Dr. Artan Veseli Prof.Asoc.Dr. Bislim Lekiqi Lec. Etleva Blakaj Prof.As.Dr. Gjelosh Vataj Lec. Faton Spahiu
15:25 – 16:15	Meeting with students	Samir Selmani Elza Alija Blerta Sylejmani



		<p>Lorita Rama</p> <p>Hana Haziri</p> <p>Leona Jahiri</p> <p>Eurolinda Shabani</p> <p>Anisa Dogani</p> <p><i>Translator: Anyla Shala</i></p>
16:25 – 17:15	Meeting with graduates	<p>Rinidon Bislimi,</p> <p>Drilon Rexhepi</p> <p>Erblina Asani, .</p> <p>Mirjeta Blinishti,</p> <p>Roland Raka,</p> <p>Fatmire Nuha</p> <p>Liridona Bytyci</p> <p>Shpetim Hasallari</p> <p>Manjolla Salihu</p> <p><i>Translator: Etleva Blakaj</i></p>
17:20 – 18:10	Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders	<p>Kenan Gashi-Rrjeti i OJQ-ve “Avonet”,</p> <p>Balton Derguti-Drejtoria për Zhvillim Ekonomik ne Ferizaj,</p> <p>Nehat Ademi-NTP DOQI</p> <p>Arianit Kastrati-Tefik Canga Design</p>



		Bujar Baliu-ANB Baliu Afërdita Hoxha-RUBIS Hajredin Ibishi-ELSAM Fitim Bajrami-EUROMETAL Nexhmedin Sadiku-DAQA Pajtim Avdyli-PROMOB <i>Translator: Anyla Shala</i>
18:10 – 18:20	Internal meeting – Expert Team and KAA	
18:20 – 18:30	Closing meeting with the management of the institution	

1.3. A brief overview of the institution under evaluation

The University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj (UASF) is a public higher education institution which was established in 2015. Prior to this, in the period 1976-2015, it functioned as a professional higher education school, and as part of the University of Pristina. Currently it is organized in five faculties (Faculty of Management, Faculty of Engineering and Informatics, Faculty of Architecture, Design, and Wood Industry, Faculty of Tourism and Environment, and Faculty of Applied Arts). The UASF offers nine study programs (six bachelor and three master programs) and serves to more than 1.500 students (according to the SER, it has 1,545 students). Almost a half of the students (45,3%) are enrolled from the region of Ferizaj, 16,8% students come from Pristina, 13,5% from Kacanik, and 8,7% from Gilan. The staff consists of 57 full-timers (out of them are 46 full-time academic staff).



The physical infrastructure of the UASF is located in the space of 8,304.27 square meters, with separate spaces for theoretical and practical learning in workshops and laboratories. The UASF has undergone several accreditations by the KAA, the last institutional reaccreditation was awarded in 2020 (for three years).

2. INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

2.1. Public mission and institutional objectives

The mission statement of the UASF is formulated in a balanced way and its clearly and explicitly points at three main pillars of every standard higher education institution's functioning: teaching, research, and the third role (public reach). In concrete, the mission statement of the UASF is formulated as follows: "We are committed to providing quality education to prepare qualified professionals, dedicated researchers and educated and responsible citizens to develop professional career and lead productive lives" (SER, p. 8).

The vision statement is clearly in a positive correlation with the UASF's mission statement. The vision is formulated as follows: "National model of a modern, innovative and integrative education university, where practice complements theory and professional and research skills are developed for the benefit of society".

Main values behind of which the UASF stands, are learning, ethics, collaboration, excellence, and diversity. This is a well-chosen set of values which points at really important aspects of quality at the higher education institution.

The documents provided by the UASF and also the data collected during the interviews brought the evidence that that mission and vision statements of the UASF were developed, based on a consultation process involving both internal, and external stakeholders of the institution. The last revision of these statements is dated to the process of strategic review which was conducted in 2021.

The mission and vision statements of the UASF seem to be recognized by the members of the academic community of the institution; they are also published at the UASF's webpages.



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

With regard to the content of the mission statement, it can be said that the UASF's mission statement has a potential to be an effective guide for strategic planning, decision making and operations of the institution.

The five strategic objectives and their further elaborations are also consistent to the mission of the mission of the UASF, and they have a potential to support the mission realization. They relate to advancement of the learning process, capacity building in science and innovation, strengthening cooperation with the community at a strategic level, raising institutional capacities, and continuous quality improvement.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *None*

2.2. Strategic planning, governance and administration

The UASF developed the Strategic Plan for 2022-2026 and this plan was approved by the Steering Council of the institution in 2022.

The process of strategic plan's development was based on the work of an ad hoc established working group which was composed of representatives of all university stakeholders, internal as well as external ones (namely, steering council, management, academic staff, administrative staff, students, business community, alumni, and civil society). In this connection, the UASF used resources of HERAS+ Project and involved in the strategic planning process an external expert who moderated the process of drafting the strategic plan. The whole procedure is well described in the SER, and it can be considered as a well thought-over institutional development process. The 2022-2026 strategic plan is also published at the UASF's website.

