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Kosovo Accreditation Agency



UNIVERSITY "HAXHI ZEKA" PEJA
BUSINESS FACULTY

MASTER IN BUSINESS INFORMATICS
Re-accreditation

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

June 2024, Peja

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: 24th of June 2024

Expert Team (ET) members:

- *Prof. Andrea Serban*
- *Prof. Miklós Hoffmann*
- *Mr. Arnoldas Solovjovas, Student Expert*

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- *Leona Kovaçi, KAA Officer*

Sources of information for the Report:

- *Self-Evaluation Report (SER) submitted by the University "Haxhi Zeka", Peja,*
- *KAA Accreditation Manual 2022;*
- *Information obtained during the site visit: visiting facilities and meetings conducted with: the management of the faculty where the programme is integrated, quality assurance representatives and administrative staff, teaching staff, heads of the study programme, teaching staff, students, graduates, employers of graduates;*
- *KAA Manual for external evaluation of higher education institutions (2021);*
- *Documents provided by the university (Annexes, Syllabus, CVs);*
- *University website*
- *Additional documents requested by the ET:*
 - *The project team composition for the research projects in which students (during their master studies) are/were actively involved and a list with the research papers (articles, conference participations) co-authored by the students and professors*
 - *The documents (or the link to the documents): last version (dated) of the Code of Ethics for scientific research (no issue date available on the provided document) and Code of ethics for administrative staff at the 'Haxhi Zeka' University in Peja (only the document from 2020 is provided)*
 - *The link to the Code of Ethics for students on the university website (in any language)*
 - *A list of the training sessions for academic staff professional development - including the participants list – organised by The Center for Excellence in Teaching*

- *Quality assurance - The questionnaires designed for employers and the evaluation results for the Employer Questionnaire (please replace the Annex 14.6)*
- *The link to the last Summary results from the questionnaire “Student- Teacher” on the university website*
- *An example of an individual development plan sent by a member of the academic staff to the Dean’s Office and an example of Performance Evaluation Report for an academic staff*
- *Regulation for drafting, presenting and defending the master thesis*
- *Table with drop-out rates*
- *Translated to English Questionnaires for students*

Criteria used for institutional and program evaluations

- *KAA Accreditation Manual*

1.2. Site visit schedule

Time	Meeting	Participants
09:30 – 10:15	Meeting with the management of the faculty where the programme is integrated	Prof.dr. Halit Shabani Dean, Prof.asoc.dr. Vlora Berisha Vice-dean, Prof.asoc.dr. Fisnik Morina Vice-dean, LLM Liridon Cukaj secretary of faculty.
10:15 – 11:00	Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff	Msc. Gentiana Kastrati Director for quality assurance and evaluation LLM Luan Lulaj, QA clerk, Msc. Agron Halitaj QA, LLM Liridon Cukaj secretary of faculty, Msc. Besa Gora Gashi student service,
11:00 – 11:10	Short Break	
11:10 – 12:10	Meeting with the heads of the study programme	Prof.dr.Edmond Beqiri Prof.ass. Gentiana Gega
12:10 – 13:10	Lunch break	
13:10 – 13.40	Visiting Facilities	Prof.asc.dr. Ylber Januzaj, Prof.dr.Edmond Beqiri Prof.asoc.dr. Vlora Berisha Vice-dean, Prof.asoc.dr. Fisnik Morina Vice-dean,
13:40 – 14:40	Meeting with teaching staff	Prof.dr.Vehbi Ramaj, FT

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		Prof.asc.dr. Ylber Januzaj, FT Prof.ass.dr. Emin Neziraj, FT Prof.ass. Vjosa Hajdari, FT Prof.ass. Driton Sylqa FT Dr.sc.Mimoza Luta, PT Phd (C) Jahja Lataj PT
14:40 – 15:25	Meeting with students	Albiona Kelmendi (first year), Diana Kasumaj(first year) Jetmira Berisha (second year) Erlinda Kasumi (second year), Berat Maksutaj (second year), Erblin Januzaj (second year)
15:25 – 15:35	Short Break	
15:35 – 16:20	Meeting with graduates	Erzen Krasniqi Rame Elezaj Labinot Dezdari Sokol Morina Lumturije Avdimetaj, Bekim Lajqi
16:20 – 17:00	Meeting with employers of graduates	Burim Berisha (IMBUS and COM-ING), Emin Blaka (PTK-Vala), Irfete Pasha (AFK), Zana Kastrati (Elkos), Emin Blaka (PTK), Xhevdet Spahija (Agency for Finance in Kosovo), Vanesa Muja (Dukagjini Cooperation)
17:00 – 17:10	Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts	
17:10 – 17:20	Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and program	

1.3. A brief overview of the institution under evaluation

The Faculty of Business is an academic unit of "Haxhi Zeka" University in Peja, which functions as a public higher education institution. It operates under the legal framework of the Republic of Kosovo and adheres to the standards and regulations set forth by national and international educational bodies.

