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Kosovo Accreditation Agency



***UNIVERSITY OF GJAKOVA “FEHMI AGANI”,
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES***

Social Care and Welfare, BA

Re accreditation

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

June 2024, GJAKOVA

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: 13/06/2024

Expert Team (ET) members:

- Dr. Stavros Parlalis (online)
- Dr. Elene Jiblatze
- Stefan-Marius Deaconu (student expert)

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- Arianit Kraniqi, KAA Officer

Sources of information for the Report:

- Self-evaluation report
- Additional documentation provided by the Department and Institution (CV's, appendices, syllabi)
- Information gathered during the site visit

Criteria used for institutional and program evaluations

- Standards for institutional evaluation as outlined in the Accreditation Manual 2021 of the KAA

1.2. Site visit schedule

Time	Meeting	Participants
09:00 – 09:45	Meeting with the management of the faculty where the programs are integrated	Ferdi Kamberi Sherif Sejdiu Granit Kelmendi
09:45 – 10.25	Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff	Daut Islami Abedin Sadrija Jeton Plava Freskina Mula Qendresa Bardhoshi Arianit Kupa Nita Pruthi
10:30 – 11:30	Meeting with the heads of the study programs Social Care and Welfare, BA 180 ECTS Dr.Stavros Parlaris (online) Dr.Elene Jiblatze Stefan-Marius Deaconu, Student Expert (online)	Behxhet Gaxhiqi Ferdi Kamberi Shqipe Husaj
11:30 – 12:20	Lunch break	
12:20 – 12.50	Visiting Facilities	
12:50 – 13:35	Meeting with teaching staff	Ilmi Hoxha Artan Nimani Arben Boshnjaku Zeqir Hashani Ruzhdi Kadrija Emirëjeta Kumnova Hoxha Mirlinda Jasiqi Begije Osaj Januzaj
13:35 – 14:20	Meeting with students	Fitore Islami Gentiana Dushi Meriton Binakaj Gentiana Isufi Vlora Vokshi Arlinda Muslija Yllka Berisha Yllarta Thaqi
14:25 – 15:10	Meeting with external stakeholders	Mentor Morina – Director of Social Policy – Ministry of Finance, Work and Transferee Kujtim Dula - Director of Employment Office.

		<p>Bekim Avdiu - Kosovo Police.</p> <p>Xhafer Kadrija – Association of Blind People ‘Jakova’.</p> <p>Adelina Shehu Kolaj – Director of Health and Social Work – Municipalities of Gjakova.</p> <p>Erbliina Dinarama – Safe house.</p> <p>Berat Thaqi – NGO ‘BSP</p> <p>Trumëza Lila Ukmata – Centre for Social Work in Gjakova.</p>
15:10 – 15:15	Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts	/
15:15 – 15:20	Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and program	<p>Ferdi Kamberi Sherif Sejdiu Granit Kelmendi</p> <p>Behxhet Gaxhiqi Ferdi Kamberi</p> <p>Shqipe Husaj</p>

1.3. A brief overview of the institution under evaluation

The University “Fehmi Agani” in Gjakove (UFAGJ) is a public university established on March 06th in 2013. It offers study programs on a bachelor level through its five Faculties, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Philology, Faculty of Applied Science and lastly the Faculty of Social Sciences.

According to the University`s Strategic Plan 2021-2025, the University`s goals are to be a model of financial and institutional sustainability, becoming transformed into a regional leader in humanities and medical sciences. Its mission is the creation, promotion and transformation of knowledge through contemporary methods of teaching and research, fostering student enthusiasm, and promoting academic integrity. The University offers academic and research experiences by collaborating with the community and contributes to the social and economic development of the country and the region, through unique and quality study programs. In addition, the University`s vision is to be a public institution of higher education that through continuous development and transformation offers studies, where teaching, learning, and scientific research are adapted to the socio-economic development needs of society.

The University currently operates in three facilities with 11697.5 m2 of utilized area. 3127 students are enrolled in the study programs organized according to the Bologna system, three years with 180 ECTS, respectively 4 years with 240 ECTS at the bachelor level.

The newest faculty, Faculty of Social Sciences, which first program "Social Care and Welfare" is a subject of re-accreditation, was established in 2019. Its establishment is the result of the market research and the analysis of the needs of institutions dealing with social care and welfare, according to the SER. The program of Social Care and Welfare prepares future leaders mainly for government institutions, school institutions and non-governmental organizations. The study program makes a link between theory and practice, as one of the most important conditions for acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary for a successful career. Graduates will be able to contribute to the creation, implementation, development and evaluation of public policies for the benefit of society.

Moreover, the Faculty`s vision is to prepare future leaders for working in governmental institutions, school institutions and NGOs. According to the program`s website, another mission of the faculty is to enable students to acquire the skills and techniques for working in the sector of social services. The program is designed being based on present experience in educating social workers in Kosovo and global standards for educating and training social workers designated by the International Association of Social Workers.

Overall, the program`s mission is the promotion of the students` continuous research on development, human and universal values for social work, is to be a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and empowering and liberating people.

60 students are enrolled in this program every academic year.

2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

The institutional evaluation consists of 7 subheadings through which the administration, organisation and management of the institution, as well as teaching and research are assessed.

2.1. Mission, Objectives and Administration

The program is declared to be closely linked with the UFAGJ mission and vision statements. The UFAGJ has elaborated the mission which relates to all teaching, research as well as community reach. Concretely, the UFAGJ “is committed to creating knowledge through contemporary methods of teaching and research, promoting student enthusiasm and promoting academic integrity. The University offers academic and research experiences by collaborating with the community and contributes to the social and economic development of the country and the region, through unique and quality study programs (SER). This can be said, therefore, the defined mission statement includes all the three main pillars.