Five strategic objectives (see section 1.4 of this report) are further concretized and elaborated into the sets of specific objectives which relate to each strategic objective. Main performance indicators were defined and the budget for realization of the strategic plan, too. As for the

9



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

budget, the medium-term budget planning of Kosova government for the years 2022-2024 was taken into account, for the remaining two years of this strategic plan (2025-2026) the budget plans are based on the trends of previous years. This way, the strategic plan seems to be taking full and realistic account of aspects of internal and external environment affecting the development of the UASF.

Monitoring of the implementation of the strategic plan is in place at the UASF. The UASF has the Monitoring Plan of the strategic plan which was drafted by the working group. The reporting is planned on an annual basis, the reports on the mid-term implementation in three-years period, and final evaluation at the end of the whole period to which the strategic plan is related. The Steering Council is the main approving body, the working group is supposed to realize its decisions in this context.

The UASF has a decision-making system and internal operating regulations in conformity with current legal provisions. The organizational chart is built in a logical way, and this includes decision making processes, too.

The election criteria and processes of the decision makers are clear, transparent and they are a part of institutional regulations at the UASF. This way, the roles, responsibilities and also decision-making procedures related to the Steering Committee, the Rector and his team of five vice-rectors, the Senate, the Teaching/Scientific Council, the Program Committee are clear. Students are represented in all main university bodies, typically having one representative. Among these bodies are the Senate, Teaching/Scientific Council, Program Committee, Quality Commission, Ethics Council, Disciplinary Commission, Complaints Commission, Commission for Scientific Research, and more. The precondition for the student representative in some of these bodies of having an average grade higher than 8,00 could be viewed as a limitation.

The Student Parliament represents students' interests on the university level, with a total of nine students as members of the Parliament. The voting procedure seems to be clear; student elections are held every two years and there is a specific regulation available for this at the UASF.

Administrative staff is led by the General Secretary of the UASF, each member is selected on the basis of public competition. The administration staff is organized into institutes,

10



departments and divisions with clearly assigned tasks and responsibilities: Institute of Applied Sciences – in the process of the development; Department for Academic Affairs and Student Services (incl. quality assurance agenda); Department for Finances and General Services, Division of Internal Audit; Division of Public Communication. These are determined by the regulation on the systemization of workplaces. Administrative staff have a representative in the Senate as well as in the Teaching/Scientific Council. Administrative staff seem to be effective in their activity. According to the SER there are 11 administration and technical staff at the UASF, and the institution considers this number modest.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Consider a possibility to open a chance to represent students in decision making bodies for all students regardless their grade average.*

2.3. Financial planning and management

The UASF is a public higher education institution, and therefore it is mainly financed by the Government of the Republic of Kosova. The financing is done based on the requirements of the UASF annually, with regard to government plans and budgetary possibilities. The annual budget and plans of the expenses for the next three years are approved by the Parliament of the Republic of Kosova. The Medium-Term Expenditure Framework can be viewed as a mechanism that guarantees financial sustainability of the UASF for the next three years.

In the case of the UASF the other incomes (own generated incomes) are very small (almost 2,7 million EUR are received from the government, and almost 19 thousand EUR as own generated income in 2023, for instance). Own generated income comes from student fees and international projects. Currently the UASF is piloting a form of commercialization of some staff and student products (project HERAS+). The development of Institute of Applied Sciences under the umbrella of the UASF is also believed to be a chance to increase own generated income for the institution.



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

This can be said the UASF can demonstrate it has sufficient financial resources in the short and medium term to adequately reach its mission as well as objectives as they are formulated in the strategic plan.

Overall, the UASF has a realistic annual budget and also a three-year budget, and its policies ensure financial sustainability. The budget is structured into several parts (Income; Category of expenses, such as Goods and services, Municipality expenditures, Subsidies and transfers, Capital expenditures, Salaries and over salaries). Within some of these parts there are sometimes rather small allocations for some specific activities. For instance, subsidies for staff in scientific research are equal for the next three years (35 thousand EUR each year); expenses on education/training shall amount 1.500 EUR each year. More investments in the library development seem to be a need and is not fully reflected in the budgeting.

The UASF's budget division into economic codes and the realization of expenses are realized through the Kosova Financial Management Information System (SIMFK) which is an integrated application for financial management of public money. The UASF also has access to the Asset Management System within e-Pasuria – it consists of a web application and a database located on Kosova government servers.

Financial issues are managed by concretely assigned personnel at the UASF. There is the Vice-Rector for Budgets, Finance and Infrastructure, the Head of the Budget and Finance Division in the capacity of the Chief Financial Officer, and the General Secretary of the UASF in the capacity of the Chief Administrative Officer – they are responsible for the development, planning and supervision of the budget's implementation and for the staff of the finance office.

The UASF prepares annually (at the end of a fiscal year) Financial Reports for the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovations (MESTI). The UASF is a subject of internal audits done by the MESTI, and every year the UASF is also a subject of an external audit carried out by the Office of the Auditor General. According to the SER, no inconsistencies were found in the estimates of expenses in the last three years.

In sum, there is an accurate monitoring of expenditure and commitments against budgets with reports prepared annually. The accounting system applied at the UASF seems to comply with accepted professional accounting standards.



Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Consider a possibility to increase expenses related to education/training of the staff, to research, and to the library development.*
2. *Continue in efforts to use the potential of the UASF for getting more funds as institutional own generated income.*

2.4. Academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability

The institution is handling the topics of academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability in alignment to the „Code of Ethics“. The priorities of the „Code of Ethics“ are the protection of the values of academic freedom, institutional autonomy and ethical integrity. Within this document, the standards of conduct of all academic staff, administrative staff, support staff and students are defined. The „Code of Ethics“ is also in alignment with the University statute, the Labour Law, the Law on Civil Servants and the administrative instructions from Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI).

With the “Code of Ethics” the university assures that all members of the institution behave in a way that meets a set of moral principles and values. So, all individuals or groups within the university are expected to consistently demonstrate ethical behavior in their actions and decisions regarding to avoidance of plagiarism in research, teaching, performance evaluation and in the conduct of administrative duties. Also, the avoidance of conflicts of interest is described in the document.

During the site visit, the university was able to demonstrate the enforcement of the „Code of Ethics“ with suitable examples. Clear processes and mechanisms were presented to the evaluation panel. The evaluation panel found no shortcomings related to the detection of plagiarism for papers written in Albanian or English language. For papers written in Albanian or English language a plagiarism detection software (plagiarismcheck.org) is used. All dissertations, seminar papers, and other works of students are checked via the platform. The university was able to adequately explain the mechanisms for plagiarism detection for papers not written in Albanian and English language.



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

The university was able to explain how the problem of plagiarism is tackled. A designated committee, the Research Ethics Council, was founded in April 2022 to handle any cases which arise in this field (until today, no such case happened, the panel was informed). Sufficient mechanisms, regulations and the Research Ethics Council ensure a proper handling of cases of plagiarism or other breaches of academic integrity, when they are found.

Besides the mentioned Research Ethics Council, the university has established two additional permanent committees who are the main bodies to implement and enforce the „Code of Ethics“. The permanent committees are the Ethics Council, the Disciplinary Commission and the Research Ethics Council. With these bodies, the university has established a structure which is responsible for the analysis and resolution of any potential breaches of academic integrity.

The Ethics Council is a body that is created at the proposal of the rector and approved by the Senate and functions in accordance with the Statute, the University Regulations and the „Code of Ethics“. The Ethics Council is composed of four members of the academic staff, one member of the administrative staff and one student representative.

The Ethics Council is in charge of discussing and taking action in cases of violation of any principle of the „Code of Ethics“. The Council meets depending on the needs of initiated cases. Procedures for the authenticity of the violation of any principle of the „Code of Ethics“ can be initiated with the submission of the report for violation of the Code, in a written form, to the bodies for the implementation of the „Code of Ethics“.

The Disciplinary Commission is approved by the university with the Regulation of Disciplinary Measures and consists of two members of the academic staff, one member of the administrative staff and one student representative. The commission is in charge of defining the disciplinary measures for cases breaches of the „Code of Ethics“. The commission is working in alignment with the Regulation of Disciplinary Measures.

The Research Ethics Council is a body appointed by the Senate of the university and consists of one member from each scientific field (external members may also be included), one member of the administrative staff and one student representative. The basic objective of the Research Ethics Council is to define the requirements and standards for the ethical conduct of research within the University.



The university stated that a breach of the „Code of Ethics“ did not have happened yet. The evaluation panel had no reason to assume that the „Code of Ethics“ is not applied adequately.

The university has two platforms where necessary information is published, the website (ushaf.net) and the U-SHARE platform, which can be accessed by all members of the university. On these platforms the university is publishing all relevant information, data, regulations and reports. The evaluation panel is satisfied with the transparency of the university.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Make sure that the awareness of academic integrity is high among all members of the academic staff and the students.*

2.5. Quality management

The latest version of the *Quality Assurance Regulation* was adopted by the Senate of the university on 23.12.2022. The document describes its purpose, the mission of quality assurance of the university, defines its scope, as well as describes the actors in the process of quality assurance (Governing Council, Senate of the University, Rector, Vice-Rector for quality assurance, Commission for Quality Assurance, Office for Quality Assurance, Coordinator for quality assurance in the university level, Coordinator for quality assurance on faculty level, dean, Program Committee) and their responsibilities, the principles of conducting different types of evaluation (internal, external, institutional, study programs), process of evaluation, the use of data gathered during evaluations. For example, the program committee should analyze study programs, courses, self-evaluation of the programs, progress in subjects, drop-out rates, monitor the satisfaction of students, and propose recommendations for improvement. The document is freely available on the university web. The mechanisms, processes, and timelines of quality assurance are regulated by the *Quality Assurance Guidelines*.



Concrete financial means for supporting continuous quality improvement are assigned in the *Strategic Plan for 2022-2026* of the university. Although the Strategic Plan contains a separate objective for quality improvement, all other objectives in fact serve quality improvement as well. Despite the fact that the university has a shortage of staff, identified as one of the weaknesses in the SWOT analysis, the leadership and management of quality assurance processes are covered with the necessary human resources.

The university has a comprehensive feedback system from all stakeholders. Concrete examples of changes that have been made were provided to the expert team (evaluation panel). They concern the replacement of courses in curricula, based on the results of statistical analysis, for instance.