The Faculty of Business has a rich history dating back to its establishment in 1960 as the "High School of Economics - Commercial" in Peja. Initially founded as an independent institution by the decision of the Executive Council of KSAK, it became an academic unit of the University of Pristina in the 1970s. Following reforms in 2002 aligned with the Bologna Declaration, it was renamed the "University School of Business" and later the "Faculty of Business" in 2004. In 2012, it became a foundational academic and scientific unit of the newly established "Haxhi Zeka" University in Peja.

The mission of the Faculty of Business is to provide high-quality education and research opportunities in the fields of informatics, economics, trade, financial accounting, and tourism. The institution aims to meet the socio-economic development needs of the region by equipping students with theoretical knowledge and practical skills necessary for the business environment. It focuses on research activities that contribute to both local and international academic and professional communities.

The Faculty of Business currently offers the following accredited academic programs:

- Bachelor of Science in Information Technology in Business and Economics (from 2022 to present)
- Master of Science in Business Informatics (from 2021-2024)
- Master of Science in Human Resource Management (from 2014-present)
- Bachelor of Science in Business Management with 3 concentrations (from 2020 onwards)
- Master of Science in Business Management with 3 concentrations (from 2020 onwards)

The Faculty offers a Master's study program in Business Informatics, under evaluation, which blends theoretical knowledge with specific scientific and professional research skills. It was accredited in 2021 for three years. The curriculum is designed to be dynamic and interactive, with mandatory and elective subjects covering qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, applied informatics, and business management. The program emphasizes the practical implementation of theoretical concepts in the business sphere and is structured over two years, with a focus on research-oriented subjects in the second year.

The Master's study program in Business Informatics at the Faculty of Business prepares students for expert careers in various ICT-related roles, including:

- ICT Researcher: Focuses on researching innovations in information science applied to business, preparing students for a future as scientists in the field.

- ICT Analyst: Prepares students to become consultants who provide advice or services on ICT-related business issues or business-related ICT issues.
- ICT Entrepreneur: Equips students with the skills to become independent entrepreneurs developing ICT products applied to business.

By combining rigorous academic training with practical research opportunities, this program enables students to develop the expertise needed to drive technological advancements and strategic decision-making in the business world.

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 mission of the Haxhi Zeka University is to strengthen and develop UHZ through student recruitment assistance, engaging in activities to raise the reputation of the University at home and abroad, as well as promoting sustainable links between alumni, students, university staff and University friends.

The Master Program's mission was revised after the accreditation visit in 2021, and the current mission is: *The study mission of the Master of Science in Business Informatics program is the advancement of research opportunities that enable a higher development of the region for students, professors and graduates to provide an environment for digital transformation and entrepreneurial innovations of business and other governmental and non-governmental institutions.* It was updated based on the ET recommendation to include entrepreneurship skills and a digitization component, which aligns with the objectives of the master program.

The Master's program of *Business Informatics* in Peja, Kosovo offers a curriculum aligned with the National Qualifications Framework and the needs of the European labour market, as mentioned in the SER. It is designed to meet the needs of both public and private sectors, and address specific challenges in Kosovo's labour market. The program encourages critical thinking, real-world IT problem analysis, and innovative solution proposals. It corresponds to Level 7 of the KKK Higher Education Bologna cycle, leading to a Master of Science degree. The SER mentioned that based on the 2021 Draft External Evaluation, a matrix of learning outcomes was developed, to enhance the program's outcomes. In 2023, after institutional accreditation, the expected outcomes of the Program were reviewed. Currently, it is considered that after graduation, as student will be able to:

- *Demonstrates developed knowledge in research and critical thinking on key concepts, methodologies, current technological advances, and interdisciplinary approaches in the field of Applied Informatics applied to different business segments.*
- *Applies theoretical and practical knowledge on business transformation and digitalization, developing new business models, and advanced use of information technology in business operations.*
- *Applies necessary knowledge in the fields of development and presentation of information systems.*
- *Applies developed skills in gathering, reviewing, evaluating, and interpreting information.*
- *Analyzes strategic planning for digital business, information technology, information infrastructure, architecture, and integration systems in organizations.*
- *Demonstrates acquired knowledge in modelling, designing, and solving software that ensures the quality improvement of information in the organization.*
- *Applies theoretical and practical experience in the function of leading a department for information technology, business processes, or digital business.*
- *Demonstrates professional and research skills to pursue academic or scientific studies in the discipline of business informatics at a higher level of education.*

The Master of Business Informatics study program emphasizes a structured teaching approach and scientific research. It provides a curriculum with detailed learning objectives, focusing on developing essential skills and knowledge for students. The program offers opportunities for research through independent projects, faculty collaborations, and internships. The master program aims to enhance business effectiveness and efficiency by integrating business knowledge, management skills, and information technology. The interdisciplinary approach combines business and management science with information and computer science, addressing current issues for organizations globally.

