Republika e Kosovës

Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo
Agjencia e Kosovës për Akreditim
Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency

UBT

Bachelor programme in Psychology

PROGRAMME EVALUATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

Zagreb, June, 2023

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: June 1, 2023

Expert Team (ET) members:

Prof. Melita Kovacevic, PhD
Juraj Bogat, student expert

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

Arianit Krasniqi, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Accreditation

Sources of information for the Report:

- Self- Evaluation Report with annexed documents
- Course syllabuses
- Academic staff CVs
- University web-page
- Additionally submitted documents

Criteria used for institutional and program evaluations

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

1.2. Site visit schedule

Time	Meeting
09:00 – 09:50	Meeting with the management of the faculty where the programme is integrated
09:55 – 10:45	Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff
10:50 – 11:50	Meeting with the heads of the study programme Psychology BSc
11:55 – 12.45	Meeting with teaching staff
12:45 – 13:45	Lunch break
13:45 – 14:15	Visiting Facilities
14:15 – 15:05	Meeting with students

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15:10 – 16:00	Meeting with graduates
16:05 – 16:55	Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders
16:55 – 17:05	Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts
17:05 – 17:15	Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and program

1.3. A brief overview of the institution under evaluation

UBT College did not provide a brief overview of the institution and programme under evaluation. The programme has been evaluated in 2021, and the institution had the same approach at that time. This has been noted in the evaluation report, but no change has been reflected in the new one.

However, knowing the institution from other circumstances and checking the website, UBT college is a private institution which has been licensed in 2004. It has 25 (?) faculties, which seems that the institution has been enlarged significantly in two years. It performs programmes on bachelor and master level and has branches in other places in Kosovo (Prizren, Ferizaj, Peja, Gjilan, Lipjan). The existing programmes cover quite wide range of fields and disciplines.

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2. PROGRAM EVALUATION
2.1. Mission, Objectives and Administration

The proposed bachelor programme in Psychology has been accredited for the first time two years ago, though for the first time it was in evaluation process in 2017. Since only two years have passed from the last evaluation, it is not to expect that the mission and objectives are much changed, although one could expect that some improvements took place in the course of the institutional development.

Actually, in the self-evaluation report exactly the same wording is given as two years ago, stressing that '*the mission of the BSc programme in Psychology is 'to enrich teaching and learning atmosphere and methodologies, to contribute to the community and society and to promote research in psychology'*.

According to the SER, the progamme aims to prepare students to be well suited for a range of jobs in their field, to develop skills and competencies they will need and to comply with professional ethics. It is explicitly emphasized that the programme has been developed in a way to follow all the professional criteria, in particular EuroPsy guidelines, it complies with NQF and national regulations.

Although there is elaborated Research strategy (2021-2025) and it could serve as a good base for overarching didactic concepts with research one, it seems after two years that the programme exists, this relationship is still not established well. In the SER, Standard 1.3. has been mainly described and explained in terms of academic calendar, course load (ECTS), form and organisation of the programme. Research has been mentioned only once referring to the main components of the educational process, but with no clear message how this is actually managed.

In terms of the management of the programme and institutional organisation, it is quite unclear how the system differentiate between the programme and the Faculty (because this is actually the same structure) as well as between the Dean and Vice-Deans and/or Dean-Vice Deans and heads-responsible academic staff of the programmes. Regardless the fact that different regulations, institutional and possible national, allow such organisation, it was almost

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embarrassing situation in which the present Rector, Dean and one Vice Dean, claimed one situation in terms of number and roles of a Dean and Vice Deans of the Faculty, while the other group of staff, including secretary general, in another session, claimed quite differently. The only possible conclusion that it could have been made was that the roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined and followed, these positions are not really functioning regardless the possible existence of the internal regulations. On a system level it is obvious that in actual functioning there are no sufficient distinction among different roles, so one person could have different roles (e.g. same person could be a Dean and one of the heads of the programme), with no clear subordination of the roles. If so, the conflict of interest should be also something to discuss within the institution (by saying institution we are referring here to the Faculty, having in focus programme to be evaluated), however when the staff with allocated functions-roles was asked if they perceive any possible conflict of interest, the answer was clearly negative. (Standard 1.4)

