Republika e Kosovës

Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo

Agjencia e Kosovës për Akreditim

Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju

Kosovo Accreditation Agency

FACULTY OF ISLAMIC STUDIES

INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

Draft
REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

26 November, 2024

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Affiliate of enqa.

INTRODUCTION

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Site visit schedule

Institutional Re-accreditation Procedure at Faculty of Islamic Studies	
On site evaluation:	**21 November 2024**
Expert Team:	Prof. Dr. Melita Kovacevic Prof. Dr. Magdalena Iordache - Platis Ms. Marija Vasilevska, PhD student
Coordinators of the KAA:	Leona Kovac Ilirjane Ademaj Ahmeti

Time	Meeting
09:00 – 09:55	Meeting with the management of the institution *(no slide presentation is allowed, the meeting is intended as a free discussion)*
10:00 – 10:45	Meeting with Quality assurance representatives and Administrative services
10:50 – 11:35	Meeting with Deans of Faculties (Head of programmes in case of smaller colleges)

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11:40 – 12.40	Lunch break
12:40 – 13:30	Visiting tour of the facilities and infrastructure
13:30 – 14:15	Meeting with teaching staff
14:20 – 15:05	Meeting with students
15:10 – 15:55	Meeting with graduates
16:00 – 16:45	Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders
16:50 – 17:00	Internal meeting – Expert Team and KAA
17:00 – 17:10	Closing meeting with the management of the institution

A brief overview of the institution under evaluation

The Faculty of Islamic Studies is an independent educational institution, which was established by Decision No. 433 of the Assembly of the Islamic Community of the Republic of Kosovo, dated 15.08.1992. The Faculty of Islamic Studies is located in Prishtina, Str. "Bajram Kelmendi" no. 84 Pristina-Kosovo and has only one campus.

Within the framework of the Faculty of Islamic Studies, 2 study programs operate, one at the Bachelor's level and one at the Master's level. A total of 26 academic staff and 6 administrative staff works in the Faculty of Islamic Studies. Currently, about 500 regular and non-regular students study at the Faculty of Islamic Studies at two levels of study.

INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

1. PUBLIC MISSION AND INSTITUTIONAL OBJECTIVES (ESG 1.1)

Standard 1.1 The higher education institution has a well-defined mission statement that comprises three main pillars: teaching, research, and community service and it is publicly available.

The higher education institution has a well-defined mission statement which includes all three relevant pillars of teaching, research and community service. According to the self-evaluation report, the mission statement defines the institution as an institution that educates and prepares professional and scientific staff for the needs of the Islamic community and Kosovar society as a whole and beyond. The ET considers that the mission statement is acceptable and that it is reflected in and consistent with other documents and procedures.

Various stakeholders have been involved in defining the mission statement and, importantly, both internal and external stakeholders continuously monitor its implementation and suggest changes if new needs are identified.

Standard 1.2 The institutional mission is clearly reflected in the strategic plan, decision making and long-term institutional objectives.

According to the SER, the mission of the faculty is education, training and preparation of professional and scientific staff for the needs of the Islamic Community and the Kosovar society as a whole, and even more widely, in the spirit of scientific principles and contemporary values from the field of Islamic theology. The mission statement paves a good ground for strategy and concrete activity planning.

The Faculty defined five main objectives: to create conditions for the development of scientific-teaching frameworks; to create the conditions for the drafting of educational scientific literature and their publication for the needs of learning; to develop conditions for quality teaching and learning and for religious sermons in various Islamic institutions in Kosovo and abroad; to provide professional and scientific services to the bodies and institutions of the Islamic Community and other institutions in Kosovo and abroad; and to develop cooperation with sister Islamic faculties and institutions and other international and local scientific-educational associations. These objectives are intertwined and reflected in all the relevant institutional documents as well as in curricula of different programmes, they support the mission.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

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ET recommendations:

      1. *To facilitate the implementation of institutional objectives, further development and differentiation of medium and long-term objectives.*

2. STRATEGIC PLANNING, GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION (ESG 1.1, ESG 1.6)

Standard 2.1 The HEI has developed a comprehensive strategic plan that covers all aspects of its operations for a minimum of five years. This plan includes teaching, learning, research, artistic work, quality assurance, student services, investment in infrastructure, and community service initiatives, leadership, HR, internationalization etc. The plan was created in consultation with both internal and external stakeholders to ensure it meets the needs of all parties involved.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies (t) has developed a [Strategic Plan](#) for the period of 2021-2025, with several objectives and activities; these have the same period of time allocated for implementation (the entire duration of the plan), or they do not have anything mentioned as period for implementation, being somehow difficult to separate objectives and development on short, medium or long terms. The strategic plan includes strategic goals and financial considerations, not too detailed and for every goal; main directions include: Internationalization; Continuous reformation/revision of curricula; Staff support in the development of research and various projects; Teaching and learning.

The Strategic Plan includes teaching, learning, research, artistic work, quality assurance, student services, infrastructure investments and community service initiatives, leadership, human resources, internationalization, etc. The plan has been developed in consultation with internal and external stakeholders to ensure that it meets the needs of all parties involved (SER, page 19).

Moreover, the Strategic Plan includes some key performance indicators, such as achieving the quota of 2-3 scientific papers per year during the next 3 years, but for many other objectives, there are not clear measurable indicators identifies. The Strategic Plan can be directly linked to the information management system and therefore, having measurable objectives through clear indicators, it could get feedback on current activities.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies has an internal system for monitoring the implementation of the Strategic Plan. This system is supervised by the Dean of the faculty where the progress achieved is regularly reported to the highest authority of the faculty to the Scientific Council of the Faculty (SER, page 19).

Standard 2.2 The strategic planning is supported by the annual and long-term budgeting process, allowing for frequent updates and adjustments.

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At the Faculty of Islamic Studies, the progress reporting is carried out regularly through regular meetings held by the Dean of the Faculty with the Scientific Teaching Council. Being financed by the BIK Islamic Community, the management of the faculty is also reporting on the progress to the BIK annually, the budget planning and financing of the faculty being dependent on the BIK Islamic Community (SER, page 30, discussion with the heads of programs during the site visit). The institution has implemented risk assessment, which is an integral component of planning strategies, and has developed effective mechanisms to minimize financial risk. In addition, the Faculty of Islamic Studies within the framework of the regular assessments and especially through the distribution of questionnaires to academic, administrative staff and students, generates a SWOT analysis, where a special attention is put on the risk assessment.

In the meeting with employers during the **site visit**, the representative of the Finance Department at the ICK, confirmed that they can support the long-term development of the Faculty for Islamic Studies, although the current budget is annually approved and agreed that the future changes have to be towards technological development.

Standard 2.3 The HEI has established a responsible, efficient, and effective internal organization structure, procedures and policies, with the involvement of stakeholders in decision-making.

The main governing authorities at the Faculty of Islamic Studies are: the Educational-Scientific Council and the Dean; all governing authorities of the faculty exercise their activity on the principle of majority voting, unless otherwise determined by the Statute, with a mandate of all governing officers and governing authorities of its members starting in October. The strategic documents are publicly available, on the [website](#) but also important. The election procedures are specified in the Faculty Statute, and the election regulation (SER, page 30).

According to the statute of the FSI and the Regulation for the election of the members of the KMSH and the Dean of the FSI, the Dean is appointed and dismissed, with the proposal of the KMSH, by the Presidency of the Islamic Community of the Republic of Kosovo. A teacher with a scientific degree is elected dean. The term of office of the dean is four years, with the right to re-election for one term only. The procedure for the election of the dean begins at least three months before the expiration of the mandate.

