



Republika e Kosovës

Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo

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



**Annual Work Report of The State Council of Quality and
the Kosovo Accreditation Agency For 2023**

Prishtina, 2024

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ACRONYMS

ADA – Austrian Development Agency

KAA – Kosovo Accreditation Agency

CEENQA – Central and Eastern Europe Network of Quality Assurance

ENQA – European Network of Quality Assurance

EQAR – European Register of Quality Assurance

ESG – European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance

HERAS - Higher Education, Research and Applied Science Plus

HEI – Higher Education Institution

Public HEI – Higher Education Institutions financed by the Government of the Republic of Kosovo

Private HEI – Self-financed Higher Education Institutions

INQAAHE – International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

AC – Appeals Committee which reviews the appeals filed by HEIs against SCQ decisions

NQF – National Qualifications Framework

SCQ – State Council of Quality

Law on HE – Law on Higher Education

MESTI – Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation

QAINTE – Quality, Accountability, Integrity and Transparency in Higher Education project

SAR – Self-Assessment Report

QA – Quality Assurance

AI – Administrative Instruction

WUS Kosova - World University Service Kosova

KSAC – Kosovo Subject Area Code

1. INTRODUCTION

This document was developed for the purpose of annual work reporting of the State Council of Quality and the Kosovo Accreditation Agency for 2023.

This Report covers information on the activities of the State Council of Quality, the Kosovo Accreditation Agency and the Appeals Committee for the one-year period.

The report presents:

1. Evaluation and accreditation processes of higher education institutions and their study programmes of the 5th level of the National Qualifications Framework (NFQ), Bachelor, Master and Doctoral, for 2023;
2. Activities and developments contributing to the internal quality assurance of the work of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency and the operation of the State Council of Quality, as a decision making institution of the KAA;
3. Addressing the recommendations for the return of the full membership in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European Register of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (EQAR); and
4. Cooperation with national and international partner institutions.

2. KOSOVO ACCREDITATION AGENCY (KAA)

The Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) was founded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) in 2008, in accordance with Law No. 04/L-037 on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo. Whereas now, the Kosovo Agency for Accreditation operates under Law No. 08/L-110 on the Kosovo Accreditation Agency, and has the status of a regulatory agency for quality assurance in higher education in the Republic of Kosovo.

The KAA does the accreditation, re-accreditation, validation and monitoring of public and private higher education institutions in Kosovo and their study programmes. Through the accreditation process, KAA supports the development of quality in higher education and in this way ensures that the offers for higher education in Kosovo concur with comparable international standards.

The legal basis for the activity of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) is comprised of the Law on Higher Education in Kosovo¹ (No. 04/L-037, dated 31.08.2011), Law No. 08/L-110 on the Kosovo Accreditation Agency² and Administrative Instruction on Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Kosovo (No. 15/2018)³, the Accreditation Manual, regulations, etc. Since its establishment, the KAA has, in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG)⁴, developed the accreditation standards and procedures and has published them through its official website.⁵

Accreditation covers the following key aspects:

- Accreditation of higher education institutions;
- Accreditation of study programmes;
- Accreditation of institutions and study programmes;
- Accreditation of branches and study programmes provided in those branches.
- Recognition/validation of international accreditation.

According to Article 7 of AI 15/2018 on Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Kosovo, the request for accreditation may be done by:

- The higher education institution to be assessed at an institutional or study programme level;
- Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI);
- State Council of Quality of KAA, in special cases.

In order to develop a transparent accreditation process, the KAA has developed the necessary documents on accreditation procedures that can be used by HEIs, such as: KAA Standards, KAA Guidelines for Drafting the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) for the assessment of higher

¹ [Law no. 04/L-037 on higher education in the Republic of Kosovo \(rks-gov.net\)](http://rks-gov.net)

² [Law no. 08/L-110 on the Kosovo Accreditation Agency \(rks-gov.net\)](http://rks-gov.net)

³ [Administrative Instruction \(MEST\) no. 015/2018 on accreditation of higher education institutions in the Republic of Kosovo \(rks-gov.net\)](http://rks-gov.net)

⁴ https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/esg_2015.pdf

⁵ <https://akreditimi.rks-gov.net/guidelines/>

education institutions and their study programmes, namely the Accreditation Manual⁶. These documents have served not only as guidelines for higher education institutions for the purpose of the accreditation process, but also as guidelines for internal quality assurance and management.

KAA consists of its administrative structure, which is led by the General Director, the State Council of Quality (SCQ) which is the governing and decision-making body of KAA, as well as the Appeals Committee. The administrative structure of KAA currently employs the director, 12 officials and 2 interns.

2.1 Mission and objectives of KAA

The mission of KAA is to support the development of quality in higher education institutions through the external evaluation process, and to ensure the society of Kosovo that the quality of higher education is at the level of international standards.

The objectives of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) are as follows:

- promote, improve and increase quality in higher education;
- increase transparency and accountability in the higher education system;
- improve the quality of study in higher education institutions;
- encourage innovative content in higher education;
- ensure comparability of qualifications between higher education institutions of Kosovo and those provided by international programmes;
- implement objectives for Kosovo's integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and contribute to its development.

The main values supported by the work of KAA are as follows:

Independence – The KAA makes independent, reasoned decisions in a sustainable and verifiable way;

Transparency – the KAA is led by the principles of public responsibility and accountability through an effective information policy;

⁶ <https://akreditimi.rks-gov.net/accreditation/standards/>

Reliability – the KAA organizes credible external quality assurance processes, where the academic community and the society at large believes in the work of the KAA;

Professionalism – the KAA applies high professional standards applicable in Europe in external quality assurance processes.