It has been stressed a great growing need for psychologists, relatively new profession in the national context, and the UBT as a programme provider feels responsible to meet demands and to prepare students in a way to increase their employability. While, for example, the SER stressed a number of strengths, it also identified as a weakness a problem with well defined enrolment criteria and this way attracting the best potential students.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Improve management organisation with clear roles and responsibilities*
2. *Reconsider establishment of faculties with one field or discipline*
3. *A further develop research capacity which will enable better alignment of research and teaching*

2.2. Quality Management

According to the SER, UBT is focused on achieving a high level of quality management. The system is focused on continuous improvement of human resources. As it has been already

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reported during the previous evaluation, in order to assure higher level of quality of administration, the institution underwent the evaluation in order to obtain the ISO certificate. Quality office is responsible for implementing institutional procedures, to prepare, administer and analise internal evaluations. There are regulations, guidelines, prepared materials to be implanted in different processes for assuring and maintaining quality.

Everyone is in a way involved in the process of quality, from the Rector, academic staff, administrative, students to international partners and employers. According to the SER as well as to the staff, they have number of tools that help in assuring quality. It has been confirmed that different surveys and evaluations are regular, both student evaluations and self-evaluations. However, it is sometimes hard to distinguish what is done on which level, namely what is he institutional level, and what is the programme-Faculty level. In addition, it is not completely transparent how the results from the programme level are linked to the institutional level. The significant portion of text regarding QA in the SER refers actually to the College perspective. Interestingly, when the staff has been asked could they state any kind of changes they made in programme after two years of implementation as this could be a result of QA and analyses they made, no one could think of any actual change, except introduction of one new course.

In addition, according to the SER, there was misunderstanding what is meant by 'self-evaluation'. While there is expectations that staff does self-evaluations, as a part of quality assurance, the SER referred to the self-evaluation report. (Standard 2.1, 2.2, 2.7)

During the site visit, the Expert team also met with students who expressed their satisfaction with the quality of the study programme, the intensity of their involvements and regular participation in evaluations. All the participating students were representatives in programme-institutional bodies. A similar level of satisfaction has been stated by the employers and external stakeholders who have a contact with the students during the practice and who eported a good communication with the staff and the programme. (Standard 2.6).

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:
   1. Introduce regular self-evaluation process for staff, both academic and administrative

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2. *Use more actively results from different evaluations and surveys for further developments and improvements*
3. *Introduce and regularly implement improvements of the programme*

2.3. Academic Staff

According to the existing standards, the following Standards 3.1, 3.2 and 3.8 are not met. However, even the majority of the standards are met, what has been observed is a serious weakness of the programme and in a way contradicts quality management that was previously evaluated as relatively positive. Comparing what has been noticed and commented in the previous evaluation, very little has been changed. Considering the time flow, it is even more disturbing today than it was two years ago.

The table with list of staff engaged in the programme has been provided, but not fully transparent (for example, PhD c. needs to be decoded to know that this refers to candidate in PhD). More importantly, teaching, research and administration load is only presented as division of the total work load expressed in percentage and it is not transparent what is the actual teaching load of each staff member expressed in their teaching hours. Although this was objected in the previous report, nothing has been changed and the information how the teaching load is distributed across different programmes has not been given. In other words, it is not transparent what is the actual teaching (administration, research) load for each staff member, in particular due to the fact that the table says information are provided for psychology programme only. (Standard 3.1)

The number of employed staff is exactly the same as two years ago – 25. However, a serious issue is their specialisation. Fine analysis of their curricula shows that only eight of them hold a doctoral degree in psychology, a few of them have PhD in education-pedagogy-sociology, but then there are other fields such as neurology, public health, political science, ethnology, business etc. Probably for few of them it could be identified some justification, however, the fact is that only one third of all staff have doctorate in the area of the whole programme is definitely not sufficient to assure satisfactory level of quality, in particular bearing in mind the range of courses form the field of psychology. Still, we should mention that among staff with

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the PhD in psychology, there are those with impressive curriculum and good research production. (Standard 3.2)

For the institution that is ambitious and has been thinking big about future developments is also not acceptable to submit CVs that are not all in English, that do not provide transparent and systematic information on e.g. education (e.g. with no institution that awarded PhD, mixing academic degrees with short-term professional trainings, no clear position at the UBT etc.). This definitely does not contribute to the overall good impression about the institution, or programme or the individuals themselves.