The Faculty of Business of the university follows the policies, notably the Strategic Plan 2023-2026 of the institution in organizing its academic and scientific activities. These policies, regulations and instructions are all available publicly on the website for all interested parties. The university regulation of master's studies was recently revised, in which all obligations and rights related to this level of studies are foreseen, including formal policies, guidelines and regulations dealing with recurring procedural or academic matters, and actions of the study cycle are clearly described. The schedule of master's studies, and the consultation period of each professor are also publicly available.

"Haxhi Zeka" University has a Code of Ethics, and all the academic, administrative staff and students of the Faculty of Business adhere to and respect this Code. As it is clear from this Code, the university, and consequently the Faculty of Business promotes fundamental rights and ethical principles, such as gender and racial equality, freedom of thought and expression,

collegiality, integrity, enjoyment and respect for rights, respect for the integrity and dignity of the person, autonomy of scientific and teaching work, equality and justice, academic honesty, professionalism, impartiality, prohibition of discrimination and harassment. During each lecture, students are informed by the professor about these rules and ethical considerations of learning and scientific research.

All policies, regulations, terms of reference and statements of responsibility relating to the management and delivery of the program are reviewed at the beginning of each academic year and amended as necessary in changing circumstances. The only exception is the strategic plan 2021-2024, which has been revised after 3 years, and the new, current strategic plan 2023-2026 has been published.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. The ET recommends to include in the revised learning outcomes of the Master of Science in Business Informatics program, the reference to entrepreneurship to ensure alignment with the program's mission*

2.2. Quality Management

The self-evaluation process is regulated by by-laws at university level, notably based on the University Statute, Article 206, the Quality Assurance Strategy 2020 – 2024 (Strategy for Quality Assurance and Evaluation), the Regulation for the quality assurance and assessment system and the Guide for quality assurance. These documents are all available on the website and they clearly define the overall framework of the quality assurance system of the institution. The regulation mandates the participation of all staff members and students in the evaluation process, including self-evaluation of all staff members. As per regulation, staff involvement across all levels of the hierarchy is well assured through various questionnaires.

The quality evaluation processes of the Faculty are well integrated into the QA framework of the University, regulating management measures at all organizational levels, assessment of study programs and courses, the organization of studies, the evaluation of teaching quality, and the evaluation of research activities as well. It is clearly described in the SER and also well assured in the interview phase, that quality assurance processes within the academic unit are regular activities that well contribute to the development of the overall quality culture, while

the evaluation of study programs are fully integrated into normal planning and development processes to further improve overall performance related to this study programme.

It is very convincing that all aspects of program planning and delivery, including administrative aspects, such as services and resources available/provided at the university level, are included in the internal quality assurance procedures. It is a good practice that specific questionnaires exist for the administration. The revision of the study program, evaluation of the teaching process, as well as research within the academic unit are also included in this process. As it was clarified in the interview phase, PDCA principles are applied with the leadership of the Council of the QA.

According to the Statute of the University, article 209, evaluations from quality assurance processes, including internal and external processes, initially serve to verify the fulfilment of standards, as well as for the implementation of adequate recommendations. It is a positive aspect that additional trainings are offered by the Center of Excellence. One aspect which is less convincingly evaluated and involved in this quality assurance and recommendation system is the quality of scientific publications. It is advised to support professors in technical writing and finding the most suitable journals for publication in order to further improve the quality of research dissemination and make this closer to the EU standards, for example by encouraging Q1-Q2 publications according to Scimago ranking.

Survey data about all courses are being collected from students, and occasionally from graduates and employers. The results of these evaluations are made publicly available. While these survey data are being collected, the data providers are not fully informed on the effects and potential interventions of the critical issues. For example, during the interview phase students were not aware of any effect of their feedback. This aspect must be improved by informing the data providers what steps have been made after collecting the data.

According to the SEP, the evaluation of the study programs within the academic unit is carried out every two years. The process is clearly defined and effective. While this is adequate in general, due to the fact that the program contains aspects of computer science, which is a field developing extremely fast, it is advised to briefly check the study program every odd year as well.