The mission of the UFAGJ is in line with the UFAGJ’s vision where teaching and research are also pointed out, and so-called third role is saturated mainly via the idea to adapt teaching, learning and scientific research to the socio-economic development needs of society.

The set of values that UFAGJ explicitly states in its SER can be seen as relevant and well acceptable to support the mission and vision of this HEI.

In case of the mission of the program under the evaluation, it is formulated as follows: “to promote to the students continuous research on development and human values, and universal values for social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion and empowering and liberating people. The principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversity are essential to the mission of social care” (SER).

This can be concluded the study program mission is in compliance with the overall mission statement of the institution.

The program Social Care and Welfare was developed with the reference to the National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

The study program has a well-defined overarching didactic and research concept. The program is designed as modular with the set of obligatory subjects, and the offer of optional courses. The link between theory and practice is reached mainly in two ways: 1) by constructing individual subjects as an interlink of theory and its application; 2) by introduction of professional practice in the field. Similarly, research elements can be found in individual subjects (theories, research findings) and separately in some subjects (social statistics; qualitative analysis in social studies, for instance).

The UFAGJ has developed a set of formal policies, guidelines and regulations dealing with recurring procedural or academic issues. Similarly, they are prepared in relation to the program of Social Care and Welfare. These are made publicly available to the staff and students. The UFAGJ provides a well-structured website, which covers all the duties of publications the institution has. The transparency the UFAGJ provides in this case is very good. This way, stakeholders should be able to find relevant regulations, documents and statistics on the website.

It appears the UFAGJ has a decision-making system and internal operating regulations in agreement with existing legal provisions. The rules and regulations include especially those for studies, functioning of steering council, senate of the UFAGJ, organization and systematization of working positions, disciplinary procedures, ethical issues, and more. Decision-making structures include governing as well as organizational structure of the administration. The organogram indicates there is a certain tendency to emphasis central level at the UFAGJ, although faculty representatives claim they have sufficient access to influence relevant decision-making processes/decisions, and to pursue faculty’s needs and priorities. In addition, the organogram does not clearly indicate a central position of teaching and research within the university.

In the documentation provided there are only partial indications that policies, regulations, terms of reference and statements of responsibility relating to the management and delivery of the program are/will be reviewed at least once every two years and amended as required in the light of changing circumstances.

<i>Standard</i>	<i>Compliance</i>	
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Standard 1.1. The study program mission is in compliance with the overall mission statement of the institution.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 1.2. Relevant academic and professional advice is considered when defining the intended learning outcomes which are consistent with the National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.</i>	X	

<i>Standard 1.3. The study program has a well-defined overarching didactic and research concept.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 1.4. There are formal policies, guidelines and regulations dealing with recurring procedural or academic issues. These are made publicly available to all staff and students.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 1.5. All staff and students comply with the internal regulations relating to ethical conduct in research, teaching, assessment in all academic and administrative activities.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 1.6. All policies, regulations, terms of reference and statements of responsibility relating to the management and delivery of the program are reviewed at least once every two years and amended as required in the light of changing circumstances.</i>	X	

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *The ET recommends improving the communication with the local community, local stakeholders, local and national boards of professional Social Work Associations, international Social Work boards/associations, in order to link the program with the latest developments in the field of Social Work.*
2. *Proceed with activities that will enhance the visibility of the BA program in the local community, aiming at informing a wider audience regarding professional social workers' role in people's lives.*

2.2. Quality Management

UFAGJ has implemented a number of initiatives with the objective of encouraging active involvement of all staff in self-assessments and collaborative improvement processes. During evaluation meetings, representatives of the UFAGJ presented a range of surveys, including self-assessments, student assessments, and evaluations by deans, which are utilised to gather feedback. This feedback is used, where the case may be made, to redirect teachers with low performance to the Didactic Centre, in order to improve their overall performance. In accordance with the Faculty of Social Sciences management, targeted intervention and continuous support are provided (*Standard 2.1*).

Evaluation processes are integrated into the normal planning process, as evidenced using survey data from students, graduates, and employers, including the module for reporting and complaints - SMU. This data is relevant for the quality assurance process and is made publicly accessible to ensure transparency, though in terms of visibility, the situation could be improved. For instance, self-evaluations and student feedback are used to revise and enhance the curriculum, demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement. Quality assurance mechanisms align academic delivery, teaching effectiveness, resource allocation, and student support services to enhance overall programme quality (*Standard 2.2*).

Within UFAGJ's quality assurance framework, there is the Office for Quality Assurance, the Central Commission for ZSC and the Commission for Quality Assurance of the academic unit. The framework ensures that there is a comprehensive cover of program planning and delivery. There is evidence that there are regular self-evaluations and feedback mechanisms help in identifying areas for improvement, ensuring that all services and resources provided by different parts of the institution are utilized effectively to support high-quality academic programs (*Standard 2.3*).

Quality assessment within UFAGJ offer a comprehensive overview of a study program quality, focusing on inputs, processes, and outputs. The higher education institution usually employs a range of assessment methods, including student feedback, to evaluate academic performance. For instance, student evaluations are used to identify strengths and weaknesses, with measures taken to address any issues, such as hiring student tutors and supporting peer-to-peer learning. This ensures that learning outcomes for students are consistently met and improved upon. For instance, *Summary Report of the Evaluation of Academic Staff and Courses - Summer Semester - 2022/2023* do show how data was collected based on a student survey of 21 questions with some concrete key findings and recommendations (*Standard 2.4*).

The manual for assessment of performance, quality and curricula within UFAGJ is in accordance with ESG and the national quality assurance framework. The evaluation criteria include student evaluations (25%), peer evaluations (15%), and assessments by deans (15%), with results informing faculty development and program adjustments. A further 25% covers scientific publications and participation in conferences, while as 20% is the contribution related to the university and community. UFAGJ supports high-performing staff through promotions and addresses underperformance with targeted interventions, ensuring ongoing improvement (*Standard 2.5*).

