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UPZ - University of Prizren
“UKSHIN HOTI”

INSTITUTIONAL RE-ACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

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1

TABLE OF 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	4
2. INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION	6
2.1. Public mission and institutional objectives	6
2.2. Strategic planning, governance and administration	7
2.3. Financial planning and management	10
2.4. Academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability	11
2.5. Quality management	12
2.6. Learning and teaching	14
2.7. Research	17
2.8. Staff, employment processes and professional development	19
2.9. Student administration and support services	21
2.10. Learning resources and facilities	24
2.11. Institutional cooperation	26
3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND JUDGEMENT OF THE EXPERT TEAM	28

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: February 22, 2023

Expert Team (ET) members:

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- *Prof. Melita Kovacevic, PhD*
- *Christopher Boh lens, student expert*

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- *Arianit Krasniqi, KAA Officer*

Sources of information for the Report:

- *Self-Evaluation Report (SER) submitted by UPZ*
- *Information obtained during the online site visit on with the management of the institution, teaching and administrative staff, students, graduates, external stakeholders and employers of graduates*
- *General strategy and work plan of the University*
- *Research strategy*
- *Website of UPZ*
- *Visits of on-site facilities*
- *Statute of the University*
- *Code of ethics*
- *Various regulations governing administrative processes, teaching, and assessments*
- *Additional documents requested by the expert team*

Criteria used for institutional and program evaluations

- *Standards for institutional evaluation as outlined in the Accreditation Manual 2022 of the KAA*

1.2. Site visit schedule

Time	Meeting
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>)
10:35 – 11.35	Meeting with: 1. Quality assurance representatives 2. Administrative services
11:40 – 12:40	Meeting with Deans of Faculties
12:40 – 13.40	Lunch break
13:40 – 14:30	Visiting tour of the facilities and infrastructure
14:30 – 15:20	Meeting with teaching staff
15:25 – 16:15	Meeting with students
16:25 – 17:15	Meeting with graduates
17:20 – 18:10	Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders
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 “Ukshin Hoti” Prizren was founded by Decision of the Republic of Kosovo on 09.10.2009 as the second public university in Kosovo. It inherits the experience of the former Pedagogical High School, a branch of the University of Pristina, which operated since 1961. Currently, in the academic year 2022/2023 there are 3,032 active enrolled students. The number of students is decreasing, from 2017/18 with 4,940; 2018/19 with 5,638; 2019/20 with 4,035; 2020/21 with 4,327 and 2021/22 with 3,648 students.

The University consists of six faculties - computer science, law, life and environmental sciences, philology, economics, education - and offers 20 study programs at two levels, bachelor and master. In addition to study programs in Albanian language, the University also offers students study programs in Turkish and Bosnian language. The linguistic diversity of study programs makes the University unique compared to other Universities in Kosovo.

The initial idea for the establishment of the University was born from the immediate need of the Prizren market demand for the preparation of specialists in the fields of ICT, business

4

administration and international management, agribusiness, forestry and environmental science, primary and secondary education, linguistics, law and related fields. University study programs are designed in close collaboration and with permanent international consultancy. The University aims at providing study programs which are coherent with the standards of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

2. INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

2.1. Public mission and institutional objectives

The mission of the University is built on education, research and community service as the main pillars (SER, p. 7ff.). The mission is specified as to provide “quality education by conducting scientific research and contributing to innovation, in accordance with the labour market demands and the community where it operates locally, nationally and beyond” (SER, p. 7.). The University explicitly cites “ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity” as a key element of its vision and the values of the University, which represents a concise set of values that serves as guidance for academic business as well as internal and external relations.

The mission of the University is available on its website and its values are explicitly reflected in the Statute of the University. From the SER and the meetings with various members of the University and stakeholders during the site visit, the ET learned that the mission of the University was drafted in consultation with internal and external stakeholders. The mission statement was published for public discussion based on the Steering Council decision and according to the information obtained from the SER and during the site visit, annual reviews of the mission statement are being conducted where relevant stakeholders are invited to participate, and revisions are made. During the site visit, the ET questioned several elements of the mission to ascertain the level to which this is understood and made use of by a variety of stakeholders. Although the ET did not obtain explicit information if there are streamlined processes of how new staff, students and stakeholders are getting familiarized with the mission, it gained the impression that the mission is adopted through informal channels in the relevant areas of the academic life as well as from external stakeholders on a high level.

A certain weakness must be noted regarding the linkage between mission and strategy, which is less so an issue of the mission but more an issue of the strategy, which does not allow for a true medium-term outlook since it covers the period 2020-2024 and, thus, a more future-oriented assessment of the relevance of the mission for the strategy is difficult. However, this does not diminish the fact that the contents of the mission and the strategy are balanced appropriately.

In particular, the ET highly appreciates the way the University addresses the regional and the societal functions of the University in the mission. While highlighting the function of the university as a regional player taking up labour market demands and business interests is less surprising as stressing this became standard in recent years, it is noteworthy that the University - in addition to its diversity orientation - explicitly addresses “social and gender equality as a value of empowering marginalized social groups and empowering women” in its mission (SER,

p. 8). Yet, this particular value is not consistently adopted in the strategy and not consistently operationalized in the corresponding processes and mechanisms for strategy monitoring.