As it is clearly stated in the SEP, the entire quality assurance system within the institution is regulated by the university-level Regulation for quality assurance and evaluation, in which the processes, mechanisms and instruments of quality assurance are all defined, with clear schedule and deadlines. This document and other quality assurance documents are continuously evaluated, revised and improved at university level, which is adequate.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

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ET recommendations:

- 1. Support professors in technical writing and finding the most suitable journals for publication in order to further improve the quality of research dissemination and make this closer to the EU standards, for example by encouraging Q1-Q2 publications according to Scimago ranking.*
- 2. Inform the data providers what steps have been made after collecting the survey data.*
- 3. Beside the biannual survey, it is advised to briefly check the study program every odd year as well.*

2.3. Academic Staff

According to the SER, academic staff with regular work contracts are employed according to the Regulation on Selection Procedures regarding the election, re-election and advancement of full academic personnel UHZ. 025/23, dated 06.01.2023 (publicly available on the University's website) in accordance with the Kosovo's internal laws. This information highlights that the academic staff is selected through procedures foreseen by the legal provisions in force, even if the SER does not provide clear information regarding the (last) open call for job vacancies proposed by the faculty to better highlight the transparency of the process. However, the SER refers to the steps of the competitions for academic staff.

The university provided in the SER a table with regular and engaged academic staff at the Faculty of Business, with activities in the Business Informatics Master Program. It includes 12 full time (FT) regular teaching staff, and 4 part time (PT) staff engaged in the Faculty of Business in the Master's in Business Informatics. For each of them, the academic degree, science degree, duration of official contract, workload for teaching, consulting, administrative activities, and results of the research activity are provided.

As mentioned before, the SER provides detailed information on the academic staff assigned to the study program. It consists of 16 teachers, of which 12 (75%) are full-time (FT) and 4 (25%) are part-time (PT). Fourteen teaching staff members (13 professors and 1 teaching assistant) have a PhD title (6 PhD titles in the field of Information Technology, and 8 PhD titles in the field of Business Management and Economics), and 2 teaching assistants are PhD candidates. Considering the field covered by the Master Program (Business Informatics), the information regarding the field of science degree (1. Information Technology, and 2. Business Management and Economics), as well as the CVs of the teaching staff, proves that they have good qualification for teaching the courses, highlighting the fact that the program is taught by academic staff with relevant qualification. Their contracts comply with the requirements of the

university regulations (University Statute) and legal requirements related to the position in which they are called (assistant, teacher or part time collaborator) according to national regulations.

The Faculty declares in the SER that, according to the University Statute, none of the full-time academic staff has more than two teaching positions in any Higher Education Institution. This information was confirmed by the teaching staff.

Considering that 75% of the teaching staff are full time employees, most master's lectures (a similar percentage) are covered by regular academic staff, as SER mentions.

The program meets the criteria related to the employment of at least one full-time staff member with a PhD title for each student group (defined by the statute of the institution) and for every 60 ECTS credits in the study program. The Master Program has 14 Professors/Assistant with a PhD title, sufficient for the 120 ECTS and the 60 students of the program.

According to the UHZ Statute, the university is obliged to offer suitable conditions for scientific research and enable the academic staff to achieve competitive results at the international level. The Expert Team requested as an additional document: the list of training sessions for academic staff professional development – including the participants list – organized by The Center for Excellence. The university provided the list with the training sessions organized by University "Haxhi Zeka", some of which were organized in collaboration with other universities. The list does not include the number of training hours. For some courses, only the year is mentioned (e.g., 2022). The SER mentions that some teaching staff attended trainings abroad (Netherlands, Poland) and that 3 professors participated in Fulbright Programme. Also, the professors have the right to request from the Senate a free year for research activity in a foreign university (sabbatical year with full salary). These activities help academic staff to increase the quality of teaching and research activity. Also, the university stimulates academic staff to publish scientific works in WoS or Scopus, by offering financial support.

There is no evidence (how the need for a specific training for teaching staff facing difficulties is identified, whether the teaching staff facing difficulties attend the trainings and how the improvement process is monitored) that opportunities for professional development are provided to academic staff facing difficulties. During the site visit, this question was addressed and the answer was that there was no such a case identified, even though the Statute mentions specific measures to improve the quality for those teachers who have reached the 10% of the lowest results in the evaluation.

Regular academic staff adhere to a 40-hour work week, during which they prepare and offer lessons, seminars, and exercises, supervise seminar papers and master's theses, ensure smooth exam periods, and set two days per week for student consultations, with at least two hours per day dedicated to this task. During the on-site visit, both teachers and students confirmed that consultations take place according to the schedule and students' needs. Each 1-2 members of

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the academic staff have their own office, where the schedule is announced. These responsibilities are outlined in the Regulation on Workload for Teachers, Associates, and Assistants.