Data collection and public dissemination of survey data from students, graduates, and employers at UFAG demonstrate compliance with *Standard 2.6*. The university conducts regular surveys, and the results are analysed and shared electronically with relevant stakeholders, including students, faculty, and administrative staff. This transparency fosters a culture of continuous feedback and improvement, ensuring that all stakeholders are informed and engaged in the quality assurance process. Nevertheless, an increased visibility should be addressed in the near future within HEIs public communication channels.

The outcomes of the internal quality assurance system are incorporated into the development and enhancement of study programmes. However, the university is yet to collect comprehensive data on student performance, workload, and graduate employability. While these data points are collected throughout SEVC – Electronic System for Quality Assurance, the processes appear to be somewhat ad hoc in certain instances. Some examples of study programme revisions have been addressed. It is important to note that a data-driven approach is employed to ensure that study programmes remain relevant and effective, meeting the needs of both students and the job market. A positive aspect is that SEVC system appears to provide protection of personal data for the respondents, which is utmost important in order to ensure a higher degree of the collected data reliability (*Standard 2.7*).

At the institutional level, UFAGJ regularly evaluates and improves its quality assurance arrangements to ensure they remain effective. The university updates its quality action plan annually and uses feedback from various surveys to refine its evaluation methods. This iterative process ensures that quality assurance mechanisms are continually enhanced, supporting the overall academic quality and effectiveness of the institution’s programs. In order to strengthen this process, UFAGJ has engaged 25 student interns for practical work with alumni (*Standard 2.8*)

UFAG regularly evaluates and improves its quality assurance arrangements to ensure their continued effectiveness. The higher education institution makes annually updates throughout the Office for Quality Assurance and uses feedback from various surveys to refine its evaluation methods. This iterative process ensures that quality assurance mechanisms are continually enhanced, thereby supporting the overall academic quality and effectiveness of the institution’s programmes (*Standard 2.9*).

<i>Standard</i>	<i>Compliance</i>	
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Standard 2.1. All staff participate in self-evaluations and cooperate with reporting and improvement processes in their sphere of activity.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 2.2. Evaluation processes and planning for improvement are integrated into normal planning processes.</i>	X	

<i>Standard 2.3. Quality assurance processes deal with all aspects of program planning and delivery, including services and resources provided by other parts of the institution.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 2.4. Quality evaluations provide an overview of quality issues for the overall program as well as of different components within it; the evaluations consider inputs, processes and outputs, with particular attention given to learning outcomes for students.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 2.5. Quality assurance processes ensure both that required standards are met and that there is continuing improvement in performance.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 2.6. Survey data is being collected from students, graduates and employers; the results of these evaluations are made publicly available.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 2.7. Results of the internal quality assurance system are taken into account for further development of the study program. This includes evaluation results, investigation of the student workload, academic success and employment of graduates.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 2.8. The institution ensures that reports on the overall quality of the program are prepared periodically (eg. every three years) for consideration within the institution indicating its strengths and weaknesses.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 2.9. The quality assurance arrangements for the program are themselves regularly evaluated and improved.</i>	X	

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Collect additional qualitative data on graduate insertion into labour market as well as the relevance of the study program to address its broader perspective and increase its effectiveness and relevance.*
2. *The ET recommends initial training and development for faculty staff and students involved in QA process, for a better understanding of the legal framework and provisions.*

2.3. Academic Staff

The University has adopted the following documents for employment of the academic staff: Law of the Labor Republic of Kosovo, University's Statute, respective ministry's administrative instructions and regulations, and Regulation on the election and academic promotion. The SER provides a table with the information for the academic staff that includes name and surname, qualification, academic title, contract duration (starting and ending date), workloads, teaching, and FT/PT positions. There are eleven Ph.D. holders among the academic staff for this study program and two assistants (PhD candidates). Moreover, the SER confirms that no academic staff covers more than 2 teaching positions.

As mentioned above, the table included in the SER shows that out of 16 academic staff in the study program, 11 are full-time employed and 5 are part-time. This means that the Faculty fulfils Standard 3.4, since it has at least 50% of the academic staff who are full time employees.

The SER reports that the study program has employed eleven full-time staff (Prof. Dr. / Prof. Ass. / Prof. Assoc.) for the overall 180 students who are enrolled in the program. Moreover, the study program employs another 2 Assistants. The minimum requirements for the full-time employed staff according to the KAA's Standards are fulfilled.

The Department is comprised by professors in the domains such as of Social Work, Sociology, Psychology, Pedagogy, Philology, Special Pedagogy and Economics, having gained international experience with studies in Universities like in countries such as Albania, North Macedonia and Austria.

The University has regulations for insuring additional professional development of the teaching staff. First, the quality assurance process is well-positioned to identify the possible and needed areas for improvement in the field of the teaching staff. Second, the University has developed the Didactic Center for Teaching Excellence through which as stated in the appendixes, is providing services for the development of excellence by identifying, designing, and ensuring the development of professional skills in all elements of the academic role. It is expected that this Center provides training to the staff in terms of the identified challenges by the quality assurance process or upon request from the academic staff. Both in the SER and during the site visit it was evident that the academic staff has been engaged in numerous trainings organised and offered by the Didactic Center (a brief report is presented in SER, p.60-62).

The promotion of the academic staff is regulated in the Regulation on the election and academic promotion. In the promotion of academic staff, the Faculties, Senate and Evaluation Committee are included. The Regulations declare that the promotion is not an automatic process, but it is competitive and praiseworthy for all positions. Various criteria are used for staff promotion, considering both teaching experience and publications in scientific journals (or book chapters) indexed in SCOPUS and/or Web of Science.

The SER informs that the academic staff have opportunities to participate in various regular meetings, study visits, workshops and partnerships. It has to be highlighted that one of the weaknesses in the SWOT analysis is the lack of extracurricular activities, which could be

beneficial for staff regarding professional development, networking and collaboration, enhancing teaching effectiveness and improving student engagement.