Although the mission is broad and more detailed information on the medium and long-term institutional objectives is missing, the ET is convinced it represents a well-structured balance of goal dimensions and values which provide a solid foundation of the university's identity being a highly significant regional and national player in the (higher) education areas, thus also taking responsibility for contributing as a higher education institution to individual, societal, cultural and economic development of the region, its neighboring regions and the country.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Develop explicit linkages between the mission and the strategy.*
- 2. Develop more differentiated medium and long-term institutional objectives and include them in the mission.*
- 3. Develop clear derivations from all mission statements for strategic objectives, strategy implementation and strategy monitoring including diversity as well as social and gender equality.*

2.2. Strategic planning, governance and administration

The current Strategic Plan (SP) covers the period 2020 – 2024. Based on the mission statement, it defines the following seven strategic objectives (p. 14):

- Quality assurance in teaching and learning
- Development of research work
- Contribution to the community
- The process of internationalization and networking
- Infrastructure development
- Digitization and integrated data system
- Financial sustainability

These strategic objectives are linked to a total sum of 43 expected results (SP, p. 15f.). The SP explicitly addresses eight stakeholder groups in detail: academic staff, administrative and technical staff, university management, students, alumni, business community, local and central government authorities, and external academic and research community. It also briefly explains the strategic planning process and contains a detailed action plan (p. 19ff.), where

7

activities, measures, “responsible structures”, timelines and budgets are attributed to each of the expected results in a comprehensive table. In addition, the SP also provides detailed budget tables attributing incomes, costs and expenditures. The ET highly appreciates that all this information is summarized in a highly integrated overview on measures, responsibilities, and time as well as financial resources attributed to each expected result in detail allowing for a systematic monitoring of strategy implementation and a transparent audit of possible changes and adaptations.

The process of the implementation of the strategic plan is monitored on a regular basis by the three vice-rectors of the University (SER, p. 13). During the site visit, it became clear that significant measures and activities to attain the goals defined have been started or are in the process of implementation, although, as the representatives admits, some measures may face certain delays for different reasons.

The SP was updated the first time in November 2021 and the second time in December 2022, when workshops were organized to discuss according to the information in the SER (p. 8). The participants were mainly internal groups and stakeholders such as the Rectorate, members of the Governing Council, the Secretary General, three Deans of Faculties, teachers and students, however, no members of the Industrial Boards (IAB) which the university has established in each faculty. The minutes of the second review workshop provide information about the agenda and the topics to be discussed, however, no outcomes of work groups and other discussions are reported there, and therefore it is not possible to assess the relevance of the outcomes for strategy implementation and/or strategy revision.

As becomes clear from the phrasing of the strategic objectives and the expected results, the main difficulty emerges from the fact, that the phrases express thematic dimensions, ie. what thematic area to act on, but not objectives which could be measured in terms of clear-cut outputs and outcomes. This difficulty continues in the phrasing of the “expected results”.

Of course, more general and less clear-cut phrasing of objectives and expected results helps to avoid strong determinations and, in turn, opens a greater scope of flexibility of action. However, the phrasing adopted in the SER and in the SP are of a general character that makes it difficult or even impossible to determine which particular progress is supposed to be achieved within a certain period. For instance, the expected result for strategic objective 2 “Development of scientific work” is “Develop and implement policies and incentives to promote research” (SP, p. 35). This example is representative for the wide majority of objectives and results as phrased in the SP. From the ET’s point of view this is a consequence of a strategy formation process which did not run to completion for whatever reason. Here, a strong need for refinement becomes visible. Asked about the measurement of goal attainment during the site visit, the management of the University referred to these expected results as a list of performance indicators.

In the open discussions with managers and deans of the University, the ET learned that some objectives could not be met fully, eg. to increase internationalization through student and staff mobility or networking with regional companies and stakeholders. Everyone who is involved in academic management knows this is frequent experience. However, it shows that there is implicit knowledge about the degree of goal attainment, however, this knowledge about realistic goals and progress was not made explicit in the strategy documents. For this reason, the refinement and further development of the strategic plan should in any case be more rigorous and evidence-based by defining SMART objectives. This is even more important since the University of Prizren, although relatively small in student numbers, consists of a broad variety of different faculties which entails a great variety of thought styles as well as teaching and research cultures. All these aspects, which are constitutive for academic and managerial practices are not fully reflected in the strategy documents.

In the meeting with representatives of regional companies and external stakeholders, the ET was able to confirm the information obtained from the SER that in each faculty an Industrial Advisory Board (IAB) is active which demonstrates the University's ambition to live up their mission to establish and to maintain close cooperation with the business community. Also, the ET gained the impression that the members of the IAB show a high level of involvement in giving inputs for curricula and in joining important collaborative projects, but less so in processes of strategic planning or strategy review and refinement. A striking example for such an important collaboration of utmost strategic relevance is the establishment of the Center for Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer (CRIKT), which the university opened in November 2022 in collaboration with the Innovation and Training Park (ITP) in the premises of the latter in Prizren. While research as such is explicitly addressed in the SP, "innovation" and "knowledge transfer" are not explicitly mentioned in the SP, although these are functions of eminent importance for a university which intends to be a key player in the region.

Based on these insights, the interesting situation arises that there are several achievements which the ET highly appreciate, but which are not explicitly mentioned as strategic objectives. The difficulty stemming from this situation is that monitoring of medium- and long-term is not connected with a pre-defined set of key performance indicators which clearly define the criteria for goal attainment of the expected results both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Integration of strategic planning with annual and longer-term budget processes may be assumed and appears to be done in a way that allows for adaptation according to internal financial and compliance regulations.

The criteria for election of decision-makers and decision-making are outlined in detail in the Statute of the University of Prizren and elected positions in the relevant academic bodies are elaborated in a transparent way. The University shows a well-functioning management and a clear structure of responsibilities that defines roles and responsibilities for overall policy and

accountability appropriately. Both, the senior administration for management, and the academic decision-making structures seem to be clearly differentiated and followed in practice.

Regarding student representatives, the College set all formal requirements which are necessary to ensure student representation in relevant academic bodies and students reported to be involved appropriately in relevant processes of consultation and decision-making.