3.8 At the end of each academic year, the 'Self-Assessment' process is conducted, gathering input from academic staff about their satisfaction with working conditions, administrative services, technical support, professional development opportunities, and their involvement in university decision-making. The last Summary report of the evaluation from the questionnaire "Self-evaluation of the Academic staff" is from September 2022. Students evaluate the academic staff through the 'Student - Teacher' questionnaire at the end of each semester, providing feedback on courses and professors. These results are also published on the university's website. The SER mentions that the dean evaluates regular and engaged teachers through the 'Dean - Teacher' questionnaire at the end of each academic year, assessing dedication to work, quality improvement, and responsibility for task performance. The last report (2022) provides very brief information: a very short paragraph for each faculty, without specific recommendations. The Expert Team requested additional documents: An example of an individual development plan sent by a member of the academic staff to the Dean's Office and an example of a Performance Evaluation Report for an academic staff. The university provided an example of an individual development plan, which is actually a document with the weight by activities of total annual working hours, and not exactly a development plan. No Performance Evaluation report, signed by the dean and the evaluated professor was provided. The documents do not specify how often peer evaluations occur or how feedback is integrated into professional development plans. These formal evaluations, according to the standards, should occur on a formal basis at least once per year. For the Academic Staff Self-Assessment and Dean-Teacher evaluation, the last available results are from September 2022.

The university implements strategies for improving the quality of teaching, as regulated by the Regulation on Quality Assurance and Evaluation System (ref. no. 763/2022, dated 05.04.2022) and Article 213 of the University Statute. These strategies include an annual teaching observation scheme, annual student evaluations, individual staff evaluations, and professional development opportunities. The university also supports quality enhancement through various projects and training sessions, which introduce contemporary teaching methods and the use of up-to-date literature. Additionally, teachers update their syllabuses annually, ensuring that the literature is current and relevant, not older than 10 years. However, the Expert Team identified in the syllabuses references older than 10 years, but this could be acceptable for the theoretical background.

Teachers retire at the age of 65, after which they can continue to engage in part-time teaching according to the relevant legislation. The Statute allows retired professors to be awarded the title of "Professor Emeritus" by the Senate. This provides a structured pathway for continued academic involvement up to the age of 70.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. The ET recommends to clearly and carefully identify the teaching staff facing difficulties. These difficulties can arise in both teaching and research areas. Therefore, the ET suggests providing training on both fronts. Particular attention should be paid to how the need for specific training for teaching staff facing difficulties is identified, whether they participate in such training, and how the improvement process is monitored;*
- 2. As both research methodologies and teaching methods evolve rapidly, the ET recommends continuing the development of training sessions for the academic staff on a recurring basis, with a sufficient time schedule, to include as many professors as possible. These sessions should be focused on timely topics such as active teaching strategies, new research methodologies, etc.*
- 3. Greater concern should be shown for the utility and efficiency of the training provided to the teaching staff by monitoring the results through questionnaires and evaluation reports to improve the content and topics of the training sessions;*
- 4. The ET recommends paying greater attention to the evaluation of academic staff, conducting it on a regular basis, at least once per year. Additionally, the evaluation should include self-evaluation, student evaluations, peer evaluations, and supervisors' evaluations. The individual development plans should be more detailed. A mechanism should also be put in place to highlight how the targets set in individual development plans are met and how feedback is integrated into professional development plans.*

2.4. Educational Process Content

The study programme is overall a good mixture of the two interrelated fields, Computer Science and Economics, providing a theoretical background of both fields, together with a thorough practical knowledge. The curriculum is fully in line with the international recommendations and good practices, and has been updated since the last accreditation procedure, following the recommendations of that report. During the interview phase it was clarified that the revision of the curriculum is a regular process. The ECTS calculation is very well justified in great detail in the SER, and credits are proportional to the weekly working hours necessary for the given course.

The study program fully complies with the National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. Most of the components of the program are combined in an appropriate way to achieve the specified learning outcomes. However, as it was reported in the interview phase, soft skills like project management, communications skills, language competencies appear somewhat sporadically in the curriculum and are not properly provided and evaluated. This aspect must be strengthened. Due to the employers, statistical skills, data science, and cloud computing aspects should also be covered in a more comprehensive way. It would also be advantageous to build stronger cooperation between business and university, involving more real-life examples in the courses.

The disciplines and scientific competencies within the curriculum are provided in a well-thought-out system and meet the definition and precise determination of the general and specific competencies. Several learning outcomes for the study program are listed and built in the curriculum, which is positive.

The courses within the curriculum have analytical syllabi which well comprise the objectives, the basic thematic content, learning outcomes, the distribution of classes, seminars and applicative activities, students' assessment system and the references. However, clear connection to the overall outcomes of the study program and the specific outcomes of the courses is not always clear, partly due to the various different forms of the syllabi. This should be unified.

The language of studies in this study program is Albanian.