2.2 Memberships and partnerships

The KAA has been part of international networks of quality assurance in higher education and continues to be in 2023.

This year, the KAA continues to be a member of:

- Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance (CEENQA)⁷.
- INQAAHE ⁸ International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education.
- ENQA Affiliate: KAA has managed to obtain ENQA Affiliate status, after fulfilling a series of criteria which have been verified by the ENQA Board and then approved by the ENQA Assembly in Stockholm.⁹
- KAA has become a full member of the Global Academic Integrity Network (GAIN). The Global Academic Integrity Network is a consortium of education quality and integrity agencies around the world joining forces to combat the rise of commercial academic fraud services targeting students, and it is supported by a number of important international education bodies, such as ENQA, European Network for Academic Integrity and ETINED. ¹⁰
- Twinning with the Austrian Accreditation Agency has continued.

3. STATE COUNCIL OF QUALITY (SCQ)

The State Council of Quality (SCQ) or the KAA Board, is a decision-making body of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency and is responsible for making decisions on the accreditation of higher education institutions and their study programmes.

⁷ Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education. <https://www.ceenqa.org/>

⁸ The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) <https://www.inqaahe.org/>

⁹ ENQA Affiliate <https://www.enqa.eu/membership-database/kaa-kosovo-accreditation-agency/>

¹⁰ Global Academic Integrity Network (GAIN) <https://globalacademicintegrity.network/>

The State Council of Quality operates under the Law on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo No. 04/L-037, Law No. 08/L-110 on Kosovo Accreditation Agency¹¹, Administrative Instruction on Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Kosovo (No. 15/2018)¹², the Administrative Instruction on Selection Criteria and Procedure of SCQ members (No. 05/2018, dated 15.03.2018), and relies on the Regulation on Rules and Procedure of the State Council of Quality (No. 621/18D, dated 12.06.2018).

The legislation in force enables the selection of SCQ members on the basis of professional and transparent criteria and procedures. The selected list of nominees is ratified by the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo. Based on the Regulation on Rules and Procedure of the State Quality Council, SCQ sets the annual agendas for the accreditation process of HEIs, approves the accreditation standards, procedures and criteria, approves the external expert teams proposed by the director of KAA, makes decisions on accreditation as well as approves the Statute and all regulations of KAA.

The current composition of SCQ is as follows:

1. Prof Ass. Dr Hasnije Ilazi, Chair;
2. Dr Klemen Miklavic; Deputy Chair;
3. Prof Ass. Dr Gëzim Tosuni, member;
4. Prof Ass. Dr Maja Martinović, member;
5. Prof Dr Jaakko Kauko, member;
6. Prof Dr Mirlinda Batalli, member;
7. Prof Dr Avni Berisha, member;
8. Dr Jetmir Haxhibeqiri, member;
9. Ex officio Director of KAA, Naim Gashi.

The terms of two members of SCQ ended on April 16, 2023, namely that of Prof Ass. Dr Dukagjin Zeka and Prof Ass. Dr Rozafa Koliqi. New members of SCQ are Prof Dr Jaakko

¹¹ [Law No. 08/L-110 on Kosovo Accreditation Agency \(rks-gov.net\)](#)

¹² [Administrative Instruction \(MEST\) No. 015/2018 on accreditation of higher education institutions in the Republic of Kosovo \(rks-gov.net\)](#)

Kauko, selected by the Kosovo Assembly on 10.07.2023, Prof Dr Mirlinda Batalli, Prof Dr Avni Berisha, and Dr Jetmir Haxhibeqiri, selected by the Kosovo Assembly on 14.02.2024.

Table 1: Main activities of SCQ for 2023

No.	Description	Date
1.	SCQ has reviewed and decided on the list of international accreditation experts. SCQ and KAA have since the beginning re-evaluated the existing list of international experts from which inactive experts have been removed, while experts from ENQA member countries have been prioritized. SCQ has decided that the call for experts will be open throughout the year.	2023
2.	SCQ has reviewed and decided on all expert evaluation reports.	2023
3.	SCQ has reviewed all requests of HEIs and has reviewed and submitted all HEI appeals to the Appeals Committee.	2023
4.	In order to increase transparency and involve all higher education stakeholders in the decision-making process, SCQ has continued meetings with accredited higher education institutions in Kosovo.	2023
5.	SCQ approved the reviewed accreditation standards	25.07.2023
6.	Together with the KAA staff, SCQ has held workshops on the supplementation of secondary legislation deriving from the Law on the Accreditation Agency.	10.11. 2023
7.	SCQ met with ENQA representatives during their progress visit	11.10.2023
8.	SCQ developed the Regulation on International Experts	2023
9.	SCQ and KAA organized the international conference on quality assurance in higher education	24.09.2023
10	SCQ and KAA have conducted visits to Brussels, Belgium where they met with the heads of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) and other important institutions in the field of education; in Cologne, Germany, where they met with the heads of the Agency for Quality Assurance through the Accreditation of Study	2023

	Programmes (AQAS); and Bratislava, Slovakia where they met with the leaders of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (SAAVS).	
11	SCQ and KAA met with the representatives of all accredited HEIs in the regular annual meeting.	16.05.2023
12	SCQ reports to the Commission for Education, Science, Technology, Innovation, Culture, Youth and Sports of the Kosovo Assembly.	04 07.2023

3.1. Meetings and Decisions of SCQ

During 2023, SCQ held 11 meetings and 2 online voting sessions. The table below lists the meetings in the order they were held.