The administration of the University of Prizren functions as required for a higher education provider. Exemplary position descriptions for academic and administrative staff were provided which fulfil basic requirements but lack detailed job requirements in terms of specific skills and experiences needed to deliver teaching and conducting research at a level that corresponds to the strategic objectives of the University.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Develop SMART strategic objectives and explain the way goal attainment is evaluated deploying quantitative and qualitative indicators.*
- 2. Integrate members of the Industrial Advisory Boards at early stages of strategy formation and review.*
- 3. Produce and publish minutes of strategy review meetings which also include the outcomes and derivations relevant for strategy implementation and/or strategy revision.*

2.3. Financial planning and management

As a public higher education institution, most the University's academic operations are funded by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI), which is complemented by several other sources such as tuition fees from students, income from services delivered to external instances, project fundings, donations and contracts with external bodies for teaching, research, and consultancy (SER, p. 23). Due to this structure of funding, financial stability can be assumed.

The University provided a very detailed overview of annual allocation of financial resources to all strategic objectives and every single expected result, which the ET likes to praise for its transparency. Based on this overview, the annual budget report for 2022 and the consolidated budget for the period 2023-2025, the University fully demonstrates that it has sufficient financial resources in the short and medium term to adequately reach its mission as well as objectives set out in the strategic plan. Furthermore, the allocation of budget shares to specific

10

strategic objectives shows a comprehensible distribution with a priority on teaching followed by research, digitization, and infrastructure development.

For the ET, a certain concern comes from the fact that budget lines do not show any dynamic development over the years. For instance, the consolidated budget for the period 2023 – 2025 shows no relevant increase in salaries and other expenditures covered by government grants. It is only own incomes from the additional sources mentioned before that make up for a moderate increase of 6.5% in 2025 of total incomes in the next three years as compared to 2023. The ET understands that this may cause severe constraints when expansion or modernization of infrastructure and services is to be funded as this will be very likely needed to bring new centers such as the CRIKT to a full activity level.

The budget process is outlined in the SER clearly, with supervision and management of budgeting and accounting carried out by the Office for Budget Planning and Finance, which consists of a head of the office, the deputy director and 6 specialized officers. This Office harmonizes the budget according to the needs and priorities in collaboration with the Rector of the University in accordance with an annual budget planning process (SER, p. 31ff.). Since the University is a budget sub-program of MESTI, the internal audit is performed by the Internal Audit Division of MESTI. Furthermore, the University submitted a series of external audit reports as appendices to the SER which demonstrate accurate management accounting and financial corporate governance.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Present budget developments in a way that makes the true dynamics of the developments in relevant areas of the university more comprehensible.*

2.4. Academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability

Academic integrity and ethical issues are defined in few institutional documents, they regulate the most of relevant issues and provide quite clear guidelines as well as obligations and expectation for different stakeholders within the institution. Main documents are Code of Ethics and Code of Ethics for Students, both revised and align with the university Statute. What is not completely clear how often the Code is revised (besides the alignment with the Statute) and it does not generate a public report with an aim to present results. As it is also reported in the SER, two weaknesses that would require additional attention is absence of reporting on ethical misconduct as well as still not sufficient awareness and applicability of academic integrity regulations.

11

University also established responsible decision bodies or bodies that are in charge of monitoring implementation of ethical standards. Those bodies have defined roles and responsibilities, however, sometimes there is an overlap between different roles (such as dealing with different research policies and activities, and, at the same time, ethics in research).

A positive step forward is introducing anti-plagiarism system that helps also in work with students and their assignments. However, it should be kept I mind, that plagiarism is only one way of having unethical behaviour in academic work-research. This needs to be further elaborated and monitored.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Define regular revision of both, the Code of Ethics and Code of Ethics for Students*
2. *Consider more in depth the conflict of interest within the University, and, in particular, in professional activities outside the University.*
3. *Define different forms of unethical behavior in research, other than plagiarism!*
4. *In order to be more institutional accountable, revisit all reports and results of the Code applications and make them accessible.*

2.5. Quality management

The main documents at the University that regulates Quality assurance are Quality Assurance Regulations and Guidelines for Evaluation. There are also key performance indicators that enable measuring improvements and to perform adjustments if needed. Office in charge makes annual planning and describes in detail all the activities that need to be performed.

The University Management System helps a lot in managing and administrating different procedures, preserving also anonymity, assuring communication in three languages (Albanian, Turkish, Bosnian).

The main bodies/structures that are relevant for supporting quality are Steering Council, Senate, Deans and Faculty Councils. All of them includes members from academic staff, administrative staff and students. Considering the overall institutional quality assurance system, there is office, staff and defined responsibilities on a university level, but also on a level of each faculty. This structure enables better implementation and monitoring of the processes; however, it would be still beneficial to differentiate more precisely roles and responsibilities between faculty and university level. In the present status, it seems that the

financial and human resources allocated to QA are sufficient and that they correspond to strategical planning, however in the future the needs might increase.

The University complies with all national regulations. Its procedures are defined, and staff is allocated to perform them. Staff is also trained, though still very dependent on additional external funding. This might need to be changed in a future and university funding would need to be sufficient for professional training as well.

Different forms of evaluations are implemented. Students do academic staff evaluations each semester. It might be an issue if this is too demanding for the overall system and if it is really sufficiently beneficial, considering that it takes lots of resources, in particular human resources. According to the SER, evaluation instruments are used for evaluation and assessment of different aspects of institutional life and functioning, including academic units, academic staff, students, but also administrative staff, management, programmes etc. Central Quality Assurance Commission and QA Office are the key players in processing different activities, drafting recommendations, monitoring their implementations.