It was well justified through the interview phase that the student-teacher relationship in this study program – and probably throughout the entire university – is exemplary. It is a real partnership with mutual respect and responsibility of reaching the learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are explained and discussed with students from the perspective of their relevance to the students' development.

In several cases teaching strategies are well fit for the different types of learning outcomes of the given course. Strategies of teaching and assessment set out in the program and course specifications are followed with sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of different groups of students, notably with students with special needs. However, soft skills, for example project-related skills are not properly evaluated – in some courses these are included in the syllabus as learning outcomes, but the assessment methods are set to standard ways: exams and test I-II. This aspect should be reconsidered and the assessment methods should be adjusted accordingly to better cover the adequate evaluation of the desired competences.

That said, as it was clear from the feedback given by the students during the interview phase, assessment mechanisms are conducted fairly and objectively, and they are clearly

communicated to students at the very beginning of each course, together with the rights and obligations of students, based on the course syllabus.

The Master's program in Business Informatics implements a structured and well defined approach to student engagement through a precisely calculated system of ECTS in terms of student engagement hours. Appropriate, valid and reliable mechanisms are developed for verifying standards of student achievement. The standard of work required for different grades is consistent over time, and comparable in ECTS validation of courses offered within a program. An important aspect of this approach is limiting student engagement to 40 hours per week with a careful calculation, an appropriate value corresponding to the working hours of a worker in the European labour market. According to the SER, this time limit aims to ensure a reasonable balance between academic engagement and other life needs, allowing students to have a rich and successful learning experience.

Regarding the policies and procedures that include actions to be taken in to dealing with situations where standards of student achievement are inadequate or inconsistently assessed, the SER provides clear and convincing description. In cases where student achievement standards are inadequate or do not match the expectations outlined in the course syllabus, additional support and improvement opportunities are provided through the tutoring process. This may include the offering of additional lectures, exercises, and activities for teaching and learning process. These processes are carried out in accordance with the University Senate. Tutoring is also mentioned as a relevant tool to help students in improving their performance, although this was not fully confirmed in the interview phase.

The Business Informatics study program includes a relevant practice phase through the course "Internship and Career Development", and further small-scale practice parts in some of the other courses. In the third semester, each student is required to conduct an internship, supervised by the professor who is in charge of the course, along with a supervisor from the company where the internship is conducted. This is fully adequate to the needs. The evaluation of the work of students is based on a report on their learning experience and knowledge gained during the practical learning activities. It is also positive that the Career Development Center provides efficient support for this phase of the program.

The University "Haxhi Zeka" has placed several activities to improve to prepare students for the challenges of the local job market, and also makes an effort to ensure a close connection between the university and the relevant local industry stakeholders. In order to facilitate the above mentioned practice stage, the university signed cooperation agreements with over 40 different institutions and organizations, including large companies in the informatics and energy sectors. It was clear from the interview phase that the industry sector would be open to further strengthen this cooperation, and even financially support some aspects, for example the system of small-scale research projects or summer schools.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Soft skills regarding project management, communications skills, language competencies appear somewhat sporadically in the curriculum and are not properly provided. This aspect should be reconsidered in the curriculum.*
- 2. Soft skills and project-related skills are not properly evaluated – in some courses these are included in the syllabus as learning outcomes, but the assessment methods are set to standard ways: exams and test I-II. This aspect should be reconsidered.*
- 3. It would be advantageous to build stronger cooperation between business and university, involving more real-life examples in the courses where appropriate.*

2.5. Students

The admission process for the evaluated study program is governed by officially approved documents, including the University's Statute (SER, page 48). According to the Report, candidates must meet specific requirements to participate in the selection process: they need a bachelor's degree (earning 180 ECTS credits) in a relevant field (such as Informatics, Computer Engineering, Management, Business, Economics, etc.) and must pass the entrance exam. The table on page 50 of the SER shows that there were over 70 applicants for the program, and all places were filled for the academic years 2021-2023. The entrance exam assesses candidates' skills in business and IT (SER, page 49). If there are many candidates, they must score at least 7.5 points to pass. During the site visit, students indicated that the entrance exam effectively filters candidates who are well-prepared for the program. They mentioned that the exam is not overly difficult and tests the basics learned in undergraduate programs. The Report also outlines the procedures for recognising diplomas from foreign countries (SER, page 49).

The program's maximum student capacity is 60 (SER, page 3). During the site visit, the experts inquired whether this number allows for effective teaching and learning processes in lectures and seminars. The teachers agreed that the current number is manageable, enabling the division of students into smaller seminar groups and equitable distribution of tasks. The experts also asked about future plans for increasing group sizes. The administration stated that with the current infrastructure, further enlargement is not feasible without compromising teaching quality. The experts concluded that the current student number is appropriate for maintaining quality laboratory work, effective seminars, and manageable workloads for teachers.