Table 2: List of meetings held in 2023

No	Date	Meetings
1	28.02.2023	Meeting 109 of SCQ
2	28.03.2023	Meeting 110 of SCQ
3	14.04.2023	Meeting 111 of SCQ
4	08.05.2023	Meeting 112 of SCQ
5	26.06.2023	Meeting 113 of SCQ
6	13.07.2023	Meeting 114 of SCQ
7	25.08.2023	Meeting 115 of SCQ
8	25.09.2023	Meeting 116 of SCQ
9	20.10.2023	Meeting 117 of SCQ
10	21.11.2023	Meeting 118 of SCQ
11	28.12.2023	Meeting 119 of SCQ

The decisions taken in every meeting of the SCQ are published on KAA's official website, official Facebook and LinkedIn profile.

Main challenges of SCQ in 2023:

1. **Recognition of diplomas from the region and beyond.** There is a large number of programme providers who have graduated as doctors of science in the regional countries and/or beyond which significantly lack accreditation capacities and mechanisms according to the ESG standards. The recognition of diplomas according to the legislation in force is not aligned with the quality assurance mechanisms in higher education, and consequently, in addition to the formal/procedural aspect, it does not provide a substantial review of dissertations, thus enabling the legitimisation of diplomas of a suspicious quality. The SCQ does not have the mechanisms to exclude from the accreditation process the providers with suspicious or low quality doctorates, which threatens quality assurance.
2. **Quality of applications.** In its work, the SCQ has faced a poor quality of programme accreditation applications. Mistakes related to the selection of ESAC codes (Erasmus Subject Area Codes) and their incompatibility with the field of the carriers, the inconsistency of the programme courses and profiles of the providers with the "learning outcomes" of the programme, the poor quality of the self-assessment reports in terms of content, and the quality of the translation in English are some of the problems faced by SCQ during the review of applications and decision-making.
3. **Lack of formal competence to orient study programmes.** SCQ does not have legal mechanisms for orienting study programmes towards profiles that are in line with the needs of society and the market.
4. **Validating accreditation obtained abroad.** HEIs that have been accredited from accreditation agencies of another country can validate their accreditation in SCQ without having to follow the full accreditation procedures according to the legislation in force. SCQ's decision-making regarding the validation of such programmes is a major challenge since the criteria are different and there is no clear overview of the criteria used by the international agencies to grant the accreditation. SCQ is in the process of drafting the Regulation on validation which will eliminate essential differences in

accreditation procedures between programmes accredited in Kosovo and those accredited by international institutions.

- 5. Sub-legal acts for the Law on KAA.** The Law on KAA entered into force in July 2023 and will have a significant positive impact on KAA's activity. The challenge remains in the drafting and implementation of the sub-legal acts which would enable the complete implementation of the Law.

4. ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION PROCESS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS FOR 2023

The institutional and study programme assessment is a periodical activity of KAA. This process is based on the assessment of documents submitted by the applying institution (Self-assessment Report), and based on the findings during the field visit with the team of international accreditation experts. According to the published procedures of KAA, every HEI is required to demonstrate that it meets the accreditation criteria in order to obtain the accreditation.

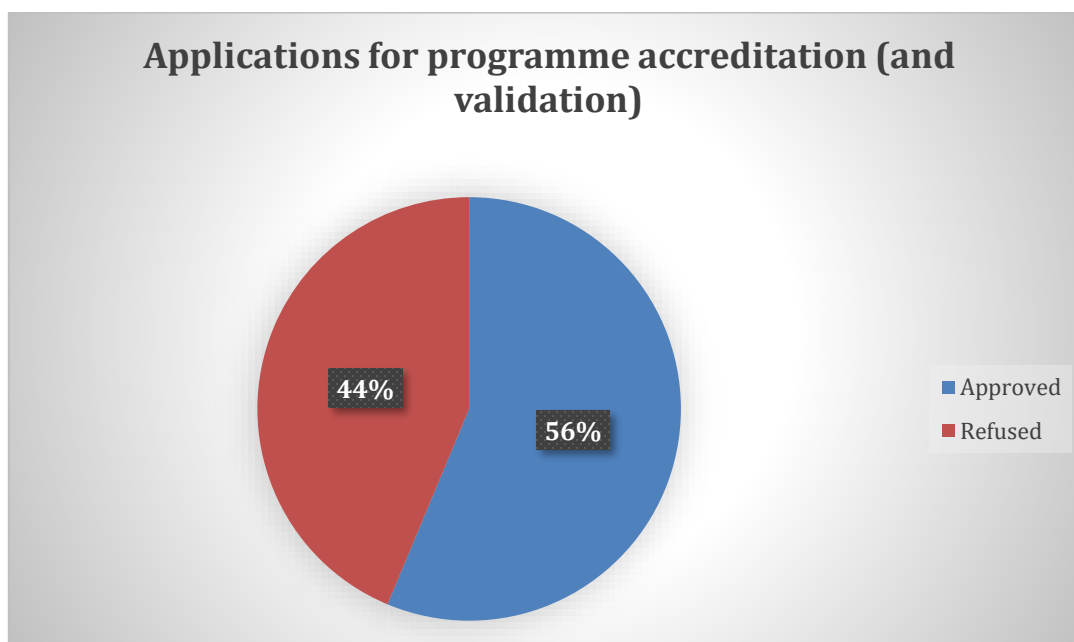
Pursuant to Article 10 of Administrative Instruction on accreditation of higher education institutions (No. 15/2018), every HEI filing an application for institutional accreditation/reaccreditation of one or more study programmes should also submit a list of academic staff declared in the KAA through the e-accreditation platform as proof of engagement in that HEI in the relevant programme for the relevant academic year. The application, together with the list of staff, is subject to evaluation of the fulfilment of formal criteria and after approval by SCQ, it is included in the annual agenda of KAA for assessment. In case of preliminary negative evaluation of the application by SCQ, it is rejected and not subject to evaluation. In addition to applications and lists of approved staff, the HEI should also bring to the KAA the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) which is sent to the external assessment team in a certain time frame before the visit in person or remote assessment through online meetings.