With an aim to boost different activities and to improve staff performance two new Centers have been established, Center for Excellence in Teaching and Center for Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer. University also initiated International Summer school which helps for institutional visibility and international networking. However, still, it is required a further work. For example, Center for Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer is still at the beginning of its work and it is not quite clearly defined how it will support all these three aspects of functioning. At the moment it seems that here is a prevalence of cooperation with industry, predominantly offering specific services.

The inputs from all the stakeholders are considered. In this process external stakeholders also participate. All the collected data and results are used to better monitor strategic plan, primarily on annual level. While it seems that maybe the number of evaluations could be decreased considering number of different stakeholders and frequency of implementation, strategic plan could profit from more close monitoring and adjustments, if needed. This is even more true for the Action plan.

Although, the institution emphasizes in its document's quality culture, it should still increase its efforts to promote the development of quality culture as a common understanding of quality values, for which every individual of the institution is responsible.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Further elaboration of roles and the way of functioning of the Center for Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer.*

2. *Revisit the way how the results of different evaluations and assessment could contribute to regular improvements of all aspect of the institutional life.*
3. *Intensify work and support of institutional quality culture approach.*

2.6. Learning and teaching

The University has general policies and procedures which are applied to academic programs which include the Statute where general provisions for teaching and learning are outlined as well as distinct regulations for bachelor and master programs and doctoral studies. Also, regulations for applications for new study programs are defined in the quality assurance regulation which defines relevant criteria as requirements for new programs, such as feasibility studies, analysis of labour market demands, accordance of new programs with the strategic objectives of the University or accordance with the national strategy of higher education and the National Qualification Framework or the European Qualification Framework. Furthermore, the processes for new programs as well as evaluation and revision of programs are in place where relevant offices and bodies of the University are involved appropriately.

The ET received consistent information about the quality assurance processes being used to ensure that teaching and learning is taking place at high standards, notably a detailed list of the Central Commission for Quality Assurance (CCQA) containing recommendations based on course evaluation and actions responding to formal and informal observations which prove that continuous improvements at the program level and at the course level are taking place (“Recommendations of the CCQA for Management and implementation (2020-2022)”). In particular, the ET praises that emphasis is also given to individual improvement of the teaching skills of professors and lecturers which can be understood as an important element of an open culture aiming not at blaming for faults but strengthening of teaching skills.

Regarding monitoring of quality indicators, the University applies a considerable range of methodologies to generate an outcome-oriented knowledge base about study success of which the results can be used for targeted interventions and student support. Here, the ET wants to highlight that the University developed a “Strategy for monitoring and reduction of dropouts” which monitors the dropout rates of students in each faculty, and which is used for drawing conclusions and offering services and support for students, among them the introduction of student tutors, soft skills and extracurricular courses offered by the Career Center, provision of psychological advice or organization of hybrid learning. At first glance, the numbers of dropout in recent years show a significant decrease from 475 dropouts in 2018/19 to 330 dropouts in 2020/21 which appears to be a decrease of 30% until the absolute numbers (taken from national statistics sources) are correlated with the number of students which shows that the percentages of dropouts remain quite stable over the years. Hence, it is difficult to assess which impact the

14

interventions and offers mentioned before really have. Nonetheless, this is a difficulty which many universities have to face and the efforts of the University under review have to be praised for they clearly demonstrate the preparedness of the University to act proactively on this challenge.

Regarding the alignment of the study programs to European Standards, the University states that it “fully implements the standards and guidelines provided by KAA, which derive from European Standards and Guidelines for Higher Education.” (SER, p. 56). However, the ET did not receive information from the documents nor from during the site visit that this is implemented rigorously. In fact, the information obtained supports the conclusion that this statement is more of a formal, assertive character, since the University did not provide explanations how the adoption of the levels and associated descriptors of the National Qualification Framework (NQR) and of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) is achieved at the program level. The University has provided the feasibility study for a program (Agrobusiness Management) where this lack becomes clearly visible (while the general quality of this study is beyond any doubt): Although the study, whose quality is beyond any doubt, carefully discusses many relevant pillars of the new program and also contains a section entitled “Content and international comparability of the study program” no reference to NQR or EQF is made at all nor is it explained how the program is going to take up this challenge in order to ensure transparency and comparability of the learning outcomes. This becomes visible also in the majority of syllabuses which have been provided as appendices to the SER. This reveals that these issues are not confined to particular study programs, since weaknesses in phrasing learning outcomes and corresponding teaching methodologies and assessment methodologies, which are not presented in detail and from a true pedagogical point of view, can be found in a considerable number of these appendices.

This, therefore, demonstrates a weakness in terms of a lack of outcome-orientation. When reviewing the University’s “Guide for Drafting and Revising the Syllabus” it becomes clear that the University has started to tackle the challenge of outcome orientation already, but still needs improvement at the conceptual level and in implementing rigorous outcome orientation at the program and teaching level. At the conceptual level, the elaborations in the guide, which contains a significant number of important provisions on how to draft syllabuses, show some weaknesses in making clear what outcome orientations means in terms of knowledge, skills and competences students are supposed to acquire during the study course. Here, for instance, no reference is made to the ECTS User’s Guide, a key document of outcome orientation in European Higher Education Area, and the different types of skills (professional, methodical, analytics, social, personal skills) which students are supposed to acquire - and, which the teachers have to know to be able to develop and apply appropriate assessment methodologies in their courses which clearly correspond to the learning outcomes defined. Altogether, a

concept would be needed to align teaching, learning and assessment in a consistent way as is the case with the concept of “Constructive Alignment”.

As stressed before, the Guide is a good starting point, however, it also shows that there is significant conceptual and methodological (teaching methodologies, assessment methodologies) progress to be achieved to legitimize the statement of “full implementation of European Standards and Guidelines for Higher Education”. To organize and to monitor this process would also be a highly important task for the “Committee for Revision of Syllabuses” which has been established in December 2022. Here, the ET emphasizes that it is a good approach to harmonize curricula and syllabi of new programs with programs in the EHRA which are already taught, since many things can be learned, and erroneous developments may be avoided at an early stage. However, this does not replace rigorous and independent implementation of the NQR and EQF standards and tailoring them to the particular needs of primary target groups and external stakeholders in the regional and national context, too.