The Regulation on the election of the members of the Scientific Teaching Council (STC) and the Dean of Faculty of Islamic Studies (also available on the webpage) states that The STC consists of professors, associates, assistants, representatives of ICRK, the secretary general of the faculty as well as the student representative from full time students (article of the FIS Statute); the mandate of student in the Scientific Teaching Council is of one year with rotation.

Student representatives are also members in other commissions. One of the students participating in the meeting at the site visit was a member of the student union and confirmed the students' engagement in providing feedback and participating in the decisional process.

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Standard 2.4 The HEI has appropriate and sufficient administration that demonstrates effectiveness and supports the HEI in daily operations.

The administration is specialized and equipped to fulfil their duties having clearly defined responsibilities. During the **site visit**, the meeting with the quality assurance representatives and administrative services revealed that all staff are professionals in the field of their institutional position.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies has developed digital platform for interaction, namely, the Integrated Study Management System (SIMS); this system serves for the management of administrative affairs related to the services of students and professors and supports registration of exams, the system for grading students, the diversity of student information (SER, page 35 and the meeting with the quality assurance representatives and administrative services during the site visit).

The Faculty of Islamic Studies provides opportunities and plans to increase the competencies of the administration through different trainings and programs towards digital competences; although there is no concrete plan for training for administrative staff, an example is the awareness training on freedom of information and the right to privacy. At the same time, the administrative staff are subject to performance evaluation, including evaluation from students and academic staff, and the results are considered for further decision-making and planning. The questionnaire template and the report were provided to the ET as additional documents.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Update the Strategic Plan, at least every 2 years and add differentiated periods of time for objectives' implementation – short, medium and long terms;*
2. *Define a monitoring mechanism of the Strategic Plan by setting clear key indicators to monitor the progress in achieving the goals of the Strategic Plan (not only for research area);*
3. *Make the correlation of the Strategic Plan with the information management system more effective and therefore, having measurable objectives through clear indicators, get effective feedback on current activities;*
4. *Create a plan for administrative staff training, including for example IT skills, communication competences and time management.*

3. FINANCIAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT (ESG 1.6)

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Standard 3.1 The HEI demonstrates that it has sufficient financial resources in the short and medium term to reach its mission and objectives set out in the strategic plan and can demonstrate financial sustainability.

The Islamic Community of the Republic of Kosovo is the main donor and ensures regular and sufficient funding for full institutional functioning. According to the SER, the financial resources are sufficient for the implementation of the programmes. The budget is also aligned with the institutional mission and its objectives. The main spending authority is delegated to the Teaching and Scientific Council. The Dean is mandated to implement the budget, while an independent committee monitors expenditure.

The institution is budgeted annually by the IC and there is five-year plan, as well as there is a commitment from the Islamic Community to regularly fund the Faculty according to its institutional needs. The sources and lines of funding are transparent and can be adjusted as necessary. Also, there are transparently presented general budget for the last three years. The Faculty prepares a budget plan for each year, and the Dean is responsible for its implementation after its approval by the Scientific Council.

Standard 3.2 The HEI ensures appropriate funding for educational activities.

Islamic Community has been fully committed for programmes to be established and accordingly financed. The existing budget confirms the sustainability of all the programmes.

Significant financial resources have been invested in various services, digitisation, infrastructure, especially computers. All these efforts and additional expenditure have contributed to the learning and teaching environment.

Standard 3.3. The HEI has officially approved a research budget that is sufficient to support its institutional research objectives, including funds for research equipment and facilities.

There is evidence that additional budget has been allocated to infrastructure to facilitate research, but it is still not enough. The main funder reported during the site visit that there is a willingness on their part to invest more, but they also need to receive more input from the institution itself.

There is a research budget and recently additional funds have been made available to motivate teaching and research staff, as well as students, to become more involved in research activities. Institution is supported by the funder and its different regulatory documents to continuously improve its working environment, both for teaching and research staff and its students. Although there was an increase in budgeting, it is still not sufficient, and it should be further elaborated and increased accordingly.

Standard 3.4 A senior governing body (or Specialized Office) is responsible for overseeing and managing the institution's budgeting and accounting functions. They ensure that financial auditing reports are regularly prepared and published.

The faculty has in place all the procedures and body to assure transparent financing and accounting procedures. The responsible unit is financial office which is connected with the Central Financial Office of the Islamic Community.
It is regularly audited and its finances are also monitored by the
Islamic Community. Dean is directly responsible for the budget implementation and obliged to report regularly. Auditing is performed by the Financial Commission.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1.More long-term planning will facilitate institutional efficiency and more appropriate development;

2.Additional funding for research is needed; institution is still predominantly a teaching institution with modest research development;

3.More applications for different projects could facilitate not only increasing the budget but also supporting networking and more involvement of other stakeholders.

4.ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, RESPONSIBILITY, AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY (ESG 1.1 ESG1.8)

Standard 4.1 The HEI has policies and effective mechanisms for monitoring unethical behaviour and all the employees and students are informed thereof.

The institution ensures academic freedom through established bodies and mechanisms, such as faculty-specific documents like the Statute and the Code of Ethics, as well as organizational structures like the Ethics Council and the Disciplinary Commission.

As per the SER, the Code of Ethics is the main document that ensures academic freedom and establishes mechanisms for monitoring of unethical behavior. It is envisioned to safeguard the ethics and academic integrity and prevent all forms of academic dishonesty. In addition, the Code of Ethics regulates plagiarism, autorship, private interest, confidential data, ethics and disciplinary commissions. The Code of Ethics applies to all academic staff at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, regardless of the type or duration of their employment contract. Its rules of conduct cover both temporary and permanent academic staff. The faculty management and the Ethics Committee, composed of five faculty members, who are responsible for monitoring and

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enforcing the Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics is mandatory for implementation at the faculty and applies to academic staff, administrative staff, and students, as well as all other individuals who are in any way associated with the faculty.

The Code of Ethics included in the annexed documents of the SER is still a draft version, raising concerns about the effectiveness and reliability of the system for monitoring unethical behavior, which relies on this foundational document (conclusion based on the translation of Article 1 from the Code of Ethics). The Code of Ethics has been finalized after the last accreditation process and is available on the Faculty's website in Albanian language (https://shorturl.at/FK5dv) . The final version of the Code of Ethics has been uploaded on the Faculty's website after the first draft of this report that was shared with the Faculty's management.

The SER shares that the scientific works and publications at the Faculty of Islamic Studies are made transparent and publicly accessible in line with the Code of Ethics. Additionally, FSI performs evaluations of teaching and academic staff at the end of each semester through students' questionnaires. Although the SER states that all relevant documents, including the faculty's regulations and decisions, are accessible and transparent on the faculty's website, they are not easily navigable or readily accessible.

The Evaluation Team learned that the faculty is using TURNITIN antiplagiarism software. In addition, the faculty utilizes Sweden's Inspera software, which includes a system for checking academic work before publication and detecting AI usage. Papers, books, diploma theses, and scientific works are subject to plagiarism checks. The SER shares that if a paper, whether a book, diploma thesis, or scientific work, is found to contain 15% or more plagiarized content, it is subject to cancellation.

Standard 4.2. The HEI ensures the availability of information on important aspects of its activities (teaching, scientific/artistic and social activities).