In 2023, the KAA conducted the assessment and accreditation process of higher education institutions and study programmes based on the reviewed standards of 2021 and the new Accreditation Manual which the HEIs use as the basis for drafting SARs. These standards aim to enhance the overall quality of HEIs in Kosovo and focus on consolidating their internal quality assurance system. During 2023, the KAA received 12 applications for institutional

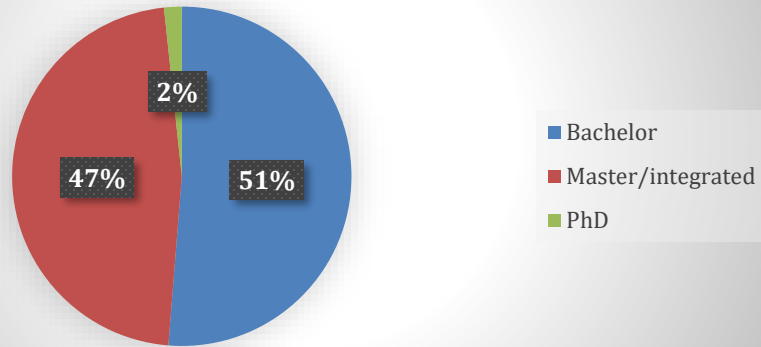
accreditation. Of those, 10 were subject to assessment, and 2 HEIs did not undergo assessment as their study programmes were not approved. Of the 10 HEIs assessed with the teams of international experts, 7 were accredited while 2 were not accredited, and one institution withdrew from the accreditation process as a negative final report was submitted by the external experts.

The accreditation process in Kosovo for 2023 was considered positive in the European Commission Kosovo report. The accreditation process in Kosovo was also considered positive by the local monitors and international donors.

During 2023, a total of 119 study programmes applied for the accreditation (and validation) process (61 were Bachelor programmes, 56 Master or integrated programmes, and 2 study programmes at the PhD level). Of these (119), 52 of those were refused for not meeting the basic criteria, whereas 67 applications for study programmes were approved by SCQ.

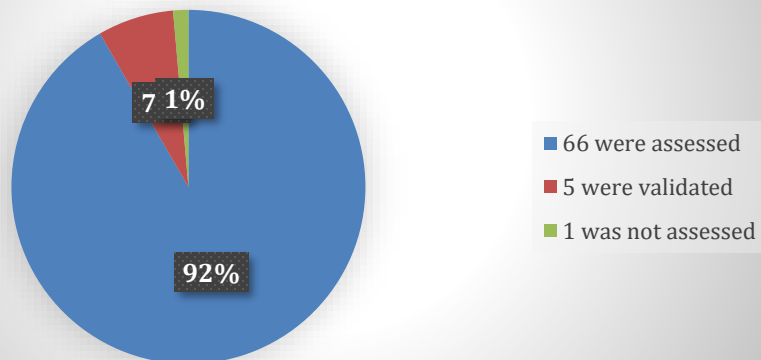


Of 67 applications received



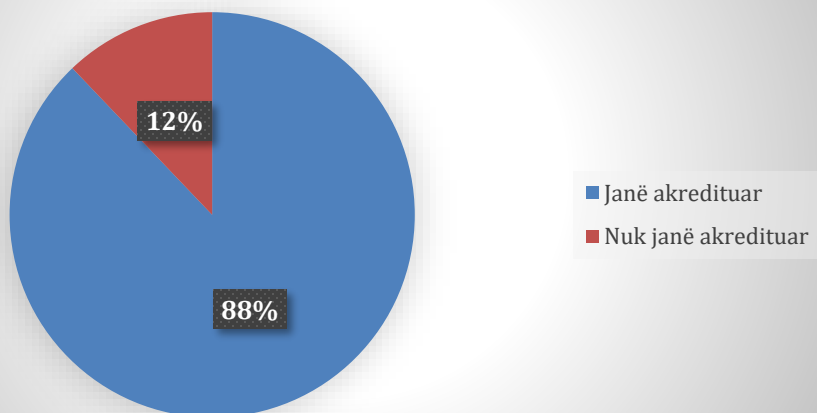
Of 67 study programmes approved by SCQ, the KAA assessed 66 of them, 5 of which were validated and one was not assessed as the HEI did not have institutional accreditation.