Regarding the Standard 3.8, as it was observed earlier, it is not evidenced that staff self-evaluations are part of regular process. This is an important part of internal quality and regular staff evaluations could contribute significantly to developing better quality culture.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Make sure that self-evaluations become a regular activity for QA*
2. *Revisit staff composition who are responsible for carrying out Psychology programme*
3. *Self-presentation of staff via curriculum vitae must meet international standards*

2.4. Educational Process Content

The programme under evaluation is comprehensive and offers students wide a wide range of courses. The SER emphasized the institutional careful approach in respecting EuroPsy guidelines as well as the criteria of Bologna Process. In other words, the programme is bachelor three-year programme with mandatory and elective courses aiming to prepare students for different career paths. The list of courses actually covers all the main areas of psychology and potentially could prepare future graduates to work in very different areas. This is a positive perspective.

Program also complies with NQF, EHEA and Bologna scheme.

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However, it could be also noticed that courses as described in the programme are too broad, too demanding, in particular considering that they are one semester courses. According to the European standards and regulations, in order to work as an independent psychologist, the requirement is to have master degree (in some countries and for some jobs even a doctorate). As this was noticed in the previous evaluation process, it is unchanged situation. The previous fact has not been acknowledged in the SER, and even more, in the list of the programme outcomes, it has not been recognized that the bachelor graduate has certain limitations in performing particular jobs of psychologist.

Certain number of courses is far too early introduced. The curriculum is very ambitious and as much as it is not fitted to the level of bachelor students, it does not correspond adequately to the capacity of teaching staff who are frequently not specialized in particular areas, not by academic degree, not by their research engagement. On the other side, for some courses it appears that they are created because there is available staff, not because this is really needed in the programme.

Therefore, programme does not meet the minimum criteria for Standards 4.2, 4.3.

The programme has well elaborated syllabi, with defined objectives, learning outcomes, distribution of classes, students' assessment system etc., however bibliography-reading literature is too demanding. During the site visit, it has been commented by some staff representatives that actually, in practice, they provide information to students what is obligatory, and what recommended readings, and this is how it should be done. However, this needs to be also transparent in the course description. Similar observations have been given in the process of accreditation. (Standard 4.4)

Standard 4.6 is met. According to students a genuine student-professor partnership in which the professor and the student take joint responsibility for achieving the learning outcomes has been established. Presently, the size of cohorts allows this, but the challenge would be in bigger groups of students. Learning outcomes are explained and discussed with students and their relevance to the students' development is explained as well.

Standards 4.7 and 4.8 are met. Teaching strategies are fit for the different types of learning outcomes. Student assessment mechanisms are conducted fairly and objectively and are appropriate for the different forms of learning sought. They are clearly communicated to students at the beginning of courses. The assessment strategies and forms differ from course to course and it is depended whether it a practical or more theorical field.

Standard 4.9 is met. Appropriate, valid and reliable mechanisms are used for verifying standards of student achievement. The assessment activities are designed according to the course content and take account of the principles of academic integrity.

Standards 4.10 and 4.11 are met. There are policies and procedures in case of inadequate or inconsistently assessed student achievement. The employers expressed high level of interest to collaborate with the Programme and reported about a positive experience and good collaboration. However, although the UBT has couple of hundreds signed MoUs, it is not clear which, if any, was signed and defined for the Psychology programme. This issue of non-transparency appears repetitively, not being transparent what is on the institutional level, and what is specific for the programme under the evaluation (Standard 4.12)

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Revisit syllabi and make improvements in terms of readings, obligatory and recommended*
2. *Revisit the whole programme and reconsider the changes in the curriculum re courses offered*
3. *Revisit the overall concept of the programme and define what kind of competencies will graduate gain*

2.5. Students

The group of students representing the whole student community of the program was communicative and opened to discussion. Their English language skills were impeccable, their arguments were supported by examples and most importantly, they expressed a great amount of satisfaction with their studies in all regards.