Moreover, it has to be underlined that there is insufficient support from the Government of Kosovo for the development of academic staff, which is a main barrier for the program. Even though it is considered as a strength that the Faculty has regular teaching staff with a doctoral degree in Social Work qualified with a PhD title from abroad, it was evident that only one professor has such qualifications. Many Social Work courses, e.g. Social Work in the family, is taught by professor without the equivalent Social Work qualifications; as a consequence, these courses do not offer knowledge relevant to the basic Social Work Methods but they are tend to be descriptive and more sociology-oriented, e.g. family education, parenting styles, etc. This reality is further presented and discussed under Standard 2.4.

The SER and the appendixes are showing proves that the teaching staff is obliged to be available with the students for consultations, which was also confirmed during the site visit.

The teaching staff is evaluated twice a year by the students. In addition to this, there is the inter-collegial evaluation process that includes evaluation among the academic staff in the role of colleagues. Both processes are formal and conducted through questionnaires as explained in the previous section of quality assurance. The results of the evaluation processes are compiled in reports published on the University’s website.

The University’s Strategic Plan 2021-2025 covers objectives related to teaching strategies and quality of learning materials. The document that covers explanation for the Didactic Center for Teaching Excellence specifies that during the last years the Center included various trainings regarding teaching strategies, quality management, building capacities in the field of higher education, promotion of research and scientific publications and other topics, which aimed/s at professional development.

There are no specific data that the teachers are retired at a certain age limit. Several documents are showing that the University is following the national regulations in terms of the labor force. Out of that, it can be concluded that they are following the age limit. In has to be stressed that the Faculty staff seems to be quite a young team of professors.

<i>Standard</i>	<i>Compliance</i>	
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>

<i>Standard 3.1. Candidates for employment are provided with full position descriptions and conditions of employment. To be presented in tabular form data about full time (FT) and part time (PT) academic/ artistic staff, such as: name, qualification, academic title, duration of official (valid) contract, workload for teaching, exams, consulting, administrative activities, research, etc. for the study program under evaluation.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 3.2. The teaching staff must comply with the legal requirements concerning the occupation of teaching positions included in the Administrative instruction on Accreditation.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 3.3. Academic staff do not cover, within an academic year, more than two teaching positions (one full-time, one part-time), regardless of the educational institution where they carry out their activity.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 3.4. At least 50% of the academic staff in the study program are full time employees, and account for at least 50% of the classes of the study program.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 3.5. For each student group (defined by the statute of the institution) and for every 60 ECTS credits in the study program, the institution has employed at least one full time staff with PhD title or equivalent title in the case of artistic/applied science institutions.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 3.6. Opportunities are provided for additional professional development of teaching staff, with special assistance given to any who are facing difficulties.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 3.7. The responsibilities of all teaching staff, especially full-time, include the engagement in the academic community, availability for consultations with students and community service.</i>	X	

<i>Standard 3.8. Academic staff evaluation is conducted regularly at least through self-evaluation, students, peer and superiors' evaluations, and occur on a formal basis at least once each year. The results of the evaluation are made publicly available.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 3.9. Strategies for quality enhancement include improving the teaching strategies and quality of learning materials.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 3.10. Teachers retired at age limit or for other reasons lose the status of full-time teachers and are considered part-time teachers.</i>	X	

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *There is lack of academic staff in the field of Social Work. There is not a single professional social worker as academic staff (holding a BA in Social Work), apart from one Professor having a PhD in Social Sciences, in the profile of Social Work.*
2. *It is inevitable to hire a Professor in Social Work (even in the Lecturer position), in order to support teaching of Social Work Methods, e.g. SW with individuals, SW with groups, SW in/with communities.*
3. *Academic staff's contracts haven't renewed in the SER (p.58). Some professors' contracts appear to have been terminated since 2020. Please change accordingly.*
4. *It is necessary to proceed with all staff advancements.*
5. *Encourage academic staff to publish on Social Work Methods, in Albanian language.*
6. *Encourage academic staff to be involved in funded research projects, either as leaders or partners.*
7. *Staff should take new initiatives for involvement in new scientific and research networking activities (e.g. COST Actions), in an attempt towards the Department's internationalisation.*
8. *Staff should establish stronger collaboration with public authorities, in order to offer greater opportunities for students' practicum.*

2.4. Educational Process Content

The program is developed with regard to the qualification objectives. It is built in such a way that subject-related as well as interdisciplinary aspects are covered. In the case of Social Care and Welfare it means there are several disciplines nurturing “the core curriculum” and naturally feeding the interdisciplinary nature, too (social work, psychology, educational science, including special education, economics, health issues, sociology, law, and more). In this way, disciplinary, methodological as well as generic skills and competencies can be developed. Consequently, one can assume the graduates will take up an adequate employment, the program will contribute to their own development, and also to the society.

The program of Social Care and Welfare is in compliance with the National Qualification Framework and with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. The individual components are combined in an acceptable way, the curriculum seems to be having its logic and certain degree of internal graduation. Of course, a relatively high number of subjects representing a variety of disciplines create a challenge of co-ordination and synergies within the study plan. Learning outcomes are defined in an acceptable way.

The disciplines within the program curriculum have syllabi, which describe the subject, inform about its objectives and expected learning outcomes, forms of teaching, assessment methods and passing criteria, means to support teaching/learning in classes, the proportion between theory and practice and the obligatory and additional literature. Such a set of information is sufficient. As stated in SER report as well as discussed during the site visit, one of the challenges seems to be availability of study literature in the Albanian language. While in some courses this does not seem to be a problem, in some others the obligatory literature is in English – the staff members explained their readiness to supply students with their own elaborated materials and with some other plans how to cope with this. Of course, in a longer run this needs to be solved more persuasively, e.g. by writing their own books in Albanian language, which could be considered as a mean/tool for personal development and promotion, too.