The Strategic Plan of the university for 2022-2026 has a strong focus on quality improvement (the word “quality” is mentioned 101 times in the document!). Continuous quality improvement is stated as one (out of five) strategic objectives of the university. Under this, three specific objectives are stated: 1. Advancement of quality and continuous adaptation of quality assurance mechanisms; 2. Adoption of digital methods for quality assessment at all levels of the university; 3. Identification of each member of the University with quality (quality culture). Under each of these specific objectives, there are concrete indicators (altogether 10) and yearly targets for each indicator as well as activities under each specific objective (altogether 15 activities), together with the parties responsible for implementation and expected outcome. Additional measures of quality assurance foreseen in advancement of the learning process and capacity building in science and innovation.

Evaluation of the modules and academic staff by the students as well as self-evaluation of the academic staff are conducted each semester, institutional, program and peer evaluations once a year. Evaluation by the graduates is conducted shortly before graduation and evaluation of internship after completing the internship.

The majority of evaluations are based on feedback from students, academic staff, non-academic staff, alumni, and employers. In addition to the Likert scale, open-ended questions are also always used. The evaluation of the courses is sufficiently thorough. However, self-assessment of study programs and consequently improvement of study programs between international accreditations could be enhanced. For example, the questionnaire for alumni contains questions about specific and general competencies but does not contain recommendations for improving the study program as such.



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

In the list of nine quality assurance instruments, different groups are involved as follows: students – in four instruments, academic staff – in four instruments, administrative staff – in one instrument, alumni – in two instruments, employers – in one instrument. University management is also represented at the meetings of the program committees. However, the most important bodies of program quality assurance – program committees – are heavily unbalanced, consisting almost exclusively of academic staff. No stakeholders from outside university (employers, graduates, policy makers, representatives of other relevant educational institutions, etc) are represented.

The Quality Assurance Office (QAO) implements the decisions of the Quality Assurance Committee: it is responsible for the organization of the assessment process, data collection and processing, prepares and uses the assessment instruments, and in cooperation with the academic and administrative staff. Although only one person currently works at QAO, this is sufficient considering the relatively small size of the university.

The university has a Quality Assurance Commission that has a representative from each academic unit as well as from the Student Parliament. Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance is heading this commission.

The duties and responsibilities of the Office for Quality Assurance and of the Commission for Quality Assurance are stated in the Quality Assurance Regulation, consisting of 10 and 9 activities, respectively. The Commission for Quality Assurance contains representatives of all main stakeholders (rectorate, administration, academic units, students). The Office for Quality Assurance works closely together with the faculty level quality assurance coordinators. However, the experts were not provided with any documents where the responsibilities of the heads of study programs are stated.

Templates for collecting data from stakeholders are used. About 2/3 of the students (1,084 from 1,545 for 2021/2022 academic year) and a half of academic staff (27 from 56 for 2021/22 academic year) provided their feedback. The experts were not provided with information on the availability of the surveys to the broader public.

The data collection is done through a special module developed within Student Management System (SMU). The data are processed by the QAO and submitted to the quality coordinators at the faculty levels and to the university management who take the necessary actions.

The management of the university, quality assurance representatives and deans have all listed a number of improvements since the last institutional evaluations. Students and alumni

17



provided concrete examples of evidence where quality assurance led to concrete improvements: access to the labs was extended to 21:00, wi-fi was improved, new courses implemented etc.

The Quality Assurance Regulation was revised twice since 2020.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Develop competency requirements for the persons in charge of the study program, and mechanisms to ensure that a lead professor is only appointed to that position.*
2. *Extend program committees by non-university stakeholders (employers, graduates, policy makers, representatives of other relevant educational institutions etc).*
3. *Update the questionnaire for alumni with asking recommendations for improving the study program.*

2.6. Learning and teaching

The University has published and adopted sufficient regulations for its academic programs. They are specified for undergraduate (“Bachelor Studies regulation”) and graduate studies (“Master Studies regulation”). Every program is monitored by the instruments of student evaluation, graduate assessment, employer evaluation (the University has an “Industrial Board” as an advisory panel), employment of graduates and graduation data. The QA office ensures, with the extensive monitoring and reporting system of the University, that all programs meet high standards. In this context, appropriate quality indicators are defined and used. The University was able to explain with the help of examples how this mechanism works, and regular changes are implemented. The evaluation panel was able to see a working QA loop for improvement at the University.

The University is working with Key Performance Indicators (KPI) to identify room for improvement, the indicators are set by the Senate of the University. KPI’s are used for institutional level; the program level; management, administration, student services and infrastructure and for the performance of the teachers.



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

The KPI's on program level are as follows:

- The satisfaction of graduates with the programs
- The satisfaction of graduate employers with the programs Employment of graduates (employment rate)
- Students' satisfaction with the programs
- Graduation rate
- Year-on-year progression rate
- The pass rate in exams during the cycle of an academic year
- Teacher/student ratio

With these KPI's the University can identify differences in quality between the programs.

The programs offered by the University are designed or reviewed by a team appointed by the University Senate. The appointed program design/review team consults with the academic staff of the relevant faculty, the business community (members of the Industrial Board of the University), the alumni, the students (through their evaluation of the program).

Before designing each program, the objective of the program is defined, which is fulfilled through specific and general learning outcomes. Also, during the program development phase, the students' workload is calculated based on the ECTS guidelines. During this procedure the accordance with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (FQEHEA) is checked.