The faculty's website provides information about the academic staff, including brief biographies outlining their professional backgrounds. It also offers details about the study programs, though the information on curricula and syllabi is somewhat limited. Evaluations are accessible and published on the website, and both academic and administrative staff are listed along with their names and positions. Additionally, the website serves as a platform to share information about the faculty's mission, objectives, organizational structure, publications, and a dedicated section for students. In addition, the students shared that they are informed about everything, and they hope that the new digitalized student system will even increase the transparency more.
The students' final thesis are not published by the Faculty in a publicly accessible repository.

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Despite these features, the website would benefit from improvements in its user-friendliness and accessibility to better serve the needs of students, academic staff, and other stakeholders. Streamlining navigation and enhancing functionality could significantly improve the user experience.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. **ET** *The Faculty should undertake measures to promote awareness and understanding of the Code among students and academic staff through regular communication, workshops, and training sessions.*

recommendations:

5. QUALITY MANAGEMENT (ESG 1.1, ESG 1.2, ESG 1.7, ESG 1.9)

Standard 5.1 The HEI has established and implemented a highly structured and efficient quality assurance and improvement system, which is continuously being improved.

According to the Strategic Plan 2021-2025 of the Faculty of Islamic Studies, within the years of implementation of the strategic actions, the process of quality assurance focuses on: internal systems including self-analysis, monitoring and evaluation; external quality assurance system; accreditation processes for both institutional and study program accreditation; however, at the date of the visit, the Regulation on Quality Assurance was a work on progress (not yet approved), as the meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff revealed during the site visit.

There are several internal tools to focus on the performance of its quality assurance system such as surveys addressed to academic and administrative staff and students. To control and improve quality, the Office for Quality Assurance, at the proposal of the Teaching Council of the Faculty, has elaborated three questionnaires for quality assessment: for academic staff, for administrative staff and the questionnaire for students. The evaluation results are used for continuous quality improvement, as data collected refer to the respondents approach to issues, such as: the internal organization of the faculty; the current management structure and its performance; the workload (commitment) of the academic staff at the faculty; the communication between the teaching staff of the faculty and students in all aspects; the communication between academic staff and non-academic staff etc. The evaluation of the performance in the provision of services is also evaluated by the academic staff, the students and the administrative staff themselves. Based on the evaluations, the action plan for improving the quality of the services provided by the administrative personnel is also developed (SER, page 36).

The Faculty of Islamic Studies has established the Quality Assurance Office, which aims to monitor quality processes including academic staff performance evaluation, study program

evaluation, and overall quality evaluation. There is also the External Board, aiming to provide information and support the institution to improve the quality of study programs but also other important aspects such as the advancement of scientific research work, the necessary skills of students, student practice etc.; the board was established in 2022, and 3 external members are part of it (SER, page 74).

The Faculty of Islamic Studies provides sufficient resources to ensure the functioning of the quality assurance system. The level of the financial resources for research-scientific activity is for example, determined by the Faculty's budget and approved by the Scientific Council. The allocation of financial resources foreseen in the budget is made according to the priorities of the annual scientific research program approved by the Dean (SER, page 106). The Faculty of Islamic Studies is managing sufficient resources for its development, aspect confirmed during the **site visit** by the participants by the management of the institution and the participants in the meeting with employers.

To achieve the desired standards of quality assurance and improvement, the Faculty of Islamic Studies has a quality assurance office with two people (1 responsible for internal quality assurance and the other for access and international cooperation) (SER, page 61).

The results of external reviews are used to improve the performance of the faculty of Islamic Studies. All participants in the meetings during the **site visit** confirmed and provided examples for improvement in the latest years, such as: new software, more library resources, adapted curricula. The Faculty of Islamic Studies also provided to ET the latest changes they implemented since the previous institutional accreditation (SER, page 153-158).

Standard 5.2 The HEI has quality policies and procedures that include the collection and analysis of relevant data, with the purpose of ensuring and improving the quality of all institutional activities (academic activity, student services, administration, etc.). These procedures include all stakeholders of the higher education institution (students and external stakeholders - employers, alumni, representatives of professional organizations, civil society organizations and internal stakeholders).

The Faculty of Islamic Studies is regularly collecting data on its processes, resources, and outcomes and uses effectively this information to enhance its activities and ensures that all collected data contribute further development; examples of improvements based on the gathered information and conducted analyses are: the addition of several modules within SIMS, which affected the improvement of administrative services for students and staff; statistical data is used for quality assurance purposes as well as to support decision making. During the site visit, the management of the institution participating in the meeting proved that internationalization (agreement with Turkey and Macedonia) represents important changes, in the PhD level of studies, and digitalization of services, too.

In addition to the data collected by the quality assurance office, the faculty also analyzes indicators on an annual basis such as: the level of applicants for studies, the acceptance rate of students, the pass rate of students, dropping out of studies (SER, page 74). The central database

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retains statistical data readily accessible to departments and units. In addition to the data collected by the quality assurance office, the faculty also analyzes indicators on an annual basis such as: the level of applicants for studies, the acceptance rate of students, the pass rate of students, dropping out of studies, etc.

Standard 5.3 The HEI established a formal process for the design and approval of its study programs.

The study programs at the Faculty of Islamic Studies have undergone a thorough internal quality assurance process and have been formally approved by the institution. Specific regulations include Regulations for studies; Regulations on the procedure for presenting the diploma thesis; Regulations for personal income in the Faculty of Islamic Studies; Regulations for the organization of postgraduate-magisterial studies; Regulations for the election of the members of the KMSH and the Dean of the FSI; Regulations for the Students' Union - the tutorial system at FSI; Regulations for selection procedures related to appointment, re-appointment and advancement; Regulations for scientific research activities; Regulations for the Code of Ethics in FSI; Regulations for the systematization of workplaces; Regulations for publications in FSI; Regulations for Master's studies; Regulations for the prevention of conflict of interest; Regulations for academic mobility of FSI students and academic staff; Regulations for the procedures for initiating, drafting and signing cooperation agreements (SER, page 24). Plans for their continuous improvement are in place. The meeting with the students at the **site visit** revealed that changes they wanted have been implemented, such as more teaching in Arabic language, less memorization of texts and more explanation of it.

The faculty has a Regulation on Studies available online having the scope of: to determine the form of teaching, scientific and educational work; to determine the student's assessment methods; to determine the conditions to be met by students in order to undergo examinations; to determine the re-examination issues; to determine the conditions to enroll the academic year; to determine other rules which are related to students. This regulation was adopted in 2014 and should be reviewed**.**

The procedures and policies for the development and approval of the study programs are well defined and include internal and external stakeholders. The meeting with the employers during the site visit proved that they are directly involved in the development of the study programs and they confirmed that during the last year graduates have become more prepared for the labor market, more professionalized in their field.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies has defined key indicators for monitoring the quality of the delivery of the study programs and the methods of collecting the necessary information. Some metrics are considered in the Strategic Plan for the period of 2021-2025, but not for all indicators are clear targets/metrics specified. These metrics are evaluated at least once a year by senior administrators in charge of academic affairs, the quality body of the institution and the senior academic body. The overall performance of the institution is then formally reported to the governing structure. A good example is on the student performance for which there are

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considered indicators such as: the percentage of passing exams, the duration of studies, the mobility of students in universities of foreign countries, etc (**SER, pages 64, 84**).

Standard 5.4 The HEI periodically monitors and reviews the study programs to ensure that the programs are in line with mission and the institutional strategy. The monitoring of the study programs involves active stakeholder participation.