On the other hand, significant barriers exist in two levels: 1) Many Social Work courses, e.g. Social Work with groups and the community, is taught by professor without the equivalent Social Work qualifications; as a consequence, these courses do not offer knowledge relevant to the basic Social Work Methods but they tend to be descriptive and more sociology-oriented rather than presenting and focusing on Social Work intervention methods/models. This reality is a great barrier as restrict student’s ability to be educated and trained in Social Work Methods, while they are allowed to register to the relevant professional body as professional social workers. 2) The overall hours that students placed in practicum should be revised according to the guidance and instructions established by IASSW-IFSW (Global Standards for Social Work Education & Training). The total of 150 hours spent in practicum (“Active practice in Institutions I” and “Active practice in Institutions II”) is far from the international standards.

Teaching strategies, as indicated mainly in the syllabi, seem to be relevant for the learning outcomes, there seems to be a room for flexibility of working with the students, too.

Within the program, the plan is to use appropriate ways to verify standards of student achievement. These ways of work, as planned, are analogical to those used by other, positively regarded higher education institutions abroad.

In general, the UFAGJ was able to credibly ensure that the learning approach is student centred and interactive. The assessment procedures are clearly defined and provide a good check-up about the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. There are indications and this relates to policies and procedures that are taken in dealing with situations where standards of student achievement are inadequate or inconsistently assessed.

Regarding the practicum, attention should be placed on some additional issues, for instance specification of the course objectives, the learning outcomes (they are too generic in their current form), tutorial/mentoring support offered to students (e.g. how many hours of mentoring is offered per week?) and other relevant details.

<i>Standard</i>	<i>Compliance</i>	
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Standard 4.1. The study program is modelled on qualification objectives. These include subject-related and interdisciplinary aspects as well as the acquisition of disciplinary, methodological and generic skills and competencies. The aspects refer especially to academic or artistic competencies, to the capability of taking up adequate employment, contributing to the civil society and of developing the students' personality.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 4.2. The study program complies with the National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. The individual components of the program are combined in a way to best achieve the specified qualification objectives and provide for adequate forms of teaching and learning.</i>	X	

<p><i>Standard 4.3. The disciplines within the curriculum are provided in a logical flow and meet the definition and precise determination of the general and specific competencies, as well as the compatibility with the study programs and curricula delivered in the EHEA. To be listed at least 7 learning outcomes for the study program under evaluation.</i></p>		X
<p><i>Standard 4.4. The disciplines within the curriculum have analytical syllabuses which comprise at least the following: the discipline's objectives, the basic thematic content, learning outcomes, the distribution of classes, seminars and applicative activities, students' assessment system, the minimal bibliography, etc. The full course description/ syllabuses of each subject/ module should be attached only in electronic form to the self-assessment report for the study program under evaluation.</i></p>	X	
<p><i>Standard 4.5. If the language of instruction is other than Albanian, actions are taken to ensure that language skills of both students and academic staff are adequate for instruction in that language when students begin their studies. This may be done through language training prior to the commencement of the program.</i></p>	n/a	
<p><i>Standard 4.6. The student-teacher relationship is a partnership in which each assumes the responsibility of reaching the learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are explained and discussed with students from the perspective of their relevance to the students' development.</i></p>	X	
<p><i>Standard 4.7. Teaching strategies are fit for the different types of learning outcomes programs are intended to develop. Strategies of teaching and assessment set out in program and course specifications are followed with flexibility to meet the needs of different groups of students.</i></p>	X	
<p><i>Standard 4.8. Student assessment mechanisms are conducted fairly and objectively, are appropriate for the different forms of learning</i></p>	X	

<i>sought and are clearly communicated to students at the beginning of courses.</i>		
<i>Standard 4.9. Appropriate, valid and reliable mechanisms are used for verifying standards of student achievement. The standard of work required for different grades is consistent over time, comparable in courses offered within a program, and in comparison with other study programs at highly regarded institutions.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 4.10. Policies and procedures include actions to be taken in to dealing with situations where standards of student achievement are inadequate or KAA inconsistently assessed.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 4.11. If the study program includes practice stages, the intended student learning outcomes are clearly specified and effective processes are followed to ensure that those learning outcomes and the strategies to develop that learning are understood by students. The practice stages are allocated ETCS credits and the work of the students at the practical training organisations is monitored through activity reports; students during practice stages have assigned tutors among the academic staff in the study program.</i>		X
<i>Standard 4.12. In order to facilitate the practice stages, the higher education institution signs cooperation agreements, contracts or other documents with institutions/organisations/practical training units.</i> <i>*To be inserted the overview of the program (with all areas to be filled out)</i>	X	

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Practicum should be supervised by professional qualified social workers, following the guidance and instructions established by IASSW-IFSW (Global Standards for Social Work Education & Training).*

2. *The two practicum courses (“Active practice in Institutions I” and “Active practice in Institutions II”) should be offered in the last year of the program, meaning the 6th and the 7th semester, respectively. This will allow students to be familiar with the main SW and other disciplines concept during the first two years and then they can practice their skills and knowledge in the field during the last year of their studies.*
3. *The overall hours that students placed in practicum should be revised according to the guidance and instructions established by IASSW-IFSW (Global Standards for Social Work Education & Training). The total of 150 hours spent in practicum (“Active practice in Institutions I” and “Active practice in Institutions II”) is far from the international standards. Necessary improvements have to be made.*
4. *The above comment should be seriously considered by the Faculty members, since following the current state of practicum, it is highly possible that students/graduates will not be able to work as social workers in the EU.*
5. *During the meeting, the academic staff members mentioned lack of resources in Albanian language (e.g. books, journals, policy papers, etc.). There is a great need to publish new material in Albanian and/or translate existing books from well-known European publishers regarding modern literature in the social work scientific domain. This can be seen as an area for great improvement in the coming years, affecting not only the Department’s students/graduates but the whole SW community of the country.*
6. *The Department should search funding to have access to online resources, research databases, e-journals, magazines, and other academically relevant resources. In addition, the Department should explore online resources that offer open access, particularly in areas relevant to the program, and encourage the students to familiarize themselves with these.*

2.5. Students

An analysis of the internal methodologies of the UFAGJ concerning the admission procedure, and a discussion with students, revealed that there are transparent admission procedures. The faculty management confirmed during the evaluation meeting that the university follows a rigorous selection process, with the aim of attracting the best students, particularly from high schools in the Dukagjin region of Kosovo and Albania. The admission requirements are clearly stated and consistently applied, ensuring fairness and equal opportunities for all applicants. (*Standard 5.1*).