Programme assessment

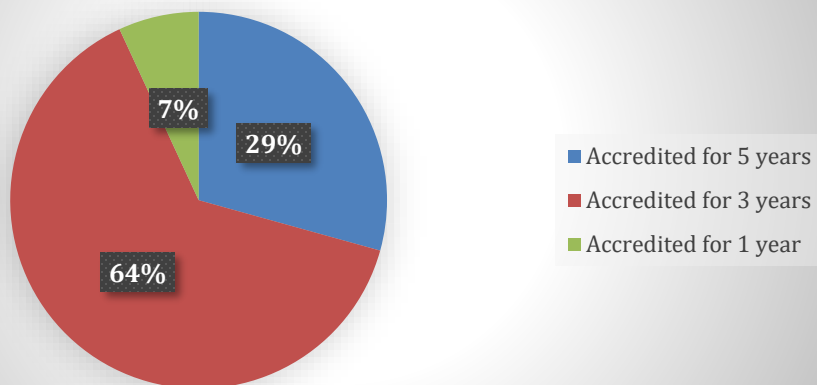


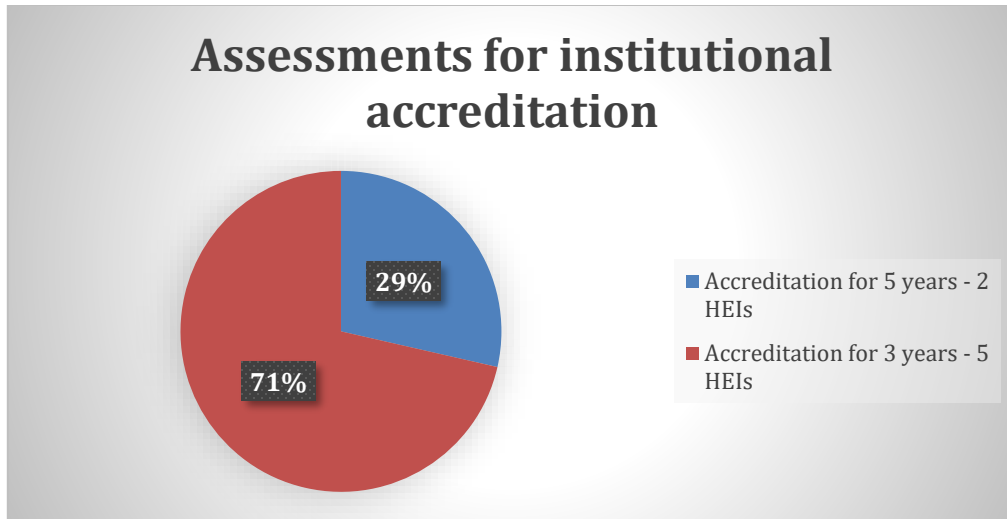
Of 66 programmes assessed with the teams of international experts, 58 programmes were accredited (17 programmes for 5 years, 37 programmes for 3 years, and 4 programmes for 1 year) whereas 8 were not accredited.

Of 66 assessed programmes



Of 66 accredited programmes





5. APPEALS COMMITTEE (AC)

5.1 Legal basis

The Appeals Committee (AC) has performed its legal authorisations based on the Regulation of the Appeals Committee 02/2019, which was approved by SCQ, and was applicable from 31.05.2019 until 05.01.2014.

On 29.06.2023, the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo approved Law No. 08/L-110 on Kosovo Accreditation Agency, which specifies the authorisations, structures, method of decision making and other aspects relevant to the AC.

For the purpose of a detailed monitoring of the AC activity, on 05.01.2024 the Regulation on AC was approved and entered into force.

5.2 Participation in the drafting of legislation and conferences/workshops

During the reporting period, the AC was through its members an active part of the drafting process of sub-legal acts deriving from the Law on KAA.

AC participated in the international Conferences: *“The impact of quality assurance mechanisms in creating a culture of quality in higher education”*, organized in Prishtina on 26 September 2023.

The Chair of the AC attended the workshop on the development of regulations and procedures for the KAA held in Ohrid, Republic of North Macedonia, which was held on 20-24 December 2023.

5.3 Structure and meetings of AC

During the reporting period, a new chair of the AC was elected, after the resignation of the former chair who took a managerial position at the University of Pristina. During this period, the AC functioned with four members, despite the fact that the legal provisions stipulate that there should be 5 members. The AC had a sufficient quorum to handle the complaints of HEIs.

During the reporting period, the AC held a total of 19 meetings in the periods as follows:

No.	Month	Meetings
1	January	0
2	February	1
3	March	4
4	April	3
5	May	3
6	June	1
7	July	1
8	August	1
9	September	1
10	October	1
11	November	2
12	December	1
TOTAL: 19 meetings		

5.4 Decision-making of AC

During the reporting period, the AC took a specific number of decisions, with the data as follows:

No.	Type of decision-making	No. of cases	Higher education institution
1	Approval of appeal as grounded	3	UP-FMNS; UP-FAV; Dardania
2	Partial approval of appeal	2	AAB; UHZ
3	Conclusion of administrative procedure	2	Heimerer; UP-FE

4	Suspension of administrative procedure	1	L.H. – University of Gjilan	
5	Refusal	12	Institution	Unit
			University of Prizren	1
			Universum	3
			Evolucion	1
			UBT	1
			Biznes College	1
			UP-FE	2
			University of Gjilan	1
			Public Security Academy	1
			Heimeier	1
6	Delayed term for decision-making	10	Institution	Unit
			Universum	2s
			Evolucion	1
			University of Mitrovica	1
			UP-FMNS	1
			UP – FE	1
			UP-FAV	1
			UHZ	1
			UBT	1
			Heimeier	1
TOTAL: 30 Decisions				

6. MAIN ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS OF THE ACCREDITATION AGENCY IN 2023

6.1. Review of accreditation applications and approval of the activity plan

The State Council of Quality (SCQ) of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA), at its 108th meeting, which lasted three days, reviewed the applications of higher education institutions for institutional accreditation, accreditation and re-accreditation of programs of study. Higher education institutions were informed in writing by KAA about the decisions of the Council. In this meeting, SCQ also approved the list of international experts who will participate in the accreditation process. SCQ has also approved the Activity Plan for 2023, deriving from the Strategic Plan of KAA.