Various methods for the assessment of students are in use. Mainly tests, exams, tasks, case studies and presentations are used depending on the subject and the level of studies. Assessment methods have their own weight for each subject, which is noted within the syllabus. In December 2022 the Senate of the University introduced the application of double evaluations. In these cases, a paper or test reached in by a student is checked by two teachers independent of each other. This method is aimed at making teachers aware of their own and their colleagues' assessment methods and the further development of assessment standards at the university.

The University ensures that the teaching staff is appropriately qualified and experienced. The teaching skills of new academic staff are tested during the hiring procedure. The university is

19



continuously training the academic staff to apply new modern teaching methods with the students at the center. Based on the agreement with the University of Pristina "Hasan Pristina", all the academic staff of the university have been trained and certified in the "Methods of teaching in higher education", from the Center for excellence in teaching which operates within the University of Pristina. During this academic year, based on this agreement, the university stated that it will continue with the certification of all academic staff at the second level. During the academic year, Program committees continuously analyze the effectiveness of teaching and the learning strategies based on the description presented in the syllabus.

During the on-site visit the evaluation panel asked the teachers about the student-centered learning approach and checked the answers later during the meeting with the students. The University credibly assured that the learning and teaching process is based on a student-centered approach, several examples of how this is achieved were presented.

The engagement with the industry and its use in the programs can be appreciated. The guest lecturers and possibilities for case studies are a special strength of the University and an opportunity for the students.

The University is using surveys to evaluate teaching quality and the effectiveness of programs. Different surveys are handed out to students, graduates and employers of graduates. While the students fill in the surveys at least once a year, the graduates do it one time right after their graduation and later on every three years. The employers of the graduates also fill in the surveys every three years, but the industrial board gives input to the University more frequently during meetings.

The evaluation panel is very satisfied with the learning and teaching aspects at the University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *None*



2.7. Research

Capacity building in science and innovation is one of the strategic objectives (out of five) of the university. It has three specific objectives: 1) Improvement of infrastructure for scientific and innovative work; 2) Improvement of scientific and applied research quality; 3) Domestic and international cooperation for scientific projects. Under each of these specific objectives, there are concrete indicators (altogether 18) and yearly targets for each indicator as well as activities under each specific objective (altogether 10 activities), together with the parties responsible for implementation and expected outcome. Additional measures of research are foreseen in advancement of the learning process and institutional capacity building. Development of scientific research projects in collaboration with local industry is stated as one of the activities. On the other hand, the activities have quite various weight. For example, *Reviewing the bachelor's and master's thesis guidelines* compared to *Organization of conferences, symposia, seminars, roundtables, forums, at the national and international level*. Moreover, the Strategic Plan does not specify what are the research priorities where the university intends to form research groups for achieving a capacity necessary for joining the international research community and conducting high level research. The Strategic Plan 2022-2026 is freely available on the university web. However, there is no section in the university's web devoted to research; there are only links to the web pages of four Erasmus+ projects (all outside the university's web domain). Therefore, the English version of the web in fact does not contain any information about research conducted in the university. Some academic staff have provided some information about their personal R&D on their personal webpage.

As mentioned above, there are 18 indicators for *Capacity building in science and innovation* strategic objective, and yearly targets for each indicator. However, some targets are relatively low, and some obvious targets seem missing at all. For example, under Domestic and international cooperation for scientific projects, the number of new international projects is planned to be two or three each year, all under Erasmus+ program which is not focused for supporting research (Erasmus+ supports education, training, youth and sport in Europe).

According to the Strategic Plan 2022-2026, the budget for capacity building in science and innovation is far the biggest when compared with the budgets assigned for achieving other four strategic objectives of the university, accounting for approximately 87% of the total budget. From this amount, more than 90% is assigned for improvement of infrastructure for scientific and innovative work. The fact that such a big proportion goes to the infrastructure compared



to the professional development of the academic staff (or “brains”) raises the question of the sustainability of research activities.

There are certain discrepancies between different financing timelines: when the funding for scientific and innovative research is supposed to be increased by 10% each year, the budget shows even a decreasing trend for years 2022 – 2024, from 596,000 EUR in 2022 to 556,000 EUR in 2024. Although the resources for improvement of the quality of scientific and applied research will in absolute amount only slightly increase from 36,000 EUR in 2022 (6% of the total R&D budget) to 45,000 EUR (4,2% of the total R&D budget), the target values of the most important indicators (the number of projects and publications) will double. Lack of each type of resources (funds, academic staff, technical staff) was mentioned in every session the experts had with the management, deans and academic staff.

Aspects that are considered as research are specified in the Regulation for Scientific Research Activities. Research is basically validated by scientific publications. The university intends to establish a knowledge transfer centre in 2023. The university also has adopted the Regulations on University Commercial Activity that states meeting the needs of the community through research as one of the purposes. However, technological transfer is not facilitated by the salary system, as salaries are unified and do not depend on cooperation with companies.

According to the SER (page 73), the university employs 46 full-time academic staff; only 30 are in the publication list. Even some heads of study programs have less than three articles during the last three years. Among them are some of those who are responsible for the master program.