It appears to the ET, that the University is aware of the topics addressed, since it established a “Center for Teaching Excellence” in 2022 which “aims to establish and strengthen academic capacities as wells to promote the culture of excellence in teaching and learning” (Regulation on the organization and the functioning of the Center for Teaching Excellence, p.1). The ET highly welcomes all objectives which have been defined for this Center, however, they should be made more concrete and strong emphasis should be given to continuous improvement of teaching and assessment skills of the academic staff by providing trainings opportunities and strengthening the collegiate exchange and peer learning which, as the ET learned from teachers during the site visit, is already practiced in the university, but is not yet part of the program of the Center. Another important topic which should be integrated into the work plan of the Center is to advance the digital or online teaching skills of teachers, since until now, only teaching tools have been used, which are publicly available such as Google Meet and Google Drive. However, this cannot replace any professional learning management system which is needed to implement university-wide standards in e-learning and hybrid teaching. Thus, the key elements of the agenda of the Center which need to be given priority are clearly visible. During the site visit, the ET came to know a highly motivated and skilled teaching staff which for sure is a particular “asset” of the University and, as the ET is convinced, will warmly welcome such offers for further training of academic staff. This will also support all academic staff to advance and to implement the principle of student-centred learning which they have presented as an important element of their teachers’ identity.

The University has adopted a system of consistent processes of evaluation of teaching quality and student satisfaction which allows for a comprehensive generation of data and information. From the information obtained, it can also be concluded that this information are systematically processed in all faculties and levels of the university. The ET is also very much impressed by the rigorous and successful efforts to implement an electronic student survey system for

16

evaluation purposes which was developed independently and implemented successfully under the auspices of the Central Committee for Quality Assurance.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Ensure that true adoption of NQF and EQF standards and guidelines and the recommendation of the ECTS User's Guideline is achieved at each study cycle, each programme and each course.*
- 2. Develop systematic qualification profiles for each study programme by clearly differentiating learning outcomes according to different types of skills and competences.*
- 3. Make digital teaching skills, outcome-oriented formulation of learning outcomes and assessment methodologies and collegiate formats for continuous improvement key elements in the agenda of the Center for Teaching Excellence.*
- 4. Introduce a learning management system which provides teachers with varied means for implementing student-centred learning in online and hybrid teaching and learning settings and which ensures systematic documentation of teaching and learning activities.*

2.7. Research

University Ukshin Hoti in Prizren is small university, with a relatively small capacity to do research, both in terms of human resources and infrastructure, however, at the same time it plays a relevant role in regional education and puts special efforts in supporting research and its development on the institutional level. In particular, they are trying to connect with the regional industry and other sectors. By doing this, they are establishing better connections with relevant stakeholders and implementing positive changes in educational process, but also opening new options for developing research, in particular applied research.

Research planning is clearly stated in the institutional strategy as well as supported with financial planning. It is well evidenced that there is serious commitment in improving research capacity, but also the focus is put on increasing the research output and number of publications published in international well recognized journals. The fact is that the present research activity is still relatively low, and it will be needed to follow strategy and action plan very closely in order to reach objectives. What is not completely clear is how the university treats research (including applied research) services to industry and-or contract research. This might become

even bigger problem when considering different fields, disciplines that exist within the University.

However, though financial planning exists, it is not sufficiently elaborated, nor it provides enough information for present time and future planning. For example, when it comes to upgrading infrastructure and research work there is no clear budget allocations.

University managed to define research priorities, which makes planning more realistic, and it will help in further development. It has been developed documents regulations for scientific research which will enable better management of research, monitoring and providing adequate support. At the same time, attention needs to be paid to avoid overregulation of the system which might hinder some activities and positive changes.

There are defined bodies that are responsible for research development and different activities, while their work is supported with documents that guide and regulate their roles. Considering clear preferences to collaborate with local industry more, it is of utmost importance also to develop carefully additional documents and regulations on ownership, intellectual property etc. In the long run this will assure stronger development of research, better investment and defined roles, expectations, responsibilities of different stakeholders.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. To establish better matching between development of research plan and budgeting*
- 2. Financial planning should also assure gradual development of research that needs to be followed with adequate budget.*
- 3. All the disciplines, fields of research need to be equally treated and supported for doing research.*
- 4. Additional mechanisms need to be developed to support and monitor research productivity.*
- 5. University needs to assure protection of intellectual property in order to establish better and more fruitful cooperation with local and regional industry.*

2.8. Staff, employment processes and professional development

The University has a Handbook for University Employees, which was drafted in 2020. The Handbook is published on the university's website. The Human Resources Unit of the University constantly updates the Handbook, depending on the changes in the central legislation and additions and amendments made to the Code of Ethics and other regulations and documents at the university level. Staff, employment processes and professional development are well regulated. The Handbook is comprehensive, including the legislation that regulates the labour relationship, from Laws, the University Statute, the Code of Ethics and other internal provisions. All the aforementioned documents are accessible to staff and the public. The Handbook also includes regulations that clearly define rights and responsibilities, recruitment processes, supervision, performance evaluation, promotion, support processes and professional development, and disciplinary processes in case of non-compliance with instructions and inappropriate behavior.