6.2. Approval of the Law on Kosovo Accreditation Agency

On 07.06.2023, the Law on the Kosovo Accreditation Agency was voted in the Kosovo Assembly. The adoption of this law guarantees the institutional and financial independence of the KAA, directly affects the quality improvement in higher education, the internationalization of the education system and paves the way for the return of the KAA to the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

This Law was approved after a long and dedicated work of the working groups of MESTI, the Commission for Education of the Kosovo Assembly, and the political will to support the independence of KAA. SCQ and KAA were represented in most meetings of the Parliamentary Committee for Education and in public hearings. The Law on KAA is an indicator of the existence of a national cohesion for quality in higher education.

Kosovo is the first country in the Western Balkans to have an accreditation law and this is a great achievement, which places KAA and Kosovo as leaders in the region in terms of raising the quality of higher education.

6.3. First international conference on quality assurance in higher education

The Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) organized on 26.09.2023 the first international conference on quality assurance in higher education, which was attended by heads of state

institutions, representatives from most important European institutions, representatives of higher education, the academic community, students, diplomatic representatives, civil society representatives, etc.

The Prime Minister of the Republic, the Minister of MESTI, members of the Parliamentary Committee for Education, representatives of higher education institutions, the academic community, industry, representatives of students, civil society, donors, etc. participated in this conference.

The representatives of the local institutions have offered support to the KAA on its way to increase the quality in higher education and membership in international organizations.

From the international organizations, the heads of ENQA and EQAR, the counterpart agencies from Germany, Croatia, Austria, experts from various European countries, etc. were present at the conference.

International partners pledged to support KAA and appreciated the achievements for the full implementation of European quality standards.

6.4. Revised standards for the institutional and programme level

The State Council of Quality (SCQ) of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) has approved the revised Standards for the accreditation/re-accreditation of higher education institutions at the institutional level and Bachelor and Master study programmes.

In accordance with the Law on KAA, these standards enter into force after one year and will apply to all new applications submitted for accreditation/reaccreditation during 2024. KAA works to enhance quality assurance standards in higher education, in accordance with the European quality standards (ESG) as well as the role of the state and society in the development of higher education in the Republic of Kosovo.

KAA has taken care to include local and international members of SCQ, local and international experts in the field of higher education, higher education institutions, representatives of civil society, student representatives, representatives of MESTI, donors in the field of education and all other actors relevant to higher education in the drafting of the standards.

After the drafting of the final draft by the working group for the drafting of these standards, KAA has published the draft for public discussion.

After the end of the period for public discussion, KAA has addressed the received comments and the latter have been submitted to the State Council of Quality for consideration. At the 116th meeting, after considering the comments submitted by the interested parties, the SCQ approved the final document. The revision of these standards was supported by Heras plus and financed by the Austrian ADA.

6.5. Progress visits of the European Association of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

A team of experts from the European Association of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) made a visit to the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) in Prishtina on 11 October 2023.

The international assessors, Mrs. Maria Weber (AQ Austria) and Mr. Klemen Subic (Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency) addressed all the standards of Chapter 3 of the ESGs, thus discussing the progress made by KAA in her mission for the full membership into ENQA and registration in EQAR.

During the progress visit, the ENQA experts met with the State Council of Quality (SCQ), KAA staff, and representatives of the higher education institutions, representative of the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), as well as donor representatives.

The KAA submitted a progress report to ENQA, which was a topic of discussion with the international experts.

This visit did not have an assessment character, but was aimed at discussing the progress of the KAA in meeting the criteria defined by the European Guidelines and Standards. The purpose of the visit was consultative and advisory in nature and serves as an indicator of the achievement in meeting the standards by KAA, before the final evaluation by ENQA.

The Law on KAA, the strategic plan, institutional independence, the increased dialogue and cooperation with HEIs, the involvement of students in quality assurance processes, etc., were only some of the issues raised for which KAA has already made significant progress.

The Kosovo Accreditation Agency has also welcomed the additional recommendations and has expressed its commitment to fulfil them until the next evaluation by ENQA.

6.6. Accreditation Agency has implemented the monitoring process of higher education institutions

During 2023, the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) continued the monitoring process of higher education institutions in the Republic of Kosovo, thus fulfilling an important recommendation of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

The monitoring process of higher education institutions and their academic programmes is one of the recommendations of the European Commission in the field of education in Kosovo, within the Stabilization and Association Process.

The team of the Accreditation Agency, in accordance with the Monitoring Methodology and Post-Accreditation Procedures, at the beginning of the monitoring process, monitored the schedules of lectures and tutorials, as well as the attendance of the academic staff in 11 HEIs.

The monitoring process meets Standard 2.3 of the European Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG) which requires quality assurance agencies to complete the accreditation cycle with post-accreditation procedures aimed at continuous improvement of the quality of higher education institutions.

Monitoring is a formal process carried out by KAA through which assesses whether the higher education institution maintains and continues to fulfil the recommendations of external evaluators and the given conditions of accreditation as well as implements the standards of the Accreditation Manual.

On the other hand, the "post-accreditation procedure" is a process which is limited to the verification of the accreditation conditions and the confirmation of the degree of fulfilment of

the recommendations from the KAA and the commitments from the HEI, not the re-evaluation of the standards of the Accreditation Manual.

The monitoring process was conducted in the following HEIs:

- University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina": Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary, Faculty of Mathematic Natural Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Philosophy, and the Arts Faculty;
- "Isa Boletini" University, Mitrovica;
- AAB College;
- ESLG College;
- Evolucion Academy;
- Heimerer College; and
- UBT College.

The evaluation and monitoring officials of the KAA, in accordance with the Law on Higher Education, the Law on Kosovo Accreditation Agency, Administrative Instruction on Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions 15/18, Accreditation Manual of KAA as well as the Monitoring Methodology of KAA and Post-Accreditation Procedures, also implemented the monitoring process remotely during this year, focusing on publications related to the accredited study programmes of HEIs.