At the Faculty of Islamic Studies, the data of the academic staff and students are stored in the SIMS system, through which the monitoring of student registration in semesters, the presentation of exams, graduation of students and other relevant data of students is also carried out. At the **date of visit**, the faculty was in the process of upgrading the system, where also, this system will serve for the evaluation of the academic staff by the students. For these aspects, the amount allocated was 19,500.00 for 2023, and €12,000.00 budget, for 2024, where it is expected that the quality assessment module will be activated by the end of the year.

The periodical monitoring procedure verifies whether ECTS allocation, learning outcomes and workload estimates are feasible, practical, and suitable. The faculty evaluates the programs on a semester basis through the evaluation of special subjects. The performance indicators are set in the questionnaire, which reflect all the aspects related to the quality of the study programs: the main performance indicators that are evaluated on a semester basis are: the study program is current with developments in this discipline of study; the study program is comparable to similar programs in other Institutions; the value of ECTS per subject is calculated according to the student's workload; practical work outside the institution is regularly applied; employment opportunities after completing studies are known to students etc.

Different stakeholders (students, staff) are involved in the monitoring processes of the study programs which also include questionnaires and the results of questionnaires on student workload, achievement of learning outcomes, academic success, resources, employment of graduates, etc. The performance within the quality assurance processes is monitored, measured and analyzed and the frequency of monitoring activities is also determined (SER, page 63). At the meeting with graduates and employers during the site visit, although they do not participate in formal surveys, they communicate very well with the management of the institution and have several opportunities to provide feedback and ideas for improvement, such as – more digitalization, new agreements on PhD studies.

At the Faculty of Islamic Studies, feedback is collected once during the semester and the results are analyzed and compared with the expected quality indicators. Employer's feedback is collected and analyzed one year after graduation, while interviews with employers are conducted 3-6 months after graduation. Feedback from graduates is collected and analyzed three years after graduation. The percentage of graduates who will work in their field is calculated and analyzed once a year after graduation (SER, page 80).

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:
   1. *Finalise and adopt the Regulation on Quality Assurance within 1 year;*

2. *Set more clear metrics for the key performance indicators to measure and monitor the performance at an institutional level;*
3. *Review the program related regulation, such as [Regulation on studies](), as it was adopted in 2014; consider in the new regulation the correlation between the learning outcomes, teaching methodology and assessment;*
4. *Make sure that the results of the monitoring processes and the resulting action plans are communicated to all stakeholders and also published on the HEI website.*

6. LEARNING AND TEACHING (ESG 1.2, ESG 1.3)

Standard 6.1 The HEI has established policies and procedures that apply to all study programs. The institution actively monitors the implementation of these policies and procedures to ensure their effective realization.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies evaluates the programs on a semester basis through the evaluation of special subjects. The performance indicators are declared to be set in the questionnaires which reflect all the aspects related to the quality of the study programs; as example of key indicators are considered several aspects for which the respondents express their opinion (such as: whether the study program is currently with developments in the discipline of study; if the study program is comparable to similar programs in other institutions; whether the number of ECTS per subject is calculated according to the student's workload etc). ET considers that these directions of action are important, but since they are not measurable, they cannot be considered as key performance indicators (SER, page 84).

Internal structures and procedures are designed to develop effective and innovative pedagogical technologies to ensure success. Moreover, the Faculty of Islamic Studies follows the latest technological and innovative trends to provide adequate pedagogical methodology for students. Also, the faculty staff is encouraged through financial support to participate in international conferences so that the latest trends are conveyed and implemented in FSI (SER, page 85). They confirmed during the **site visit** the financial support for travel and research from the institution.

Standard 6.2 The study programs' intended learning outcomes are formulated clearly, precisely, and comprehensively according to the best practices; they are aligned with the published mission and strategic goals of the higher education institution, and they are publicly available. *Mandatory

The Faculty of Islamic Studies implements regular review procedures of study programs where special emphasis is placed on the compilation of learning outcomes, objectives and mission, in particular. The institution ensures that all learning outcomes are consistent with the objectives and mission of the program, ensuring that all of these are consistent with FSI's mission. (SER, page 86). At the meeting with the heads of programs, during the **site visit**, it was explained the

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heads preoccupation to adequately define the learning outcomes and it was given the example considered for the first year of undergraduate studies (to comprehend and understand the fundamentals for beliefs), while in the 4th year the program focuses on the coexistence with other religion.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies, during the process of compiling the learning outcomes, takes care that the intended outcomes are in line with the competencies to be acquired by the students after completing their studies. The learning outcomes focus on what the student is expected to know and understand in the service of methodological and transferable skills and abilities and other professional competencies. In addition, the faculty pays a lot of attention to the importance of differentiating the learning outcomes from one level of study to another (from Bachelor to Master). Students in Bachelor level programs, upon successful completion of their studies, will be capable of early professional careers as well as capable of continuing advanced studies or master's level studies that will also be oriented by research skills (SER, page 86). During the site visit, all graduates confirmed that they found a job easily in the Islamic community and ICK.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies when developing learning outcomes, applies the guide called "Writing and Using Learning Outcomes: A Practical Guide" authored by Declan Kennedy Professor at University College Cork, Ireland.

In addition, the Faculty of Islamic Studies ensures that the learning outcomes are a function of the four basic competencies that a student must possess after completing studies, therefore the learning outcomes in Faculty of Islamic Studies programs are developed targeting 4 competencies such as: achievement of students' professional competencies, achievement of methodological competences; social/social competence, and 4. personal competence (SER, page 87).

Standard 6.3 The HEI demonstrates that each study program is designed considering the correlations between learning outcomes, teaching methodology and assessment. *Mandatory

Study programs provided by the Faculty of Islamic Studies has clearly specified objectives, learning outcomes, student workload reflected in ECTS - credits, lecture forms, exercises, independent studies, evaluation system, etc. Programs offered at the Faculty of Islamic studies are established and implemented according to the Bologna system, in the field of studies, being of a duration of 4 + 1, which means that the Bachelor's level of studies is 4 years and includes a total of 240 ECTS credits, where for each semester the student must accumulate 30 ECTS and 60 ECTS per year , while 1-year Master consists of 60 ECTS (SER, page 88). ET considers that all programs and ECTS allocation should be checked every academic year, before the beginning of the semester by the Quality Officer.

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All important issues related to the implementation of the study programs are discussed within the responsible staff of the program as well as in the scientific teaching council, where the management of the institution ensures that all processes of monitoring the implementation of the programs are being implemented and that the program of the study *is being implemented* according to the formal program that has been approved by the Faculty of Islamic Studies bodies (SER, page 88). Moreover, through the ECTS system, the students' mobility is encouraged; the institution has in place adopted in 2023 the [Regulation on Academic Mobility of Students and Academic Staff](#) which sets and define the conditions and procedures of academic mobility of students and academic staff from accredited and licensed universities or higher education institutions, domestic and international, to the Faculty of Islamic Studies and vice versa.

The structure of the study programs is flexible and allows each student to choose their learning direction corresponding to their interests and skills. Every semester the curricula consist of at least one course to be chosen by students, as their study route or alternative. In addition, the study programs' contents are regularly updated with the latest scientific research findings, which includes the research conducted by the teachers themselves; teachers participating in the meeting during the **site visit** confirmed this aspect and provided the integration into teaching of biographic research of 2 centuries.

Standard 6.4 The HEI ensures that ECTS allocation is appropriate.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies pays special attention to the connection between theoretical and practical work and considers this approach as a condition for the education and professional training of staff. The connection between theoretical and practical learning is made depending on the teaching subjects under the care of the institution and the organization of the teacher.