UFAGJ ensures that all enrolled students possess the necessary qualifications as per the MEST requirements. The evaluation meeting highlighted that the application process includes verification of high school diplomas (if the case) and other relevant documents. This adherence to the MEST guidelines guarantees that all students meet the academic prerequisites, thus maintaining the integrity and quality of the study program (*Standard 5.2*).

Within UFAGJ and also the Faculty of Social Sciences there are study groups that are designed to promote effective and interactive learning. According to the meeting with faculty management, each modular course is structured to balance teaching and learning with practical work components. This design ensures that students engage actively in their studies and apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings, delivering an enhanced educational experience (*Standard 5.3*).

Students underlined that they receive constant and timely feedback on their performance and assessment results. According to the meeting with students, discussion with the faculty management and further internal regulation, the evaluation system is transparent. The results are promptly communicated towards the students and academic staff underlined is availability for consultations both before and after the exams in order to provide guidance and additional support if the case (*Standard 5.4*).

UFAGJ certifies the results of students through their academic records, maintaining comprehensive documentation of their performance throughout their study cycles. Each semester's results are evaluated and recorded, ensuring that students' academic progress is accurately reflected and certified in accordance with the credit requirements established by the institution (*Standard 5.5*).

Both students and academic staff highlighted towards the ET that there is significant flexibility in accommodating students with special needs regarding their educational experience, including deadlines and formal requirements. For instance, during the meeting, at least one student with special needs was present and confirmed the above-mentioned situation. The faculty underlined their efforts to provide flexible scheduling for additional study consultation sessions. (*Standard 5.6*).

UFAGJ maintains records of student completion rates for all courses and programs. These records form part of the institution's quality indicators, providing valuable data for continuous improvement. The administration ensures that completion rates are regularly reviewed and

used to inform strategic decisions about program enhancements and resource allocation, in the limitative framework of institutional autonomy due to national legislation (e.g. financial allocation) (*Standard 5.7*).

Students were aware of the anti-plagiarism systems to ensure the originality of student work. As discussed during the evaluation meetings, the university uses tools like <https://plagiarismcheck.org/> to verify the authenticity of submissions. This system helps in maintaining academic integrity by systematically checking for plagiarism and ensuring that all student work is original (*Standard 5.8*).

Students are aware of their rights and obligations. The Appeals Committee provides a formal mechanism for students to address grievances and seek redress. Information about student rights, including the right to academic appeals, is widely disseminated through official channels, ensuring that all students are aware of and can exercise their rights (*Standard 5.9*).

The transfer of students between institutions and programs at UFAGJ is governed by clear regulations. The university's internal documents outline the procedures and requirements for transfers, ensuring a smooth and transparent process. This includes verifying academic records, ensuring alignment with program requirements, and facilitating the integration of transfer students into their new academic environments (*Standard 5.10*).

The academic staff at UFAGJ are committed to providing comprehensive consultation and advisory support to students. Regular office hours and additional consultation times have been scheduled to ensure that students can seek assistance and guidance as needed. Tutorial assistance is also available to help students comprehend and apply their learning effectively, thereby enhancing their academic success and overall educational experience. Students have expressed their satisfaction towards the tutoring system provided through some colleagues that receive a scholarship for this scope (*Standard 5.11*).

<i>Standard</i>	<i>Compliance</i>	
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Standard 5.1. There is a clear and formally adopted admission procedure at institutional level that the study programme respects when organising students' recruitment. Admission requirements are consistently and fairly applied for all students.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 5.2. All students enrolled in the study programme possess a high school graduation diploma or other equivalent document of study, according to MEST requirements.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 5.3. The study groups are dimensioned so as to ensure an effective and interactive teaching and learning process.</i>	X	

<i>Standard 5.4. Feedback to students on their performance and results of assessments is given promptly and accompanied by mechanisms for assistance if needed.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 5.5. The results obtained by the students throughout the study cycles are certified by the academic record.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 5.6. Flexible treatment of students in special situations is ensured with respect to deadlines and formal requirements in the programme and to all examinations.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 5.7. Records of student completion rates are kept for all courses and for the programme as a whole and included among quality indicators.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 5.8. Effective procedures are being used to ensure that work submitted by students is original.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 5.9. Students' rights and obligations are made publicly available, promoted to all those concerned and enforced equitably; these will include the right to academic appeals.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 5.10. The students' transfer between higher education institutions, faculties and study programmes is clearly regulated in formal internal documents.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 5.11. Academic staff is available at sufficient scheduled times for consultation and advice to students. Adequate tutorial assistance is provided to ensure understanding and ability to apply learning.</i>	X	

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Peer-learning activities seem to be one of the most appreciated educational for students also within Social Care and Welfare BA. Students have expressed an interest in increasing practical and group activities to improve student engagement. Therefore, the ET would recommend the faculty to address this issue and further take actions in this sense.*
2. *ET recommends that potential improvements of the tutoring system be maintained and evaluated, with particular focus on the first-year students. In order to facilitate the transition from pre-university to university education, an induction programme should be implemented (e.g. one week at the beginning of the first semester in the first academic year).*
3. *Increase the existent support to enlarge student attendance at international event such as conferences or (virtual) mobilities.*
4. *Further resources be allocated to the tutoring system with the aim of improving the annual completion rate of students.*
5. *The issue of student dropout should be addressed through the provision of advice and counselling services to students.*