Expectations for teaching staff involvement in scientific and professional research are specified in the work contract, in the *Statute of the University*, in the *Regulation for Scientific Research Activities*, in the *Regulation on the Selection Procedures Regarding Appointment of Academic Staff at the University of Applied Sciences Ferizaj* and in the *Regulations for Advancement or Re-election Procedures of Regular Academic Staff at the University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj*. The performance in relation to these expectations is considered in the self-assessment reports.

The expert team was not able to find any regulation or other document of the university containing clauses about encouraging teaching staff to include in their teaching information about their research and scholarly activities that are relevant to courses they teach. However,



both academic staff and students confirmed that the teaching staff informs students about their research.

The regular academic staff of the university publishes papers under the name of the University.

As mentioned above, the university has adopted the Regulations on University Commercial Activity. This document lists Intellectual Property Policy as one of the university policies as well as the Tech Transfer Policy.

The university has adopted the *Code of Ethics*. This document lists the principles of academic ethics and public life, the obligations of the personnel, the usages of academic freedom etc. On some aspects separate articles are devoted (sexual harassment, personal relationships, conflict of interests, administrative services, student's behavior, electronic communication, plagiarism etc.). The *Ethics Council* is elected by the Senate on the proposal of the Rector. For dealing specific issues, the Disciplinary Committee is formed by the Scientific Council. Rector can additionally appoint ad-hoc disciplinary commissions. The composition and procedures of action of the Ethics Council, the Disciplinary Committee and of a Disciplinary Commission are thoroughly described in the Code of Ethics.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Decide on the research priorities of the university and form the research groups accordingly.*
2. *Develop and implement a motivation system that supports cooperation of teachers with companies.*

2.8. Staff, employment processes and professional development

The *Staff Manual* has ten chapters: 1) Introduction of the university (incl. mission, vision, values), 2) Staff related aspects (rights, responsibilities etc.), 3) Employment policy, 4) Evaluation of staff performance, 5) Career development, 6) Remuneration, 7) Vacation, 8) Ethical issues, 9) Termination of employment relationship, 10) Compliant procedure. The document lists also relevant legal acts and other documents.



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

The recruitment of academic staff is conducted according to the *Regulation on the Selection Procedures Regarding Appointment of Academic Staff at the University of Applied Sciences Ferizaj*. For each academic position (Full Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, Lecturer, Lecturer of Foreign Languages), the requirements on a scientific degree, on academic competence, scientific experience, pedagogical and leadership skills as well as on students' mentoring are described. To initiate the recruitment, the dean's office should submit a grounded proposal to the Teaching/Science Council that brings it to the Senate. The vacancy is announced in a daily newspaper. The Evaluation Committee has five members: representative of the rectorate, representative of the dean's office, three experts of the relevant field (possibly from other universities). The evaluation procedure is thoroughly described in the abovementioned regulation. The report of the Evaluation Committee will be reviewed by the Teaching/Science Council, and based on that, the Senate of the university makes the decision. Therefore, three academic bodies are involved in the decision making. Recruitment of non-academic staff is conducted according to the *Regulation for the systematization of jobs for non-academic staff at the University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj*.

UASF as a public university follows strictly all regulations concerning employment. The criteria of evaluation are described in the *Regulation on the Selection Procedures Regarding Appointment of Academic Staff at the University of Applied Sciences Ferizaj*.

The main regulations and procedures are described in *the Staff Manual*. All responsibilities are described already in the employment contract. The induction takes place during the first week of employment – a university e-mail account is set up, study management system introduced etc.

The students-staff ratio is approximately 31:1, which is relatively high, especially because three faculties out of five are in technology and arts where this ratio should for quality teaching be significantly lower. Moreover, quality teaching in these faculties requires many more technical staff than are currently employed. On the other hand, the weekly teaching workload of academic staff is relatively low, from six hours for professors to twelve hours for lecturers/lectors, which allows them to devote enough time to research and development activities.

The level of academic staff is secured by the employment procedures where the applicants should comply with the competence criteria previously formulated. On top of formal criteria, an interview is conducted, and a public lecture. The need for a non-academic/administrative staff is decided by the General Secretary of the university.

24



Criteria and processes for performance evaluation are specified in the *Regulations for Advancement or Re-election Procedures of Regular Academic Staff at the University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj*.

Self-evaluation, peer-evaluation, evaluation by students and deans are implemented at the university.

Although the university regulations foresee conducting staff assessment by students as well as peer reviews, their impact is questionable. For example, in a situation where each academic staff should publish on average at least one research article each year, several academic staff have not published any article in the last three years. Thus, regulatory compliance appears to be incomplete. The SER states that "The self-evaluation questionnaire is completed once a year, at the end of the academic year, and is sent to the dean of the faculty. The dean accepts the completed questionnaire and then invites the staff to a meeting, and they discuss all student evaluations, peer evaluation and conclude the final evaluation by the dean." (SER, page 79). Based on this, the scope of development interviews does not cover all academic activities of academic staff.

Staff development is planned for two years ahead. For example, six general themes for staff training are identified for years 2023-2024: 1) Advanced teaching methods, 2) Composing proposals and managing projects, 3) Development of video tutorials, 4) Use of statistical software in research, 5) Drafting research projects, 6) Writing textbooks.