The SER provided the detailed explanation for the professional and academic staff engaged as well as the links about the open vacancy positions published and advertised on the University web-page. The entire process of recruitment and re-selection and advancement is based on legal and by-law provisions, qualification, experience and other merit criteria which is a prerequisite for their effectiveness at work. The whole process is transparent, every stage of the procedure is published on the web, and it guarantees equal treatment. The university has a central commission for complaints which is competent for examining the complaints of the university personnel as well as the complaints of candidates in the recruitment procedure, as the last instance at the university level.

At the beginning of each academic year and semester, the “Welcome Week“ session is organized for new full time academic staff and for part-time academic staff. The Human Resources Management Unit, when hiring new employees in the University's administration, organizes a welcome meeting with the General Secretary, all the necessary information and handbooks will be provided to the new employees.

The SER explains the various steps up to the stage when the academic staff is provided with employment contracts as well as for procedures when members of staff are not appropriate for some course/area. In addition to the official languages, priority is given to candidates who have knowledge of the English language as well as other local languages.

The regulation for the description of work duties defines the work duties and responsibilities for administrative staff of the University. Academic staff are given an effective orientation to ensure familiarity with the institution and its services. In addition to this, an induction training is organized for the new full time academic staff at the Centre for Excellence in Teaching.

The University has six academic units and 20 study programs. Each year, staff recruitment is conducted based on the requirements of academic units and study programs. During the accreditation/re-accreditation of study programs, the staff relevant field of study and suitability with the study program is taken as a basis. Which process passes the internal and external evaluation process. The number of academic staff (ratio students to full-time staff) is adequate for the programs offered and comparable to national/regional Universities.

During the site visit, the ET also was provided with the information about the various projects with the involvement of academic staff and students, about the center “Theory to Practice” which has been established. Evaluation at the institutional level takes place according to the article 12 Quality Assurance regulation, and the members of the academic staff are involved in evaluation twice a year.

There is also comprehensive analysis that is performed based on evaluation results. The Regulation on Quality Assurance, the Regulations for evaluation and the use of evaluation results, apply to academic staff. The two documents are published on the website and the staff is notified in advance. The evaluation process takes place online and ensures complete anonymity. The evaluation of full time and part time academic staff is done at the end of each semester, and annually, based on the criteria defined in the Regulation for quality assurance and the Regulation for staff evaluation and the use of evaluation results. The performance evaluation criteria of the academic staff are: Evaluation by students (20 %); Inter-collegial evaluation (10 %); evaluation from the dean (15 %); scientific publications and participation in conferences (30 %); contribution to university and contribution to society (25 %).

The results of the evaluation are analyzed and if in any aspect it is considered that the performance of the staff is not satisfactory, based on Regulations for evaluation and the use of evaluation results, CQAC (Central University Quality Assurance Committee) has recommended to organize trainings for the improvement of teaching. After the evaluation, each academic staff is informed about his performance and in case the results are considered less than satisfactory, the academic staff is given clear recommendations. An evaluation report containing recommendations for improvement.

In this context, the Center for Excellence in Teaching offers training for improving the performance of academic staff. Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET) is established and is in function of strengthening academic capacities as well as promoting a culture of excellence in teaching and learning. Through its activities, CET contributes to the advancement of the quality of teaching and learning towards increasing the competitiveness of the academic staff of the University. The purpose of this CET is to ensure excellence in teaching by promoting academic culture and providing opportunities for the professional development of the current professors and assistants and new professors and assistants at the University. Within the CET

they will also organize training for publication in credible journals, training in ethical behavior and training for publication in credible journals.

The University, based on the evaluation results, recommends training for the academic staff in order to help them develop professionally. On the other hand, the Human Resources Office on an annual basis after evaluating the services provided by the administration units and self-assessment by the administrative staff for training needs for career development, draws up the training plan on an annual basis.

The University has an academic staff professional Development plan 2023. Therefore, the evaluators were able to gain the impression that there is a lack of a concept to promote the further development and training of personnel. Therefore, there should be a corresponding concept to promote didactic further training as well. Overall, the intensive efforts and the establishment of the CET can be praised here by the expert team, but the only point of criticism remains that the use by the academic staff could be stronger.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. More active use could be made of further training opportunities for staff.*
- 2. On the one hand, the university has excellent opportunities to provide the rewards for publishing, on the other hand, the UPZ has no concept to promote the further training of professors and staff. Therefore, the introduction of those stimuli in training could create appropriate incentives for professors and staff.*

2.9. Student administration and support services

The area of university admission and admission procedures are documented and are applied and in accordance with the decisions of the Accreditation Agency regarding accreditation of the programs. The documents regarding the admission and vacancy are published on the University's website. Meanwhile, the Senate, on the occasion of the publication of the competition, reconfirmed them every year. Proposals for the number of students for admission after approval by the Senate are also approved by MASHT (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Innovation). The admission procedure for new students is fair, non-discriminatory and transparent. These procedures are published on the university's website, including the right to appeal.

At the state level it is regulated by the law on higher education, the university statute and the internal regulations of the university. The recruitment procedure is transparent and public, starting with the public announcement of the competition for admission of students for the

21

respective academic year. Those interested applied through the online system, after reviewing the documents. The academic unit organizes an entrance exam, the results from the test are proportionally proportional to the result of the success of the general preliminary education and the national test. During the recruitment stages, respectively in the announcement of the results, there is the possibility of complaining and viewing the test - documents. The students are divided into study groups to ensure an effective and interactive teaching and learning process.

The university has adopted Regulation for the studies transfer, which regulates the recognition and transfer of ECTS credits from other institutions. It enables other students to be transferred into the university through the open call, which is published annually. This open call specifies the requirements for other students in order to be transferred into our University.

The university has a University Management System (SMU) which provides appropriate performance tracking. The system is a "one stop shop services" space, where the student makes the application, registers the semester, registers the subjects, administers the payments, read the curriculum, syllabuses, teaching materials, track his progress, follow online lectures (for example during the Covid-19 pandemic), accepts or rejects grades, etc. Detailed data can be generated at any time upon request. The SMU has also included the questionnaire; which students must fill in upon deregistration. The University has monitored dropouts and the reasons for dropouts and has drafted strategies to reduce dropouts.