According to Article 1.4 of the Monitoring Manual of KAA, "The monitoring of HEI websites (media and social networks) aims to ensure that the information published by HEIs related to the accreditation of study programmes is accurate and does not create confusion among students, parents or the general public."

As a result, KAA has monitored and verified all publications and announcements of study programmes in accordance with the decisions of the State Council of Quality (SCQ). During this process, some incorrect information was identified, and KAA has instructed HEIs to adapt information and publications in accordance with SCQ decisions within a certain period.

The HEIs were informed in writing, and they corrected their publications in the media, their websites and social networks, in accordance with the decisions of the SCQ. In cases where an

institution fails to correct the information within the specified period, the KAA writes a report with recommendations for the KSC.

According to the Monitoring and Post-Accreditation Procedure of the KAA, if the SCQ considers the institution's reason to be ungrounded and that the institution has violated the terms of accreditation with its actions, it may decide to initiate an external evaluation process for the study programme and/or institution.

6.7. SCQ established a Working Group for the drafting of regulations emerging from the Law on KAA

The State Council of Quality (SCQ) of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) established a Working Group for the drafting of regulations emerging from the new Law on KAA.

This group consisted of representatives of SCQ, KAA, Appeals Committee, Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers, Conference of Rectors, UPCO Institute and civil society representatives. SCQ has also reviewed a number of reports from the monitoring process, as well as the submitted requests and appeals.

6.8. Information session related to the programme accreditation standards and process

The Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) and the Rectorate of the University of Prishtina organized an information session related to the accreditation standards and process of academic programmes, which was attended by the quality assurance coordinators and providers of academic programmes from all academic units of the UP.

Quality assurance coordinators and providers of study programmes at the UP negotiated with the managers of the KAA on issues related to quality assurance.

Both parties agreed to continue with the periodical meetings to exchange ideas for enhancing our education system.

6.9. Activities for the development of regulations emerging from the new Law

With the support of the HEI'25 project, the Kosovo Accreditation Agency organized workshops related to the development of sub-legal acts emerging from the new Law on KAA. Participants in these workshops included SCQ, the administration, Appeals Committee, local and international experts, etc.

6.10 Information sessions with HEIs about the application process and staff declaration

The Kosovo Accreditation Agency held an information session with all HEIs about the application process for accreditation and reaccreditation of institutions and study programmes, as provided by the Law on Higher Education No. 04/L-037 and Administrative Instruction 15/2018 on Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions. Application forms and the data to be entered in the e-accreditation platform were presented at this meeting.

Additional questions by HEI representatives for further explanations were also addressed at this meeting, which were responded by the staff of the Accreditation Agency.

6.11 Conclusion of declaration process for 2700 academic staff in Kosovo

The Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) has successfully concluded the declaration process of 2700 academic staff of all higher education institutions in the Republic of Kosovo.

According to the legislation in force, the period for the declaration of academic staff for the new academic year is 1 to 31 October, and this process has been completed successfully.

As a result of the advanced system and increased human resources, the e-accreditation online platform was active and there were no technical issues in its operation.

In order to complete this process successfully, the KAA organized trainings with all HEIs, developed an explanatory document, and responded to several emails and phone calls of those who needed technical support for declaration in the e-accreditation platform.

7. COOPERATION WITH PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

7.1. Support from ENQA and EQAR on the implementation of European standards

A delegation of SCQ and KAA were received in Brussels by the heads of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and other important institutions in the field of education.

The Kosovo delegation received support from ENQA and EQAR for the work done in the field of quality assurance in higher education, the practical implementation of European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and fulfilling ENQA's recommendations.

The Minister of MESTI and the Chair of the Parliamentary Commission of Education attended the first day of the visit in meetings with very important institutions in Brussels.

The visit was supported by the Hera Plus Project, financed by the Austrian International Development Agency, ADA.

On the first day, the Kosovo delegation was received by the EQAR President, Karl Dittrich, EQAR Director, Magalie Soenen, and Deputy Director Melinda Szabó.

The Kosovo delegation was also received by the ENQA Director, Anna Gover, where the work of KAA in implementing the European quality standards was discussed.

Another important meeting was developed with Mr. Patrick Van den Bosch, the Director of the Flemish Higher Education Council (VLUHR).

The KAA delegation also met with Lucien Bollaert, from the University of Gent, Belgium. In separate meetings, the Kosovo delegation was also received by the European University Association (EUA), the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (AEQES) and the Accreditation Organisation for the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO).

7.2 European Commission: KAA has implemented the recommendations for institutional and operational independence

The European Commission Kosovo Report¹³, published in Brussels on 08.11.2023, positively evaluates the work of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) as an institution that has implemented the recommendations for institutional and operational independence as well as for increasing capacities.

“In September 2022, the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) received the status of an affiliate member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The agency is currently in the process of applying for membership in ENQA and the European Quality Assurance Register. Kosovo has adopted the Law on the KAA, which aims to increase the operational independence of the agency and the transparency of management appointments”, says the European Commission Kosovo Report.

7.3 The Accreditation Agency benefits from the United States project – USKEB

The United States-Kosovo Educational Exchange Board (USKEB) has confirmed to the Kosovo Accreditation Agency that the "Design of a thematic analysis for the accreditation of study programmes" through the Fulbright Specialists Programme has been approved for funding.

According to this project, an expert from the United States of America has supported the Accreditation Agency in drafting a thematic analysis for the accreditation process at the level of study programmes.