In addition to the training that the UASF offers to its staff, the staff members can participate in training that the University of Pristina offers. However, there are some aspects that inhibit personal development, mainly caused by the lack of resources. For example, some staff members do not have sufficient knowledge of English language. On the other hand, the university does not have enough resources to support academic staff to take part on scientific conferences abroad and start joint research projects with foreign universities.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Take measures to lower significantly the student-teacher ratio.*



- 2. Recruit more technical staff, which would allow reducing the burden of academic staff in preparing and conducting laboratory work, as well as improving the opportunities for students to do homework in university laboratories.*
- 3. Expand the scope of development discussions by addressing all aspects of academic activity and develop effective mechanisms for solving the problems that have identified.*

2.9. Student administration and support services

All student admission/application procedures are implemented in accordance with recruitment procedures for student enrolment in higher education institutions, without any gender, religious or ethnic discrimination. The whole process is transparent and is developed based on the decisions determined by the management structures of the university.

Complete information about the institution (including the range of programs and courses, program requirements, services, scholarship opportunities, tuition and administrative fees) is available on the website of the University.

Each academic year the University organizes an orientation day for new students. During the orientation day, first-year students are informed about their rights and obligations, the student handbook, and other regulations relevant to the student, as well as the student services and the electronic systems to which the students will have access to.

The student handbook is available in electronic form. In this handbook students can find all necessary information and regulations they need. The students stated that they are very satisfied with the handbook and its contents.

The University is offering scholarships to students. For the past academic year 124 scholarships (with a total value of 65.000€) were given to students. The criteria the students have to fulfil for a scholarship is an average grade above 8. A student cannot get a scholarship twice. For students with disadvantaged backgrounds the University offers no financial support.

With the help of the platform SMU, the University is monitoring data referring to the profile of the student population, student progression, success and drop-out rates, students'



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

satisfaction with their programs, learning resources and student support available, career paths of graduates.

During the on-site visit the students stated that they are aware of the student appeal procedure. All the information they need about this topic can be found in the electronic student handbook.

In case of academic misconduct, the University describes the procedures to resolve this issue in five steps as follows: The person who witnesses the violation submits the report for violation of the code of ethics, in written form, to the Ethics Council (anonymous reports are not considered); On the basis of the report for violation of the principles of ethics, the chairman of the Council of Ethics calls the meeting of the council within 30 days, from the date of receipt of the report. If the Ethics Council certifies the non-existence of violations of the principles by the student, with its own decision it rejects the submission as unfounded. If the Ethics Council proves that any of the principles of the Code of Ethics have been violated by the student, it proposes a decision to the Disciplinary commission of the University for the corresponding measure. Decisions of the Council are taken by the majority of votes of the general members.

As described earlier in this report, the University is able to handle breaches of the “Code of Ethics” like plagiarism.

During the on-site visit the evaluation panel had a good impression of the administrative services the University is offering to the students. The scope of these services is sufficient for the size of the University. Also, the University was able to explain plans to improve the services even further. The effectiveness of the services is also monitored by the students via surveys.

The evaluation panel can state that academic counselling, career planning and employment advice as well as personal or psychological counselling services are available with easy access for students from any part of the institution.

The facilities of the university are spacious enough to host extracurricular activities for students.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

27



1. Introduce financial support opportunities for students with disadvantaged backgrounds

2.10. Learning resources and facilities

The university has made significant investments in its infrastructure. Capital expenditures are the second biggest in the budget (after salaries) comprising on average about 30% of the university's total budget. Although the costs for cataloguing, system development etc. are not specified in the university's budget, the share of capital expenditure is adequate.

A large part of books is published within last 10 years. However, the number of titles is extremely low (1,433 different types of publications). This is why the lecturers have to prepare thorough course materials for the courses where the suitable textbooks are not available; these course materials are free for students. The university has a number of measures that compensate the lack of books in its library: 1) access to different electronic databases such as, for example, EBSCO, Cambridge University Press, MSP (Mathematical Sciences Publishers), 2) agreements with the National Library of Kosova and with the city library of Ferizaj on the use of their resources by the students and staff (ASTM Compass, Edward Elgar Publishing, IOPScience, IMF Library, Duke University Press). On the other hand, students who the expert team (evaluation panel) met, did not complain about the lack on learning materials.

The university is a member of GEANT Network. To access the licensed online databases, signing in is possible via university user ID or through Google or Clever accounts. In addition to the sources listed above, the university has an agreement with the University of Pristina on access to Science Direct. It is also planned to obtain access to Web of Science databases.

The students have access to the laboratories until 21:00. Wi-fi is available on the university premises. The university uses Moodle platform for supporting educational processes.

The opening hours of the library are until 16:00 (except weekends). The expert team members were not able to find the opening hours of the on the university's website.

The expert team members were able to analyze systems described in English language only. Information was extremely scarce. For example, the university's website did not contain any information about the library and its services: selecting an item under Students/Library led directly to the websites of the institutions providing the service.



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

The university has a modern building (put into operation since 2014) and has assigned considerable resources for buildings and equipment. The infrastructure consists of two amphitheatres (with 150 and 350 seats), 14 classrooms (with up to 75 seats), six laboratories (for wood technology, engineering, renewable energy, physics and chemistry, research and innovation, informatics), a library, restaurant, offices and other spaces. The laboratories are in general relatively well equipped. The total size of the building is 8,304,27m². Considering the number of students (about 1,500 active students in the whole university), the number and size of teaching classrooms is adequate. Should the university decide for more practical approach of teaching and learning (which is highly recommended), the composition of the laboratories should also be revised to allow, among other things, their more intensive use by students for independent tasks and research.