2.6. Research

There is a lack of relevant and recent scholarly publications at the faculty, which has multiple reasons and cannot be attributed to internal issues only (Standard 6.4). Firstly, the University of Gjakova as the public university in one of the regions of Kosovo, is underfunded and this is reflected in the limited funding for research as well. It is true, the strategic plan of 2021-2025 mentions that the funding for research is “considerable” (p. 24), and lays out different ways of supporting the research, it is not visible, how much has already been spent on research and research support activities throughout those four years. Secondly, the faculty's capacity is not strong regarding research capabilities and the ability to produce research that is publishable in international journals needs systematic and systemic support. Since the capital city absorbs most of the academic capacity in the country, it is understandable why there is a capacity gap in this regard at the university and this faculty, respectively. The university attracts practitioners with great experience and a deep understanding of local needs. Many of these practitioners have participated in the institutional building of local governance institutions and regulations in the area of social welfare. Their experience and knowledge of local needs are immensely valuable, and this is what the faculty capitalizes on. With a good combination of practice and research skills, there is potential for collaborative work that will enrich the understanding of local needs and enhance theoretical perspectives. This is what the research development plan of the university, including this faculty, needs to reflect (Standards 6.1, 6.7.). Apart from the gap in research capacity, the academic staff also lacks proficiency in English, which prevents them from staying current in their fields or gaining an understanding of social care and welfare – fields of study, which are still under development in Kosovo.

At the BA program level, the development of research methods and skills is part of the learning outcomes. In addition to the course on research methods, students practice conducting research through their BA thesis (Standard 6.1).

One way to overcome the challenges that the university faces regarding scholarly publications is through collaborative work. According to the academic staff interviewed by the ET, they often form teams and conduct research collectively. This approach helps them overcome challenges such as English language barriers, time constraints, and other issues they face individually (Standard 6.7). The university also offers training to improve the research capacity of the academic personnel. These efforts are expected to show results in a few years, provided that the capacity-building measures are offered regularly.

Regarding the inclusion of research work in teaching content, the academic staff at the Faculty of Social Sciences are encouraged to include their publications in the syllabus. However, this is not evident in the syllabi of the BA program (Standards 6.8; 6.9).

University-wide policies and regulations define the research and scholarly activities (Standard 6.2) and outline what is recognized as research in accordance with international standards (Standard 6.3). These policies also stipulate that the university holds the ownership of intellectual property (Standard 6.10). Additionally, they provide supportive measures for research activities at both the institutional and system levels (Regulation No. Prot. 05/1159 dated 25.07.2022).

The SER mentions that the criteria for publishing academic research are "respected for the selection, appointment, reappointment, and advancement procedures of the academic staff" (SER, p.99). However, the sample contract of the academic staff was not available, making it impossible for the ET to assess the exact requirements for academic personnel regarding their research productivity.

Despite these constraints, the faculty remains active in the Gjakova region, organizing conferences that benefit the students. These events keep the university at the center of developments in social care and welfare, ensuring that main stakeholders and partners remain engaged in ongoing developments and exchanges (Standard 6.5).

Additionally, the faculty is taking small steps to build international collaborations. For instance, according to the head of the faculty, there is a recent partnership with Iowa University. This exposure to international experience can provide a positive boost for the academic personnel, allowing them to gain global insights and receive mentorship on conducting research effectively.

Regarding the involvement of students in research, there are very few, if any, instances of collaboration between professors and students on research or joint scientific projects (Standard 6.11).

<i>Standard</i>	<i>Compliance</i>	
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Standard 6.1. The study program has defined scientific/applied research objectives (on its own or as part of a research centre or interdisciplinary program), which are also reflected in the research development plan of the institution; sufficient financial, logistic and human resources are allocated for achieving the proposed research objectives.</i>	X 0.5	
<i>Standard 6.2. Expectations for teaching staff involvement in research and scholarly activities are clearly specified, and performance in relation to these expectations is considered in staff evaluation and promotion criteria.</i>	X	

<i>Standard 6.3. Clear policies are established for defining what is recognized as research, consistent with international standards and established norms in the field of study of the program.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 6.4. The academic staff has a proven track record of research results on the same topics as their teaching activity.</i>		X
<i>Standard 6.5. The academic and research staff publish their work in speciality magazines or publishing houses, scientific/applied/artistic products are presented at conferences, sessions, symposiums, seminars etc. and contracts, expertise, consultancy, conventions, etc. are provided to partners inside the country and/or abroad.</i>	X 0.5	
<i>Standard 6.6. Research is validated through: scientific and applied research publications, artistic products, technological transfer through consultancy centres, scientific parks and other structures for validation.</i>	X 0.5	
<i>Standard 6.7. Each academic staff member and researcher has produced at least an average of one scientific/applied research publication or artistic outcome/product per year for the past three years.</i>	X 0.5	
<i>Standard 6.8. Academic and research staff publish under the name of the institution in Kosovo they are affiliated to as full time staff.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 6.9/6.8. Academic staff are encouraged to include in their teaching information about their research and scholarly activities that are relevant to courses they teach, together with other significant research developments in the field.</i>	X 0.5	
<i>Standard 6.10. Policies are established for ownership of intellectual property and clear procedures set out for commercialization of ideas developed by staff and students.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 6.11. Students are engaged in research projects and other activities.</i>		X

Compliance level: Partially Compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Develop a coherent strategy on developing research capacity on the faculty (or university level).*
2. *Promote and support collaborative work to capitalize on the combination of research skills, English language and experience.*
3. *Introduce small research projects/tasks within the program or as extracurricular activities to include students in the research processes.*

2.7. Infrastructure and Resources

The university has a standalone building of the Faculty of Philology & Education & Faculty of Social Sciences, where the BA program is being offered. This building is in good shape and provides all the necessary space and infrastructure for the successful implementation of the program. It is sufficient to accommodate the number of students the faculty has planned for and offers ample space that can easily be converted into student gathering areas. These spaces will help students spend more time together, facilitating joint projects and the exchange of ideas and experiences. Additionally, the university has a dormitory that houses students from nearby countries, such as North Macedonia and Albania (Standard 7.1; 7.4). The buildings and infrastructure are state property, which provides stability. However, the lengthy bureaucratic procedures make it rigid and difficult for the university management, and the faculty, to make necessary changes in a short period (Standard 7.3).