ECTS are calculated according to the methodology of the Student Load Form with ECTS credits. Assessment points are assigned to course components, based on the amount of study time a student needs to achieve the objectives of a given course. The subjects are described in accordance with the syllabus.

The calculation of ECTS is based on the principle of 1 ECTS is equal to 25-30 hours of the student's overall study time; The calculation of ECTS-credits is based on the following rules: the distribution of ECTS is based on the time invested by the student; the time that students invest includes all activities that are part of studies; "Contact hours" represent only a part of the entire time allocated to study the specific subject (SER, page 89).

Standard 6.5 The study program's intended learning outcomes comply with the National Qualification Framework and the European Qualifications Framework level descriptors.

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The Faculty of Islamic Studies proves that their study programs' intended learning outcomes comply with the National Qualification Framework and the European Qualifications Framework level descriptors (study programs, syllabus and curriculum are on the institutional [webpages](#) and follow clear structure and content; the qualification of level 6 for the bachelor and the qualification of level 7 for the master program demonstrate different sets of knowledge, skills and competences (SER, pages 90-93).

According to this differentiation, the bachelor approach is that students should have advanced knowledge in and about the field of work or study, including a critical understanding of theories and principles, while in the master approach, the program provides highly specialized, broad and detailed knowledge, some of which is fundamental in one area of work or study and which is cross-functional, as a basis for original thinking and research; programs are designed and delivered in accordance with the first cycle of the Bologna process and of relevant Dublin descriptors leading to the Master's degree. Qualifications at this level, in the FSI, are worth credit lasting one full year of study (**SER, pages 90-93**). At the same time, the ET had access to the set of skills and competences for both level of studies.

Standard 6.6 If the HEI study programs lead to degrees in regulated professions, they are aligned with the national and EU Directives and recommendations issued by the national and international professional associations.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies manages study programs which are compatible with prescribed conditions defined in EU Directives and proves that it has considered and applied the recommendations issued by professional associations since the relationship with the ICK as the initiator and financial support of the institution is a direct and efficient one.

The institution has a preoccupation to develop internationally and the benchmark with other institution is evidence of the effort to improve through the best practice sharing process. The participants in the meeting with the graduates and employers during the **site visit** revealed the satisfaction of all graduates in finding easy a job and the entire support of the employer – ICK.

Standard 6.7 The higher education institution ensures student-centred teaching and learning.

At the Faculty of Islamic Studies promotes a pedagogical system and teaching methods in line with international standards and best practices; teachers are encouraged to use innovative pedagogical methods; teachers describe in the syllabus their teaching methods, the content of the discipline, the assessment methods and the number of ECTS allocated for every type of activity.

According to the defined learning outcomes, for the relevant level of study, specific methods are used to enable students to achieve the learning outcomes, always aiming to increase critical thinking and research skills. At the Bachelor's level of studies, the achievement of basic knowledge, skills and competences related to the ability to understand the basic aspects, concepts and terminology of the relevant field and subject and their practical application is more prominent, while the Master's level of studies is more oriented towards the development of critical, innovative and research thinking. (SER, page 95). The HEI continually evaluates and adapts teaching methods and different modes of the study programs delivery. Both participants in the meetings with teachers and students during the site visit mentioned the case of improvement in the assessment of students, the requirement of learning by heart being replaced by more understanding and interpretation.

Standard 6.8 The HEI ensures that evaluation and assessment are objective and consistent and ensures that intended learning outcomes are achieved. (ESG 1.3.)

The HEI ensures that the criteria and method of assessment, as well as criteria for grades are published in advance and all students are informed about it. Students participating in the meeting at the site visit confirmed this.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies provides support to the academic staff in the development of skills related to testing and assessment methods. As an additional document, the Plan for Professional Development was provided to the ET; it includes scientific research where students are also encouraged to apply; supporting staff to publish their papers in various national journals, including the journal/Bulletini published by the Faculty of Islamic Studies, the journal Dituria Islame, the journal Edukata Islame, which are publications of the Islamic Community of Kosovo, but also other publications in international journals: SCOPUS and Web of Science listed journals (SER, page 9).

In addition, some online tools facilitate the process of teaching and learning, to the online platform used in FSI for SIMS learning management, FSI also uses the Google Classroom platform, which facilitates the process of studying for students (SER, page 96).

Students receive feedback on the evaluation results from their professors in a general manner. The communication of the exam result takes place no later than seven (7) days after the exam. The form of communication of exam results, rejection of the grade and deadline for rejection as well as other procedures are provided in the regulations of the Faculty of Studies. In addition, students are notified of assessment results that identify their strengths and weaknesses, and if necessary, instructions for the learning process based on these assessments (SER, page 98).

Standard 6.9 The HEI ensures that a functional procedure and mechanism for student appeals is in place. (ESG 1.3.)

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Students are informed about a clearly defined appeals procedure in a timely manner, which is consistently implemented (SER, page 99). The students who participated in the meeting at the site visit confirmed that they are aware of the mechanism for student appeals.

The appeal procedure is available in the documents published on the website and during studies, students are encouraged by the management of the faculty to submit all possible injustices to the dean's office, where they are then examined by the ad hoc complaints committee to deal with the issues of student complaints (SER, page 122).

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Make sure you define measurable key performance indicators to measure the improvement in all directions/areas of development; include them in the Strategic Plan;*
2. *Check at the level of the Quality Office the allocation of ECTS, before the beginning of the academic year (the last semester at the Bachelor level consists of 33 ECTS instead of 30 ECTS).*

7. RESEARCH

Standard 7.1 The HEI has developed a research strategy which is integrated within the institutional strategy and aligns with its institutional mission. This strategy is reflected in a detailed action plan, which includes clearly specified performance indicators and is made publicly available.

The research strategy is part of the institutional strategy, which also integrates the research perspective. The research strategy is in line with the institutional vision and mission. It consists of six different pillars, among which internationalisation and advancement in research are particularly relevant. Special emphasis has been placed on human capacity building.

Teaching and research staff potentially have sufficient capacity to carry out research. many of them have been educated and trained in international institutions. there are still a number of collaborations that could help to maintain and carry out research work. . To support and facilitate research activities, the Faculty has established the Institute for Islamic Research and Studies.

The infrastructure has recently been modernised, digitalisation is much more present and, since most research activities are in the field of humanities and social sciences, the working environment is relatively adequate.

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There has also been a recent increase in efforts to publish and report on the research achievements of individual staff members and to support their individual activities and endeavors.

Standard 7.2 The HEI ensures that academic staff are committed to the achievement of high-quality research work and/or professional activity.

Teaching and research staff are involved in a variety of roles, and as well as their teaching and research activities, they are also involved in a variety of social roles, serving their communities. A wide range of their activities are recognised and supported by the institution.

The promotion of academic staff is based on their overall performance, including research and scholarly output and productivity. It has been reported that academic output has increased in recent years and that academic staff are more likely to publish in recognised international journals and other types of publications.

Although there is an increase in research output and a more articulated commitment to be engaged in research, it is still relatively low and insufficient. Teaching staff needs to be more engaged, to be more active in applying for research projects and to try to publish in more recognised international journals. However, one should not underestimate the importance of all the translation work and other types of scholarly work and results that are very relevant and meaningful to Islamic culture and heritage.

Standard 7.3 The HEI ensures that the academic staff has a proven track record of research results on the same topics as their teaching activity.

Academic staff have their specific areas of expertise and there is clear evidence that they try to link their research and teaching. This was also supported during the interviews by the students and their positive experiences of working and collaborating with their teachers. Recently, the institution has also introduced new incentives to support research activities and staff engagement in different international forms of presenting research, such as study visits, conferences, seminars, etc.