The university has identified principal users of the facilities and included questions about the equipment and facilities in the questionnaires. The processing of data in this area is subject to the general data processing practices implemented at the university and quality assurance mechanisms.

The facility possesses elevators, emergency exits as well as the entire infrastructure which is needed for students with special needs.

It is stated in the SER (p. 29) that “Through the asset management system, the Institution manages the inputs/outputs of assets and consumables in the institution, the inventory (barcoding) of equipment is carried out, the depreciation of equipment, the state of the stock, as well as the online request for equipment and consumables from each employee of the relevant institution.”

The university has two computer labs. Some more computing devices are in the Innovations Laboratory: five PCs with VR headsets, three 3D printers, two 3D scanners, CNC machine, plotter etc. The reading room has 20 seats and some space for group work; there are eight additional seats for students in the library. All computers have both general purpose (e.g., MS Office) as well as necessary specific professional software (e.g., AutoCAD) installed.

The training needs of staff are mainly determined during the annual staff performance evaluations conducted by deans. Additionally, the university conducted a survey to identify individual training needs in 2022. Based on that, series of trainings was planned on 1) advanced teaching methodology, 2) project proposal writing and management, 3) development of video



tutorials, 4) the use of statistical software in research, 5) drafting research projects, 6) writing textbooks.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Develop a strategy for the development of the university library and the services provided by it and begin its implementation.*
2. *Publish information about the university library, its resources and the services offered on the university's website.*

2.11. Institutional cooperation

As for institutional cooperation, it is one of the strategic objectives of the UASF. There is a set of strategic objectives directly explicitly focused on advancing cooperation with industry, community and alumni.

The UASF has an internationalization action plan for the period 2022-2026 and it corresponds positively with the UASF strategic plan for the period 2022-2026. Internationalization action plan formulates four strategic objectives: “(1) advancing the teaching and learning process based on the experience of international universities; (2) encouraging cooperation with international research projects as well as those of knowledge transfer; (3) increasing the University’s visibility in the international arena; increasing the University’s capacities based on the experiences of international universities” (SER, p. 98).

Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance manages the process of internationalization at the UASF, the Office for Internationalization is a structural unit supporting this agenda. Regulations for internationalization, incl. mobilities, are in place at the UASF.

The UASF has different agreements and memorandums of understanding with relevant international partners and organizations, responsibilities of partners seem to be clearly defined there.



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

There is the evidence about active involvement of the UASF in various international projects (supported by Erasmus+, Programmatic Partnership, US Embassy, GIZ, Austrian Development Agency, and some other organizations).

The UASF has also been actively involved in organizing events of international visibility and outreach, such as conferences (University-Industry Cooperation in Innovation, 2019). Nationally, the UASF organizes roundtables with participants from industry, the academic field, politics and civil society (for instance “Challenges of the Hospitality and Tourism sector in Kosova after the COVID-19 pandemic”, “Increasing prices, a consequence of inflation or breaking the supplier’s chain”, and more).

It can also be said that the UASF is encouraging in some extent the participation of the staff and students in different study mobility, conferences and other events, and there is the evidence about some outcoming staff (both academic, and administrative), and some students. The number of outcoming staff and students is not very high, but it is slowly increasing; plans for the coming years in this area are not very ambitious. The question is whether all international agreements are/will be actively used. There are no incoming students and occasionally there are very few visiting scholars coming to the UASF.

The UASF seems to make international activity of the staff the subject of regular performance evaluation.

This can be said the UASF has some mechanisms to support cooperation with international higher education institutions (since 2018 it is a member of the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)).

The UASF staff seems to be encouraged to participate in forums where significant community issues are discussed – a strong relation with the Industrial Board is also helpful in this respect. Consequently, the UASF seems to have relatively strong relations established with local industries and employers, as was proven during their meeting with employers, too. This is contributing to the study program development, to student opportunities to get practical experience during their studies, to planning of the UASF’s development in general.



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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

Since 2019, the UASF has the alumni network and currently is operationalizing the virtual Alumni platform (funded by GIZ from Germany). During the interviews, alumni confirmed their contact with the UASF, they were informed about developments at the “alma mater”.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Make sure students and the staff are effectively supported to participate in outgoing mobilities.*
2. *Consider possibilities to encourage incoming mobilities of students and the staff.*



3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND JUDGEMENTS OF THE EVALUATION PANEL

Standard 1	Fully compliant
Standard 2	Fully compliant
Standard 3	Substantially complaint
Standard 4	Fully compliant
Standard 5	Fully compliant
Standard 6	Fully compliant
Standard 7	Substantially compliant
Standard 8	Substantially compliant
Standard 9	Fully compliant
Standard 10	Substantially compliant
Standard 11	Substantially compliant

In conclusion, the evaluation panel considers that:

The University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj is *fully compliant* with the standards included in the KAA Accreditation Manual and, therefore, recommends *accrediting it* for a duration of 5 years.



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo




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

Expert Team


Chair

	Milan Pol	06.03.2023
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

Member

	Peeter Normak	06.03.2023
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

Member

	Christoph Back	06.03.2023
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)