Relevant documents containing the rights, obligations and other information regarding the study programmes are published on the website. There is also a student handbook and the Bachelor-/Master degree criteria. Also, the academic units have Study Program Brochures, where candidates can look at other aspects of the programs, curricula, workloads, career opportunities, etc. In addition, the Career Office in cooperation with academic units each year organizes a promotion campaign of the university study programs offered, in high schools in the Prizren region, as well as beyond.

At the beginning of each academic year, in the first week of lectures, the university Career Centre, in cooperation with academic units, organizes an information session for new students admitted to the university Welcome Week. Students are informed about the study program, the opportunities offered by the University, they are informed about the structures of the faculty and the teaching process.

A number of scholarships and financial support measures are available to the University students. The university gives scholarships to all distinguished students, who have a grade above 9, and in FCS (Faculty of Computer Sciences) and FLES (Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences) above 8.5. The amount of the scholarship is determined based on the number of scholarship beneficiaries. It is not specified what the amount of the budget allocated for student scholarships is. MASHT gives scholarships to all distinguished students, who have a grade above 9.0 and also rewards female students who study at FCS and FLES, students from minorities, and for students with special needs. All university students with unfavorable status

benefit from scholarships from MASHT, government funding and policy-making institutions of higher education.

The university has implemented clear procedures for handling student complaints and appeals, which are regulated by the Statute (Article 110), the Regulation for basic studies (Article 43) and the regulation for master studies (Article 22) and the criteria of competitions for admission of students to relevant levels of studies. Also, in the Handbook, students are informed about the right to appeal.

Regular attendance of the lecture by the student is confirmed by their signature on the evidence sheets, but there is no electronic system. The way the student is evaluated is set out in the syllabus of each subject in the "student workload" section.

The entire process of reflecting the results of students is regulated by bylaws and applied through the electronic system. The student examination and papers are subject to the anti-plagiarism system which is applied at the level of the academic unit and the university. The university has established since May 2020 a system to check corresponding examination papers and theses for plagiarism and has described appropriate consequences.

Students within each faculty are also organized in the Student Council as well as the Student Parliament to guarantee their rights. Students are an active part of the University's governing bodies, such as the Senate, the Faculty Council, and are part of any committees created at the faculty level.

According to the available documents and after the discussions at the university, the evaluators can also state that the lecturers are accessible to the students and can be approached for problems.

Participation in workshops, establishment of contacts through collaborative memorandums with public institutions as well as with private sector operators are some of the ways that are used to inform students and enable their access to the labor market, in accordance with the requirements of his. The University offers Career counseling services through the Career Office academic consulting. University offers Student Psychological and Counseling Service. Services are free of charge for all students and staff. Service is intended to provide free counseling to help students manage a range of personal, emotional and psychological concerns.

The university monitors the effectiveness of student services regularly through processes that include service satisfaction surveys. The Services are modified in response to rating and feedback. The quality of student services and their effectiveness is regularly monitored by management. This data is used for planning and improving services.

In the university's own SWOT analysis, a number of points have already been mentioned which state that the university should also pursue itself. During the interviews the students were able

to confirm the good impression of the expert team. In particular, the university has changed a great deal in recent months. Wishes of the students only go in the direction of more English language study programs, and more marketing for the institution to make it better known.

The university has already made efforts to enable the cooperation and in particular internship for the students. This is to be acknowledged. It is just as difficult to realize this sufficiently in the Republic of Kosovo as in other European countries. In accordance with the requirements of the labor market and feedback from employers, these contacts should be further expanded. In the long term, the aim is to ensure that practical phases after graduation are no longer common.

In summary, the expert team can state here that processes and instruments for monitoring and reducing dropout are in place, there are clear processes described and documented available on the website. That there is support for students through counseling, both on the psychological level and on the professional level. And finally, more and more services are being digitized and students can print out their own Transcript of Records online.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *None*

2.10. Learning resources and facilities

The university campus is located near the Prizren city park which offers students easy access to additional recreational spaces. The University infrastructure consists of: 40 classrooms, 3 Amphitheatres, 47 offices for academic and administrative staff with a total infrastructure area of approximately 14,820 square meters.

The entire campus, especially the library areas, are monitored 24/7 by security cameras, and a private security company has been contracted, and civil security personnel are employed in all buildings on campus.

The university has adapted its infrastructure for people with disabilities relatively well. These categories have special access to all university buildings and facilities. These include a separate entrance for people with disabilities, elevators and toilets. The university has special accommodations for students with special needs. These include classrooms and library spaces equipped with audio equipment for students with hearing impairments and literature and Braille readers for visually impaired students.

The classrooms have projectors and enough space for lectures, while the laboratories have computers and functional laboratory equipment for theoretical and practical work for students.

The inventory owned by the University, including the laboratories in all academic units, is monitored and maintained daily.

Based on its cooperation agreement with Innovation and Training Park (ITP), the University also uses its spaces. In November 2022, the Center for Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer (CRIKT) was established at ITP for the purpose of providing scientific, professional, and artistic services. Also, this cooperation agreement includes student and staff housing. And has plans to build its own student dormitories with a canteen in the future.

The University facility owns a University Library which has a fund of over 71,000 book titles in Albanian, English, Turkish, Bosnian and other languages. The University has made investments in various areas to improve its infrastructure, considering the available budget and following the objectives outlined in the strategic plan as well as the needs of the University. Recently, investments have been made in laboratory equipment to improve the infrastructure, which has resulted in the establishment of three computer labs in various academic units.