The admission process seems to be transparent and fair according to the enrolled students, although no such procedure was described with all necessary steps in the process. From other evaluations we are aware that the candidates undertake an entrance exam and an interview. Once they get enrolled, they have a week of introduction and orientation on the campus which is helpful for all the students who are attending higher education for the first time, and they are also handed out the student handbook to help them along the way.

All their student rights are met and there seems to be no record of any notable disputes, either between the students or students and teachers. Moreover, the teachers seem to be very attentive to the students, they are mostly available via all possible forms of communication, they even show understanding for possible extreme situations and enable students to participate in activities if such situations occur.

That being said, all standards from 5.1 through 5.7, and both 5.9 and 5.11 are met.

In standard 5.8 it is said that "Turnitin or similar plagiarism-free online platform" is used to check if the student submitted work is original. This might be unfortunate wording since it implies that the Turnitin software is free, which is not. Furthermore, plagiarism software is usually not free, and there is a reason for that. In order not to compromise quality and integrity, we strongly recommend acquisition of quality plagiarism software. It will not only help to optimize workload regarding the student's work, but it may also help professors with their research as well.

As for the standard 5.10, it is not met. While the students may transfer between the institutions and fully enroll to the new institutions, there seems to be no possibility of any kind of student exchange or mobility (ERASMUS, CEEPUS). We are aware that efforts are being put toward enabling student mobility, but since no mobility is yet possible, we are not compliant with this standard.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:
1) *Acquisition of a proper and fully licensed plagiarism software*
2) *Prioritise the mobility option for both students and teachers*

2.6. Research

UBT has its Research strategy and research plan for Psychology programme is part of it. The main objectives are defined and strategy is defined for the period of 2021 to 2025. While

reading this document, it could be concluded that research is becoming an important institutional engagement. By saying so, it is even more hard to understand why so little has been developed in terms of specific infrastructure in the field of psychology. Psychology today is in a way umbrella for so many different subdisciplines of which each requires special equipment, instruments, trainings etc. There is definitely dissonance between plan and reality. (Standard 6.1).

Academic staff is engaged in different community activities, and according to students, staff is open and ready to involve students as well, is friendly towards them and supports their small research activities. (Standard 6.11, 6.9). According to the SER, the institution also recognises relevance of interdisciplinarity and supports different interdisciplinary cooperation within the UBT itself.

Although there are clearly defined expectations for each staff and defined promotion criteria, academic staff is still not publishing enough. (Standard 6.7). On one side, all the staff are fully aware that some international standards for publishing work exists, and they know that their research activity needs to increase. We should also notice that a few staff members are research active and they do publish papers in relevant publications. On the other side, it is still not easy to reach those thresholds. In other words, although there are a few individual staff members who are definitely among the most productive one, there are also those who have very modest records.

However, the ET noticed, similarly as when the style of writing CVs was commented, the lack of skills to report on research productivity. Information on published papers in most of the cases does not follow at all well-defined international standards and it is definitely not transparent. While students have the course on academic writing, it seems that this skill is still missing among the academic staff. Again, this is not good for the individuals as well as for the institutional image. Even more so, if the institution is emphasising its ambitious development plans than the first prerequisite to succeed is to have skilful staff.

Unfortunately, as significant number of staff are not holders of a PhD in psychology, but they are educated and have research experience in other domains, it is not unusual to have a mismatch of what they teach and what are their research topics. (Standard 6.4)

According to the SER and information obtained during the site visit, UBT supports staff to attend conferences, to publish-in-house books, and for some open access publishing. On the other side, there is no sound and transparent financial planning for research, not sufficient human resources and no clear support by professional administrative staff.

The ET asked for the list of research projects in order to see the scope of research activities as well as tp get an idea of financial resources for doing research. Unfortunately, it was the same

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pattern as with the CVs and list of published papers – unprofessionally, non-transparently prepared information on projects, missing the main information, such as the period, funder, the role of staff from the `psychology etc. The problem is that there was no evidence that the programme-institution differentiate btw research and professional projects, but most disturbing was providing information that are almost impossible to check or once when they are checked, they are false. This is something that it should not happen in any circumstances (e.g there were four projects stating that they are funded by the University of Vienna, but this information has not been confirmed at all by the University of Vienna; on the contrary, it was emphasised that Uni of Vienna does not provide this kind of funding for the external institutions).