The Report mentions that the teaching-learning process is well-regulated and approved by the University Senate (SER, page 50). During the site visit, teachers noted that they have full

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autonomy over student evaluations: they can decide on the grading system and the amount of work assessed during the semester and in the final exam. However, teachers cannot base the grade solely on the final exam. The experts believe the grading process is well-defined, allowing students to receive feedback and improve based on their semester performance. Final grades are stored in the University's internal SEMS data system, enabling the Quality Office to monitor and analyse student performance (SER, pages 52-53). The expert team had some doubts about the pass rate data collection, as it does not necessarily reflect teaching effectiveness.

During the site visit, students were asked about the learning process and whether teachers provide feedback during or at the end of the semester based on mid-term tests or the final exam. Students explained that most teachers are easily reachable at any time, even at night, through various channels (emails, social media, etc.). The Report states that all teaching staff must schedule at least two consultations per week with students (SER, page 55). Teachers welcome questions from students after their performance and provide feedback on areas needing improvement. They are also flexible regarding issues during the learning process, such as training or inability to attend the final exam. The University has a regulated quality assurance system, part of which involves collecting student feedback at the end of each semester. This data is provided to the central quality assurance committee, which processes and returns it to the faculty. Additional documents showed that students are generally satisfied with the study process. During the site visit, experts inquired whether students complete surveys because it is mandatory or because they see improvements. Most students noted that teachers receive the feedback and adjust their teaching methods accordingly.

The University employs several plagiarism check systems. The Report mentions a system called Anti-Plagiarism, designed for regular work checks (SER, page 53). After submission, teachers receive a Report with all necessary information on the students' papers. Students writing their final thesis must upload their work to the Plagiarism Check system, funded through the Erasmus project (SER, page 53). This system checks for similarities among works and detects text generated by artificial intelligence. The regulation procedures and similarity indexes are detailed in Annex 29. The expert team believes that the existing academic ethics regulations are well-developed and that these procedures should be regularly communicated to the academic community.

The official University website provides students with information about their rights and duties, as stated in the Student Manuals (SER, page 54). During the site visit, students explained that they are aware of commonly used rights, such as the ability to appeal and express their ideas and opinions. The experts were pleased to talk with a student representative, who mentioned that the faculty allows student representatives to express their opinions and feel like equal members in any faculty body.

The Report indicates that the University has a well-regulated student transfer system between higher education institutions. However, none of the current students participated in Erasmus Mobility during the site visit, primarily due to full-time job commitments. The experts understand that this is common in many countries and universities but suggest considering short-term internships as a potential solution.

Students expressed gratitude to their teachers for their academic support and assistance in finding jobs or internships. The same applies to the career development centre, which helps students with writing CVs and motivation letters.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Promotion of short-cycle Erasmus studies/internship for the students.*

2.6. Research

The SER mentions that a very important research objective of this master program is to provide new research knowledge and skills in the field of informatics, enabling graduate students to conduct scientific research and offer practical solutions to complex business problems related to informatics. The Strategic Plan of UHZ emphasizes establishing and developing scientific research programs, reflecting the academic staff's research results.

The Faculty of Business at UHZ allocates financial, logistical, and human resources to achieve these research objectives. The research and scientific development strategy from 2022 includes incentives for teachers and student-teacher teams to create research projects, supported by the Regulation for scientific research and artistic activity at the university level. The UHZ Governing Council ensures sufficient financial support for faculty members to publish research papers in prestigious journals or conferences. Specifically, academic staff who publish on SCOPUS and WOS platforms receive financial support for at least two research studies on each platform. Additionally, UHZ supports joint intercollegiate projects and teacher-student projects with up to 2500 euros.

Each member of the academic staff at the Faculty of Business submits an individual development plan to the Dean's Office at the beginning of the academic year. This plan details the planned research and scientific activities for the year, including the number of scientific papers to be published in international journals with impact factors, participation in international scientific conferences, research projects, and other scholarly activities. The individual development plan does not contain specific information regarding the topics that will be researched or the journals/conferences that will be targeted. Also, the time allocation

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seems to be quite optimistic according to the example of the individual development plan the university provided (e.g., the preparation of scientific articles for publication in scientific journals credible with impact factor takes 43 hours). There is no mention of the papers under review and the needed time for the reviewing process, because a paper developed in the current year will likely be reviewed and improved in the next year(s). There is no document to reflect how the performance of the academic staff is assessed by the supervisor or to evaluate the objective set by each member of the academic staff in the previous year's individual report.