The University has three libraries that provide a total of about 71,000 books: the Central Library located in the Faculty of Education/Philology, the library in the Faculty of Economics, and the German Language Library (Austrian Corner) located in the Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences. Additionally, there is a specific library at the University where students can bring one book and take another. The library offers a wide range of books in various languages, including Albanian, Bosnian, Turkish, English, and German, covering all of the courses taught at the University, such as education, philology, economics, law, life and environmental sciences, and computer science. The University libraries are equipped with computers and internet access, allowing students to conduct research on electronic literature. There are three full-time staff, including the director of the library and two full-time librarians. The services offered in the library are continuously evaluated by means of questionnaires. On an annual basis, the University purchases books according to the needs of the department. Every year the library asks the departments for a list of the titles they need.

The University library has also been expanded through partnerships and collaborations with various institutions, including the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo, the Institute of History “Ali Hadri”, the Pedagogical Institute of Kosovo, the Albanological Institute of Kosovo, the Regional Center for Cultural Heritage in Prizren, the Institute for the Protection of Monuments in Pristina, the Albanological Institute in Tirana, and the Bank of Albania (which provide magazines, annual reports, and studies). The library has obtained materials from the State Archive of Kosovo. Approximately 1,262 samples have been acquired through cooperation agreements. The University has reliable and efficient access to online databases and electronic research materials. This access has been greatly enhanced through an agreement

with the University Library of Pristina to join the Association of Electronic Libraries of Kosovo. In addition to the agreement with the University of Pristina Library, the University has also made agreements with the National Library, the Association of Electronic Libraries of Kosovo, and the Library of the Municipality of Prizren. Through an agreement with the EBSCO electronic library, academic staff and students at the University are provided with access to scientific journals and greater opportunities for scientific research. Therefore, the possibilities for literature research are satisfactory, taking into account the Kosovar conditions. Nevertheless, to maintain Western European conditions, constant further improvement is required.

The university has signed an agreement with KREN (Kosovo Research and Education Network) which allows academic staff and students to use Microsoft products, have access to hardware and software resources, access to the network, and opportunities to access GEANT (European National Research and Education Networks (NRENs)). The equipment assigned to individual personnel is also evaluated on an annual basis by a commission which certifies the existence and condition of the equipment with respect to its depreciation. The annual report is drawn up and submitted to the management.

The university has already recognized these problems (limited budget from MASHT; lack of space on campus for sports activities; lack of a plan in place for developing new infrastructure at the University; creating spaces for extracurricular activities for students) itself and the experts are hopeful that the university will solve the problems itself. The students could not report any major grievances. Based on the documents submitted, the experts assume that there is financial security.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Opportunities should be explored for students to also have venues for extracurricular opportunities or appropriate open space for their activities.*

2.11. Institutional cooperation

University included institutional operation as a part of strategic planning, and as much as it is emphasised the role of cooperation with local institutions and industries, it is also recognized the relevance of international cooperation.

Lately, University joined a few of well recognized and respected international associations, such as EUA, or CEEPUS. This move will definitely help university to become more visible

to support establishing different networks and to be better acquainted with the most recent trends in higher education in Europe. University in Prizren also signed the number of inter-institutional agreements, and some of them have already resulted in joined activities. Up to know, there are around fifty bilateral agreements, so called MoU which shows definitely a good trend. However, institution needs to be careful not to collect MoUs with no actual activities. The number of such agreements should be realistic and focused primarily on actual shared activities.

It should be also noticed that the institution managed to enlarge her cooperation with local external stakeholders, different representatives from industry and other sectors. As much as this helps in research and different services, it is also beneficial for students, and it facilitates their transition to real sector. Establishment of so called Industrial Advisory Board is a very well recognized activity and, evidently, also appreciated by the local industries and firms.

University is also trying to be present in project activities, however, the most projects are either ended or it will end very soon. They have a different profile, mostly they are not research projects. All this is a warning sign that both management of the University as well as individual academic staff must put more efforts to develop supporting mechanisms and to be more proactive if they want to be more successful with projects which will, among other things, also increase their research productivity.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Increase the number of MoUs, and activate the existing ones.*

3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND JUDGEMENTS OF THE EXPERT TEAM

As shown above the compliance levels per general areas are:

Standard	Compliance level
1. Public mission and institutional objectives	Substantially compliant
2. Strategic planning, governance and administration	Substantially compliant
3. Financial planning and management	Fully compliant
4. Academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability	Substantially compliant
5. Quality management	Substantially compliant
6. Learning and teaching	Substantially compliant
7. Research	Partially compliant
8. Staff, employment processes and professional development	Fully compliant
9. Student administration and support services	Fully compliant
10. Learning resources and facilities	Fully compliant
11. Institutional cooperation	Substantially compliant
Overall compliance	Substantially compliant

*According to the KAA Accreditation manual, in order to be granted a positive decision for institutional accreditation, every education provider has to demonstrate at least a **substantial compliance** level in the overall judgment. In order to be granted a positive decision for the program and institutional re/accreditation, every education provider has to demonstrate at least a substantial compliance level in the overall judgement. Therefore, failure in meeting at least an overall substantial compliance level entails delaying, withdrawing, suspending or denying accreditation.*

*According to the expert team's evaluation, University "Uskhin Hoti" Prizren is "**substantially compliant**" with the standards included in the KAA Accreditation manual and, therefore, the expert team recommends **to re-accredit** the institution for the duration of three years.*

28

Expert Team

Chair

Electronically signed in PDF

	Dr. Dietmar Paier	March 10, 2023
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

Member

<i>Melita Kovacevic</i>	Melita Kovacevic, PhD	March 10, 2023
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

Member

	Christopher Bohlens	March 10, 2023
(Signature)	(Print Name)	
(Date)		