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Research plan needs to be aligned with institutional-programme capacity (human, financial, infrastructure)*
2. *To support developing additional skills of staff for science communication; international standards must be internalised*
3. *Improve research capacity*
4. *Rethink how to support and increase research productivity*

2.7. Infrastructure and Resources

Infrastructure and resources seem to be somewhat satisfactory, but there is still a lot of work to be done. Firstly, the campus is located outside of Pristina, but the University has organized transportation for all the students and secured parking for teachers. In terms of human resources, there are sufficient number of professors, but their selection is potentially problematic (see standard 2.3 Academic staff). The financial aspect is well under the control since it is a private university that has income from scholarship fees (roughly amount of 4 average salaries in Kosovo) and probably other forms of co-operations as well. The positive sidenote is that the students can pay the fee monthly/quarterly and they can get discount based on the grade average and academic achievements. As for the premises, the buildings are rather new and there is even a playground for free time. The thing that we find troubling is the exposed wires on the location where a streetlamp is supposed to be. It is needless to say that it evokes major safety concerns regardless of whether the wires are *dead* or *alive.*

The psychology programme with such a broad scope of offered courses and ambitious plan for skills and competencies students should have at the end of their third year, does not provide sufficient learning space, in particular adequate laboratories and facilities for practical part, e. g. for clinical psychology or educational psychology. It is not only an issue of space, but also

adequate equipment that, today, psychology is using regularly. Although, the UBT has spacious teaching classes and halls, there are no really adequate spaces specific for the programme needs (Standard 7.1)

Standard 7.3 has four sub standards. Fully met standards are a, b, and c, although we must point out that the laboratory barely fits the definition. While there is minimal amount of equipment and minimal amount of literature, the thing we cannot condone with is a "two-way mirror" which is actually regular glass with lower opacity. The laboratory with that glass is called "observation room" which in no context fits reality and therefore we suggest that the space needs to be adequately furnished. The lack of laboratories and spaces for practical work is linked to Standard 7.1, as well.

Although there is quite a large library, the ET did notice an issue with the reading space in the library. This might be compensated with some other areas around the campus and buildings where students could work and read. Although the shelves in the library are high and full of books, no adequate lighting is available. The methodology of book stacking is somewhat unusual, and it seems to be rather unintuitive. The library also seems to lack infrastructure for students with mobility impairments. On the other hand, there seems to always be a librarian inside who can help the students with orientation and search for literature.

Besides the library, all other parts of the premises are available for students with disabilities since all buildings possess an elevator although we are not entirely certain if the transportation for people with disabilities is organized.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:
1) *Psychology programme needs to have more specifically suited space for practical and research work*
2) *Acquire more equipment for the laboratory and put it in proper and regular use*
3) *Replace the glass with a two-way mirror in the Observation room*
4) *Clear out the premises of the unnecessary and potentially dangerous hazards such as uninsulated wires*
5) *We suggest that reading rooms and group work rooms are implemented as soon as possible and that they are accessible to students with mobility impairments.*

3. FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

Overall compliance:

Standard	Compliance level
1. Mission, objectives and administration	Partially compliant
2. Quality management	Partially compliant
3. Academic staff	Substantially compliant
4. Educational process content	Substantially compliant
5. Students	Substantially compliant
6. Research	Partially compliant
7. Infrastructure and resources	Substantially compliant
Overall compliance	**Substantial compliance**

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.

In conclusion, in line with the Manual requirements, the Expert Team recommends **to reaccredit** the bachelor programme *Psychology* for three years, with maximum enrolment of 50 students per year.

Expert Team

Chair

(signature)

	Melita Kovacevic	**June 26 , 2023**
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

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Member

<p align="center">**Juraj Bogat**   **June 26 , 2023**</p>

(Signature)   (Print Name)   (Date)