The Faculty is starting to publish a journal called Bulleting, which has also opened up new opportunities for staff and students, although the institution needs to be careful about the role of the publication and its capacity for dissemination. If the journal remains within the walls, as is often the case with in-house publications, it is an expensive but ineffective way of sharing research.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1.Research must become more institutionally relevant;
2. More diversified research activities need to be planned and implemented;
3.More professional and qualified support should be provided to all academic staff to enable them to be more successful in different research activities;
4.The research culture in general needs to be promoted;
5.Adequate and additional training needs to be organised for both academic and administrative staff in order to be more successful in applying for different research schemes and programmes.

8. STAF, EMPLOYMENT PROCESSES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (ESG 15.)

Standard 8.1 Teacher recruitment is in line with national legislation, internal regulations in effect and it is based on objective and transparent procedure.

The selection of academic staff is based on the needs and development policies of the faculty and is carried out through a public competition. The request for the selection of personnel is submitted to the Teaching Council of the Faculty by the Dean and then they are published in a public competition. After the publication of the contest, potential competitors are selected according to the criteria set forth in the Faculty statute and in the regulation on the criteria for selection and re-selection of personnel at FSI and are evaluated by a special commission **(SER, page 109).**

The criteria and procedures for the selection of the staff are specified in the Faulty of Islamic Studies Statute and the Regulation for the selection procedures related to the appointment, reappointment and advancement of the academic staff in the institution, which are published on the website. Candidates for employment are provided with full descriptions of the position and terms of employment based on the faculty's statute and employment regulations (SER, page 109).

The Faculty of Islamic Studies has adequate methods for selecting the best candidates for each position (teacher recruitment procedures are derived from the development goals of the HEI and they are in accordance with the legislation and internal regulations in force (SER, page 113).

 The institution ensures that both teaching and administrative staff have access to a full set of policies and regulations, which are described in an employee handbook. This includes essential information about their rights and obligations, the code of ethics and conduct, recruitment and promotion procedures, supervision, participation in projects, performance evaluation, support procedures, as well as professional development and digital skills (SER, page 113).

Standard 8.2 The higher education institution has enough permanent academic staff adequately qualified for the delivery of the study programs.

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The Faculty of Islamic Studies ensures that there are enough qualified academic staff to carry out the study programs and conduct scientific and professional activities at the required level (for example, CV, data on the percentage of courses delivered by full-time academics for the study programs, number of teachers with the doctoral degree). The discussions with the teachers and heads of programs during the site visit revealed that the academic staff is well trained, specialists in their field of studies. In addition, the ET checked the CVs on the institutional webpage of the staff and admitted the high level of staff qualification.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies is a small institution with clear evidence that the academic staff is not engaged, within one academic year, in more than two teaching positions (one full-time, one part-time), regardless of the educational institution where it develops its activity. The CVs and the study program description show that they follow this requirement. Moreover, the teaching staff can be engaged in a maximum of three subjects per semester (winter/summer).

The Faculty of Islamic Studies provides information that for each group of students (defined by the HEI statute) and for each 60 ECTS in the study program, the institution employs at least one full-time staff member with a doctorate title or an equivalent title in the case of the institution of applied arts/sciences.

Based on the specifics of the study programs, the ratio of students to academic staff cannot be more than 1:30 (eg the student-teacher ratio and its changes over time; future plans for the student-teacher ratio). At the date of the visit, the staff/student ratio was 22/1 for the bachelor program and 6/1 for the master program (SER, pages 120-121).

The institution provides information that the workload of academics complies with relevant legislation and regulations issued by competent bodies, etc. (SER, page 114).

Standard 8.3 The promotion and re-appointment of teaching staff is based on objective and transparent procedures and policies which are publicly available, which include the evaluation of excellence, and they arise from the higher education institution's mission and strategic plan.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies provided to the ET as additional document a plan for professional training; however, this is more a descriptive document and not a concrete plan, with objectives, resources and deadlines.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies proves that the promotion of academic personnel to higher levels is based on excellence and important achievements (criteria or national legislation, teaching activity, international activity in the scientific discipline, high-impact publications, projects, supervision of diploma thesis, texts school records, evaluations by students, etc.). The HEI ensures that the promotion process for academic staff is carried out promptly once they have met the necessary promotion requirements (SER, page 115). The Regulation on Selection Procedures Related to Appointment, Reappointment and Advancement of Academic Personel in the Faculty of Islamic Studies adopted in 2024; its scope is to establish and define the selection procedures and processes for the appointment, reappointment, and advancement of

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academic staff for the following academic titles: full professor, associate professor, assistant professor, assistant, and lecturer.

The institution has implemented a staff performance evaluation system that includes feedback from students; there is no clear evidence of how supervisors, peers, and self-assessment are part of the staff evaluation system. The results of this evaluation are taken into account when promoting and reappointing teaching staff, as well as renewing their contracts (**SER, page 115**).

Standard 8.4 The higher education institution ensures and supports academic staff in their professional development.

The academic staff is clearly supported for professional development. Academic staff should be more involved in professional development programs (for example, language training, digital skills trainings, etc.).

The Faculty of Islamic Studies has in place the [Regulation on Academic Mobility of Students and Academic Staff](#) which proves that support of the institution towards the staff mobility. According to its Article 17, academic staff wishing to participate in academic mobility (staff teaching assignment-STA) and administrative staff seeking a training opportunity abroad should follow specific steps, such as: regularly monitor calls and information published by the Office for Foreign Relations or other sources regarding relevant mobility opportunities; apply to the specific calls for teaching or training opportunities published by the partner universities; submit the application to the Dean's Office and send an electronic copy to the OFR (Office for Foreign Relations). The regulation also stipulates the criteria to follow the applicants for international mobility.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies ensures that newly employed teachers undergo adequate training to strengthen teaching competencies before their teaching activity. They have to become familiar with the Strategic Plan of the institution, research requirements, Regulation on the Code of Ethics, Regulation on the Prevention of Conflict of Interest and others, all available [here](#).

Standard 8.5 The HEI ensures that its external associates have adequate qualifications and work experience to deliver study programs in line with the program's objectives and intended learning outcomes.

The external associates include the latest research, trends and know-how from the labour market in the teaching process. All academic staff (14 regular academic staff) has a biography [posted](#) on the faculty's website and other relevant data (SER, pages 57, 101-103).

In addition to financial support for the advancement of scientific research work of the faculties and students of the FIS (Faculty of Islamic Studies), the aim is to provide support and logistics for teaching staff and students of the institution. This includes the time of advising on the opportunities offered to find at various conferences in the country and abroad. In addition to quantitative indicators, FSI will also focus on the indicators that will support those works that

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have a tendency of publishing in the journals with impact factor listed in the SCOPUS and Web of Science platforms.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Create a long-term operational plan for developing academic staff (for 3 years);*
2. *Elaborate an annual calendar of trainings/workshops for the administrative and academic staff;*
3. *Create a methodology of staff evaluation considering all the components – students, supervisors, peers, and self-assessment within 1 year;*
4. *Involved administrative and academic staff in professional development programs (for example, language training, digital skills trainings, etc.).*

9. STUDENT ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES (ESG 1.4, ESG 1.6)

Standard 9.1 An admission policy is clearly defined and is made publicly available.