The thematic analysis is one of the criteria that KAA is required to meet at a substantial level. Article 3.4 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area requires that "Agencies must regularly publish reports that reflect and provide analysis of the findings of their external quality assurance activities.”

Of the 13 recommendations from ENQA's previous assessment, KAA is required to "use the data collected during accreditation processes and other activities to conduct thematic and

¹³ [Kosovo Report 2023 - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-operations/infographic-124226.pdf)

systematic analyses to support the further development of the higher education system in Kosovo.”

With the support of the US Embassy, KAA had previously developed the Methodology for thematic analysis. Based on this document, thematic analyses are continuously developed with the aim of providing systemic research that produces concrete recommendations for raising the quality of higher education.

During 2023, KAA has developed the thematic analysis on the topic: Development of accreditation/re-accreditation processes of study programmes. This includes the evaluation of three-year accreditation processes in the field of study programmes (Bachelor and Master levels) in public and private institutions.

7.4 Kosovo benefits from the Austrian experience in the field of accreditation

The Kosovo Accreditation Agency hosted a delegation from the Austrian Accreditation Agency (AQ Austria), led by dr. Maria Weber, Director for Accreditation and International Cooperation and Barbara Schinwald, Department for Accreditation.

AQ Austria within a joint project financed by the Austrian Agency for International Development ADA, is supporting the KAA to build its capacities and meet the criteria for returning to the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European Register for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (EQAR).

The Austrian delegation was also received at the meeting by the Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI).

These meetings and visits provided opportunities for fruitful discussions and exchange of knowledge regarding accreditation processes and quality assurance in higher education between Austrian and Kosovar institutions.

The twinning of KAA and AQ Austria is financed by Heras Plus, as part of ADC. KAA and its partners appreciate the support and cooperation of AQ Austria in their efforts to improve the quality of higher education in Kosovo.

7.5 KAA part of the staff exchange with the German Accreditation Agency ASIIN

In the spirit of cooperation, the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) has developed a joint activity with the German counterpart agency, the Accreditation Agency for Study Programmes in Engineering, Informatics, Natural Sciences and Mathematics (ASIIN).

This staff exchange was facilitated by the Central and Eastern European Network of Accreditation Agencies (CEENQA) in cooperation with the German Accreditation Agency ASIIN.

In addition to professional development and staff capacity building, this staff exchange will also serve for the drafting of the Strategy for cooperation and support of ASIIN to KAA, with the aim of returning to the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

KAA continuously promotes its staff in order to enhance and improve its policies and services.

7.6 Memorandum of understanding signed between KAA and HEI'25 project

The Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) and the "Higher Education Interventions 2025" project signed a memorandum of understanding to further concretize the cooperation and coordination of the activities supported by the project.

The HEI'25 project aims to support the main processes in higher education that are related to quality improvement. The support for KAA will be focused on the digitization of work processes and further developing institutional capacity for an increased transparency and efficiency of work and higher credibility.

The HEI'25 project is financed by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), with the contribution of the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation and the Kosovo Accreditation Agency.

7.7 The Kosovo Accreditation Agency signed a process digitization contract

The Kosovo Accreditation Agency has signed a contract with the economic operator for the digitization of internal processes, with the support of the HEI25 project.

The project aims to digitize the internal processes and services of KAA, including the application for accreditation, monitoring processes, declaration of academic staff, academic information, generation of confirmations, etc. The software for accreditation, which will be developed on this occasion, will have 6 different types of users: SCQ members, KAA officials, international experts, management and staff of HEIs, and students. This software will enable interaction between different stakeholders, according to their duties and responsibilities, at the same time enabling the improvement of the quality of services, an increased efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability.

After a transparent, professional process based on clear criteria, in which 13 operators applied, the evaluation committee selected the operator ClouDarina, LLC, as the winner for the software development. This project raises the Kosovo Agency for Accreditation to an even higher level as an institution with digitized services and in the interest of the citizen.

The HEI25 project is funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), with contributions from the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation and the Kosovo Accreditation Agency.

7.8 Kosovo and Slovakia cooperate in increasing quality in higher education

A delegation of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) was received in Bratislava by the leaders of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (SAAVS), with whom they discussed cooperation in the field of quality in higher education, academic exchanges and the possibility of joint projects.

The KAA delegation presented the work of the KAA in accreditation processes, the creation of mechanisms for continuous quality improvement, as well as the implementation of all recommendations for the full return of the KAA to the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

Both delegations agreed to continue cooperation in international joint projects related to quality assurance mechanisms.

7.9 The Accreditation Agency and NARIC Centre exchange experiences with the Czech Republic

For exchange purposes in the field of quality in higher education, the team of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency and the NARIC-Kosovo Centre stayed for three days in a study visit to the Czech Republic.

This project was supported by the Higher Education Intervention 2025 Project (HEI 25), funded by the Austrian International Development Agency (ADA).

During a visit to the Czech ENIC-NARIC Centre, discussions were developed on the procedures for recognition and equivalence of diplomas and the promotion of cooperation between Kosovo and the Czech Republic.

As a result of the reliability of the documents issued by the Kosovo institutions, according to the Czech counterparts, all diplomas from Kosovo have been recognized by the Czech authorities so far.

The Kosovo delegation also visited the National Accreditation Bureau (NAB), where they discussed cooperation in increasing the quality of higher education, with a special focus on the process of digitization of services.

The Kosovo delegation also paid a special visit to the Charles University in Prague, one of the oldest universities in Europe, where internal quality assurance mechanisms and the impact of accreditation agencies on quality assurance within universities were discussed.