The university has also initiated a campus development project, which, in a few years, will significantly enhance the overall student experience. However, it is highly unlikely that the new campus will be ready for operation within the accreditation lifespan of the program.

The provided budget included in the SER (pp. 122-123) is for the university and does not specify the allocations to the faculty, making it difficult to assess whether the resources are sufficient for the sustainability of the BA program. Centralization of the budget is a common financial management practice in public universities. Nevertheless, judging from the resource allocation, the largest sum is planned for the salaries of the academic and administrative personnel. It is not clear whether the section on 'goods and services' includes the purchase of books for the library or subscriptions to electronic journals, for instance (Standard 7.2).

The library resources, particularly electronic subscriptions, are limited, and the library space requires significant improvement as it can currently accommodate only a few students (Standard 7.5). The university also has developed e-services to support students' needs and help organize their learning experience.

The Faculty building is designed to accommodate individuals with special needs, including those with mobility challenges and visual impairments. Administrative and faculty rooms, along with one or two classrooms, are located on the first floor and feature Braille signs. The Faculty collaborates with the Association of the Blind, which assists in converting text to Braille and provides orientation signs within the building. It is worth noting, however, that the bathrooms are not yet adapted. This may be because the institution is avoiding infrastructure expenses in light of its mid-term plan to move to a new campus, construction of which is set to begin this year (Standard 7.6).

<i>Standard</i>	<i>Compliance</i>	
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Standard 7.1. The adequate long-term implementation of the study program is ensured in quantitative terms as regards premises, human resources and equipment. At the same time, it is guaranteed that qualitative aspects are also taken into account.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 7.2. There is a financial plan at the level of the study program that would demonstrate the sustainability of the study program for the next minimum three years.</i>	X 0.5	
<i>Standard 7.3. The higher education institution must demonstrate with adequate documents (property deeds, lease contracts, inventories, invoices etc.) that, for the study program submitted for evaluation it possesses the following, for the next at least three years:</i> <i>a) owned or rented spaces adequate for the educational process;</i> <i>b) owned or rented laboratories, with the adequate equipment for all the compulsory disciplines within the curriculum, wherever the analytical syllabus includes such activities;</i> <i>c) adequate software for the disciplines of study included in the curriculum, with utilisation licence;</i> <i>d) library equipped with reading rooms, group work rooms and its own book stock according to the disciplines included in the curricula.</i>	X	
<i>Standard 7.4. The number of seats in the lecture rooms, seminar rooms and laboratories must be related to the study groups' size (series, groups, subgroups); the applicative activities for the speciality disciplines included in the curricula are carried out in laboratories equipped with IT equipment.</i>	X	

<p><i>Standard 7.5. The education institution's libraries must ensure, for each of the study programs:</i></p> <p><i>a) a number of seats in the reading rooms corresponding to at least 10% of the total number of students in the study program;</i></p> <p><i>b) a number of seats in the group work rooms corresponding to at least 10% of the total number of students in the study program;</i></p> <p><i>c) their own book stock from Albanian and foreign speciality literature, enough to cover the disciplines within the curricula, out of which at least 50% should represent book titles or speciality courses of recognised publishers, from the last 10 years;</i></p> <p><i>d) a book stock within its own library with a sufficient number of books so as to cover the needs of all students in the cycle and year of study the respective discipline is provided for;</i></p> <p><i>e) a sufficient number of subscriptions to Albanian and foreign publications and periodicals, according to the stated mission.</i></p>		X
<p><i>Standard 7.6. The infrastructure and facilities dedicated to the implementation of the program is adapted to students with special needs.</i></p>	X	

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Substantially improve the library resources including electronic subscriptions, also improve the scarce and sitting area in the library or space for the group work.*
2. *Use the available space in the building and create spaces for students' socializing and gathering (low-cost interior redesign will suffice).*

3. FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

(Insert all comments or observations, commendations and suggestions relating to this general area and its allocated standards, as specified in the KAA Accreditation manual. Consideration should be given to the adequacy of processes and results achieved in each of the standards.)

STANDARD	COMPLIANCE LEVEL
1. Mission, objectives, and administration	Fully compliant
2. Quality management	Fully compliant
3. Academic staff	Fully compliant
4. Educational process content	Substantially compliant
5. Students	Fully compliant
6. Research	Partially Compliant
7. Infrastructure and resources	Substantially compliant
OVERALL COMPLIANCE	Substantially compliant

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the study program **BA in Social Care and Welfare** offered by the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Pristina is *Substantially compliant* with the standards included in the *KAA Accreditation manual* and, therefore, recommends re-*accrediting* the study program.

Student quota recommended: 60 students

Duration: Five (5) Years

Expert Team

Chair



(Signature)

Dr. Stavros Parlalis

(Print Name)

17.07.2024

(Date)

Member



(Signature)

Dr. Elene Jiblatze

(Print Name)

17.07.2024

(Date)

Member



(Signature)

Stefan-Marius Deaconu

(Print Name)

17.07.2024

(Date)