The Statute of the Faculty of Islamic Studies in its articles 33-39 specifies the admission criteria for the students from Kosovo and for the ones from abroad. In specific, the Statute regulates that the student status is granted upon enrolment in the first year of studies, following a public call open to graduates of Islamic secondary schools, general high schools, and international applicants with equivalent qualifications. The public call outlines the number of admissions, criteria such as academic performance and entrance exams, evaluation methods, rights protection procedures, and registration deadlines. SER specifies that the number of students that will be enrolled is decided based on the labor market needs. These elements are determined by the Academic-Scientific Council and published in relevant media.

The Statute also regulates that the enrolment is managed by the Faculty's Student Services Office, with additional conditions and deadlines specified in the public call. If quotas remain unfilled, the call is repeated. Candidates may contest the ranking list through appeals to the Dean, the Academic-Scientific Council, and, ultimately, the Islamic Community's Presidency.

In addition, from recently the admission process has been digitalized since the Faculty started using Student Information Management System (SIMS) System.

Students from Islamic theological faculties abroad may transfer without entrance exams if their academic credentials align with the Faculty's curriculum; otherwise, supplementary exams are required. Eligible candidates may enrol as regular or correspondence students, with status changes allowed at the start of the academic year upon approval by the Academic-Scientific Council. The evaluation team during the visit to the Faculty learned that most students enrolling in the MA program have completed their bachelor's studies abroad and must ratify their BA degrees in Kosovo to apply and receive an MA diploma. In such cases applicants must provide proof of initiating the diploma nostrification process with the Ministry and submit the Ministry's approval within six months after their enrolment.

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Most of the information needed for the future students are available online. After careful review of the available data on the Faculty's website it can be concluded that for the study programs curriculums, syllabuses and graduate students followed by attached documents and forms for the students are available online in Albanian and English language.

Having in mind the requirement that students who are enrolling should have Islamic secondary schools, general high schools, and international applicants with equivalent qualifications it can be expected that students who are beginning their education are adequately prepared and capable of following the courses at the Faculty of Islamic studies. In addition to this, the students and graduates confirmed the openness and supportive approach by the academic staff who are always supportive towards the students in cases needed.

The SER confirms that the criteria for student admission, procedures apply consistently and fairly to all students and prevent discrimination and favor underrepresented groups in a transparent manner. In addition, it also proves the whole admission process including selection of applicants and opportunity for appealing in case someone is not admitted.

As explained in the SER, an orientation day is organized for students, during which professors introduce the available services, physical spaces, and study resources, as well as the career development opportunities offered by the faculty. They also explain the procedures, students' rights and obligations, and the institution's responsibilities, providing a comprehensive overview of the faculty's goals, mission, and vision.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies regulated the recognition of periods of study from different exchange programs in details in their Regulations for student mobility document (shared with the Evaluation Team as annex to the SER). Under this regulation, the Faculty is obligated to support students with necessary information and documents for academic mobility, review applications and respond within specified timeframes, recognize and transfer ECTS credits for mobility programs, and issue transcripts and confirmations for credit transfers to students' respective programs. This regulation also specifies the Procedure for Academic Mobility for Foreign Students, Rights and Obligations of Foreign Students, Academic Mobility Procedure for FSI Students and others. The Regulations should be available on the Faculty' s website in Albanian and English language.

Standard 9.2 The HEI collects and analyses information on student progression and takes appropriate actions to ensure students completion of the study program.

The SER presents that the Faculty of Islamic Studies has a system for monitoring the students' progress and the need for giving assistance and/or counselling to the ones needed.. The Faculty also monitors student progress and performance indicators by analysing passing rates for each semester and distributing questionnaires to gather students' feedback on courses and teacher performance. These mechanisms ensure a comprehensive evaluation of academic progress and educational quality.

The Evaluation Team also acknowledge the introduction of the digital platform, the Integrated Study Management System (SIMS) through which the monitoring of the students progress will be easier

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The students are informed about the availability of teaching staff, in specific about their consultation hours. Each professor has designated consultation hours for students, which are posted on their office doors.

Standard 9.3 The HEI ensures appropriate conditions and support to outgoing and incoming students (national and international students).

The Office for International Cooperation is responsible for managing international exchange mobility programs at FSI. While the Faculty has established partnerships with various institutions to enhance academic collaboration, including agreements with universities in Turkey, North Macedonia, Malaysia, and through ERASMUS+, there is no information on the Faculty's website about the person responsible for the Office for International Cooperation. Publishing this information would enhance transparency and accessibility. Despite the Faculty prioritizing internationalization over the next five years, as noted in the SER, none of the students or graduates interviewed by the Evaluation Team had participated in exchange programs, although efforts are being made to address this.

The Faculty has facilitated projects bringing professors from the USA and Europe to teach, enriching the learning experience. Regulations for student mobility, including ECTS recognition, are in place, requiring the Dean to certify the recognition of selected subjects upon a student's return. A learning agreement, defining rights and obligations, is signed by both the student and the Dean. Information on mobility regulations, application procedures, and study program admissions is available in Albanian and English on the Faculty's website. However, the number of students participating in mobility remains low, with only one recorded visit to universities in Turkey and North Macedonia in the last three years.

Although the Faculty uses questionnaires to collect student feedback on various aspects of their studies, the Evaluation Team found that these do not cover feedback on exchange programs. The Faculty has included some foreign students in its programs, primarily from the Western Balkan region, but specific data is not reflected in the SER. Furthermore, all courses at the Faculty are conducted in Albanian, which may limit international participation.

Standard 9.4 The higher education institution ensures adequate resources for student support. The needs of a diverse student population (part-time students, mature students, students from abroad, students from under-represented and vulnerable groups, students with learning difficulties and disabilities, etc.) are taken into account.

The Evaluation Team met few of the administrative staff who shared that they are receiving in house staff trainings in different fields. They shared their dedication in supporting the students and the academic staff in the teaching and learning processes. The SER shares that the management has clear plans for the professional development of the staff and their obligations are regulated in the Status of FSI and the Regulation for the systematization of FSI Workplaces. The contact details of all administrative staff are published on the faculty's website.

The SER indicates that all relevant information about services, informational packages for new students, study regulations, and internal organization is available on the faculty's website. While the

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faculty does not provide a student handbook, it offers the following regulations for students: Regulation on Studies at FSI, Regulation on the Procedure for Submitting Diploma Work, Regulation on Student Academic Mobility, Code of Ethics, and Guidelines on Student Practice. Students mentioned that they currently receive all necessary information through the SIMS system.

FSI provides special stations and an elevator to accommodate students with mobility challenges, ensuring accessibility for all.

The Evaluation Team through the SER and the evaluation visit learned that FSI has a Regulation for the tutorial system to organize and enhance tutoring activities at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, fostering direct interaction between students and professors, integrating students into the faculty environment, and promoting higher academic achievements. The tutoring role can be performed by professors or students, with student tutors required to be in their third academic year, maintain an average grade of at least 9.0 (or lower if no higher-grade candidates are available), and guide students on legal, academic, and procedural matters while assisting them in overcoming educational challenges. Despite the previous accreditation recommendation to establish a career support office or officer, the evaluation team found that administrative and academic staff, with support from the Islamic Council, actively assist students and graduates in securing future employment. Students expressed high satisfaction with this support.

The complaints procedure primarily relates to students' right to contest exam scores. These procedures are governed by the Statute and the Regulations for Bachelor and Master study programs, which outline the decision-making process but do not specify an appeals process. Students also indicated that they are unaware of any opportunity to appeal. The only appeal option currently available is for cases where a student is not accepted into the Faculty.

The Faculty consistently supports students through scholarships, focusing on those who demonstrate exceptional academic performance and those facing challenging economic or social circumstances. Over the past three years, FSI has awarded scholarships to 60 students, providing approximately 20 scholarships annually, as shared in the SER. Each scholarship amounts to 400 euros per year, helping recipients cover study expenses and encouraging them to pursue higher levels of education. To ensure equal access, scholarship opportunities should be clearly advertised and easily accessible on the Faculty's website in both Albanian and English.

A cafeteria is needed to enhance student convenience and foster a more supportive campus environment.

There is no information in the SER about the existence of senior staff member assigned to oversee and develop student support services.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

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1. *It is recommended that the Faculty publish contact information for the person responsible for the Office for International Cooperation on its website. This would enhance transparency and accessibility for students and stakeholders seeking support with international collaboration and mobility programs.*
2. *The Faculty should establish a clear and comprehensive appeals process for all student complaints, including those related to exam scores, and ensure that it is explicitly outlined in the Statute and program regulations. Additionally, the Faculty should conduct awareness campaigns to inform students about their rights to appeal and the procedures for doing so, thereby promoting transparency and accountability.*
3. *The scholarship opportunities should be clearly advertised and easily accessible on the Faculty's website in both Albanian and English.*
4. *The Faculty should establish a cafeteria on campus to provide students with convenient access to food and beverages, creating a more supportive and accommodating campus environment.*
5. *The Faculty should designate a senior staff member to oversee and develop student support services and include information about this role in future SERs. The name and contact of this staff member should be published on the Faculty's website.*

10. LEARNING RESOURCES AND FACILITIES (ESG 1.6) *Mandatory

Standard 10.1 The HEI ensures adequate premises and equipment for performing education processes and research.
*Mandatory

The Evaluation Team visited the premises of the Faculty of Islamic Studies including classrooms, amphitheater, library, teaching and study rooms and others. The premises are equipped with digital equipment for teaching and learning and are well maintained. The students, graduates and academic staff shared their satisfaction of the faculty's infrastructure. The graduates also highlighted that the facilities are now improved in comparison in the last four years. The faculty building is newly constructed, providing excellent conditions for work and study. Located in the center of Prishtina, the campus offers convenient and quick access to other public institutions. Having this in mind it can be concluded that the faculty has adequate premises and dedicated equipment for performing educational activities and research.

The faculty offers the following facilities: an amphitheater, a gym or TV room, four offices for academic staff, management offices, administrative staff offices, a research institute, a computer room, teaching rooms, a prayer space, and a library. The one thing that was highlighted from the students related with the infrastructure was the need for cafeteria for the students.

Students are regularly evaluating the infrastructure and access to various study resources at a satisfactory level during the collection of evaluation results.

The SER shares that the Faculty maintains an equipment inventory system, which is updated annually to document existing equipment as well as new acquisitions, whether purchased by the Faculty or donated by external donors.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies provides suitable infrastructure for access to study areas, including special stations for individuals with limited mobility (such as wheelchair users) and an elevator for access to the upper floors. Additionally, institutions supporting students with disabilities or vision impairments offer financial assistance through various centres, with transportation organized by designated individuals.

There is no information available for the assigned senior staff member who is responsible for overseeing and development of infrastructure and resources.

Standard 10.2 The HEI ensures adequate library resources for their study programs.
*Mandatory

From the SER and the Evaluation Team's visit it can be concluded that the library of the Faculty is equipped with academic and scientific literature in both Albanian and foreign languages. The newly constructed Faculty building provides excellent conditions for work and study.

The library offers dedicated spaces for students to engage in study and reading, and it is well-equipped with computers to support their academic needs. This observation has been confirmed by the students as well.

The library houses a distinctive collection of books contributed by the local community, offering students a unique opportunity to learn from these rare and valuable resources. The Faculty should explore opportunities and methods to digitize its book catalogue, enhancing accessibility and efficiency for students and staff. The students shared that the library faces a shortage of literature in the Albanian language.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies library is open to students daily from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., providing a dedicated space for study and academic activities throughout the academic year.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *The Faculty should prioritize expanding the library's collection of literature in the Albanian language to better meet the academic needs of students.*
2. *The Faculty should consider digitalizing the books and making an online catalogue of the available literature.*
3. *The Faculty should appoint a senior staff member specifically responsible for overseeing the development and maintenance of infrastructure and resources. Additionally, this information should be clearly communicated and made accessible to ensure transparency and accountability.*

11. INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION

Standard 11.1 The HEI has formulated and implemented a proactive institutional collaboration plan that aligns with its mission institutional strategy. This plan is clearly reflected in the institution's decision-making and resource allocation in this field.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies is well connected with other higher education institutions, both locally and internationally. It also has a very good and proactive relationship with its community and is in continuous engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. Its relationship and engagement with other institutions is fully in line with its mission, vision and strategy. As much as it is supported within the Faculty, where all staff are either directly involved in various collaborations and -or supporting the same, it is also well supported by the main funder, the Islamic Community.

According to the activities that FIC regularly organises or has carried out so far, it is obvious that various forms of cooperation with other stakeholders and institutions are encouraged. As a result, the Faculty is continuously improving its visibility and its role in society, both academic and non-academic.

Standard 11.2 The HEI has implemented mechanisms to facilitate collaboration with national and/or international higher education institutions, networks and organizations. The HEI provides support to teaching staff to establish partnerships with the academic community, locally and/or globally.

Staff and students are encouraged to participate in a wide range of activities. Interestingly, once students graduate, they often stay in contact with their institution and continue to support various activities, so there is a positive interaction between academic staff, graduates and current students. Various types of collaboration during or after study also encourage and support students to find employment and/or to better serve the community.

The Faculty has signed some MoUs and is following its mission and main strategic objectives, but is also making special efforts to benefit from the Erasmus + programmes.
The Faculty also organises various events such as conferences, workshops, round tables, etc. All these activities contribute to the visibility of the institution.

Standard 11.3 The HEI established and maintain relationships with local industry, public sector, employers and local community.

The Faculty of Islamic Studies plays an important role in the local community, but also regionally, and accordingly makes special efforts to develop links and relationships with the community and various stakeholders.

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Students and staff have also established collaborations with other academic departments, such as Architecture, and have organised joint activities to contribute to the learning process and the exploration of cultural background and history. They also play an important role in the development of specific programmes and support for society, such as violence, and reach out to different stakeholders.

Standard 11.4 The HEI has established and maintains relationships with its alumni.

Although the Faculty of Islamic Studies does not have a very formally organised alumni body, its graduates are very much connected in a regular and ongoing relationship with the institution, its academic staff, former colleagues - students and current students. They share experiences, support each other in the process of defining their careers and also provide feedback to their teachers.
Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:
    1. *Formally establish alumni, plan and prioritise activities*
    2. To invest additional time and effort to be better connected with other higher education institutions in Kosovo, especially public institutions, and to plan joint activities.
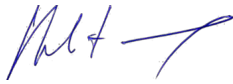
Overall evaluation and judgments of the ET

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

Faculty of islamic Studies demonstrated an overall substantial compliance, with only one partial compliant area of evaluation. According to the Manual requirements, the Expert Team recommends **to reaccredit the Faculty of islamic Studies for the period of 3 years.**

Expert Team

Chair

Melita Kovacevic.   November 30, 2024

(Signature)   (Print Name)   (Date)

Member

Magdalena Platis   November 30, 2024

(Signature)   (Print Name)   (Date)

Member

Marija Vasilevska   November 30, 2024

(Signature)   (Print Name)   (Date)

Member