The policies defining the research activity are detailed in the UHZ Strategic Plan (2023-2026), the Strategy for Scientific Research and Artistic Activity (2023-2026), the Regulation for Scientific Research and Artistic Activity, and the Code of Ethics in Scientific Research. These documents outline activities for academic staff and students, including research project preparation, scientific and applied research, publications in reputable journals, and participation in scientific conferences. At the university level, A Scientific Research Office monitors these activities.

The SER mentioned that between 2020 and 2023, there has been a notable increase in publications by academic staff in international journals indexed on Web of Science and Scopus. These publications, which are publicly accessible, are closely linked to the fields of specialization of the teaching staff. During the site visit, the professors mentioned that during the previous accreditation visit they received the recommendation to include their own works, including papers published in international journals, as references in the syllabuses. This motivated them to increase the research in their teaching area.

The academic staff has also participated in numerous international scientific conferences and engaged in various national and international research projects, both individually and in groups. Their scientific work is integrated into the teaching process, fostering student involvement in research. Additionally, the Faculty of Business organizes international scientific conferences in collaboration with local, regional, and international universities, with participation from faculty and students, further demonstrating their active engagement in relevant research fields.

The academic and research staff at the Faculty of Business are actively engaged in publishing and presenting their work. Each member is required to publish at least one scientific paper annually in international journals indexed on Web of Science or Scopus, to present a paper at international scientific conferences, to participate in research projects with local and international colleagues, and conduct applied research projects with students. These activities ensure that their scientific and applied outputs are disseminated to the national and international communities.

The research activities are reported individually twice per year at the Office for Scientific Research. Each member of the academic staff has, on average, published one scientific paper per year, as required by the accreditation standard (many members of the teaching staff of the

master program have published one paper per year in the last three years in journals indexed in Scopus/Wos). The SER provides a list of the Scientific papers published by the academic staff at the Faculty of Business. By publishing their research under the name of the UHZ, the university has seen a noticeable improvement in global rankings.

By evaluating the syllabuses provided by the faculty, the Expert Team noticed that in the section of supplementary literature, published articles of the professors related to the course are included.

The university has established policies for the ownership of intellectual property and procedures for the commercialization of ideas developed by staff and students, as outlined in the 2022 Code of Ethics for academic staff. Approved by the Governing Council of UHZ, this document specifies policies related to research activities, ethical behavior, and intellectual property. Article 12 of the Code clearly defines these policies and conditions, ensuring the protection of intellectual honesty and personal responsibility in research activities.

The Expert Team requested an additional document detailing the project team composition for the research projects and articles/papers in international and national journals and conferences developed jointly by teaching staff and students of the master program. The Faculty provided a list of 4 projects. Two projects were funded by the UHZ. For the other two projects, it was unclear if they were research projects or groups of research (the papers mentioned also appeared in the list of conference/journal papers elaborated by students and professors). Ten articles/papers presented at conferences were developed by teams including students from the master program.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. The ET recommends trying to increase, if possible, the connection with the business environment by creating consultancy centers for research purposes;*
- 2. Increase the participation of students in research, considering the university provides financial support for small research projects;*
- 3. Clearer specification on how the performance of teaching staff, in relation to expectations, is considered in staff evaluations;*
- 4. Increase collaboration with researchers from abroad (for journal and conference papers, or writing applications for international grants);*

2.7. Infrastructure and Resources

The Report mentions that the faculty has 16 classrooms, accommodating over 1,000 students simultaneously (Table 15). The expert team found the faculty's video tour of the hall facilities

very useful for a detailed analysis. The computer classrooms have 122 seats and are equipped with necessary technical equipment such as projectors, whiteboards, and Wi-Fi access (SER, page 76). The experts noted that the computer classroom size is efficient for the study program when divided into smaller groups of 10-15 students, as approved by the faculty heads. This arrangement effectively accommodates all students in smaller seminar computer class groups.

The faculty also has a library that can accommodate over 100 students (SER, page 80), which is sufficient for this program's students, though the faculty runs multiple programs. During the site visit, the experts toured the library and noted it meets basic needs with quiet study areas and necessary literature. When asked if they missed any resources, most students were satisfied with the library's collection in Albanian and English. Students also have access to virtual databases for many needed journals. Other higher education institutions share their database access with the University "Haxhi Zeka," which the experts see as a good temporary solution but recommend to receive long-term access. During seminars and laboratory work, students use licensed software programs such as STATA, Nvivo, and SPSS. It was mentioned during the site visit that students can access this software from home, which the experts see as a significant advantage in the learning process. The Report and site visit also highlighted that the faculty has begun constructing a new building expected to be completed in 2025. This new building will add 7,500 square meters of working space with modern equipment (SER, page 76).

The experts reviewed the budget planning table (SER, page 77). As a public university, its budget aligns with the state budget. The expert team noted that salaries are expected to remain unchanged over the next three academic years, signaling that the faculty plans to maintain the same number of accepted students. However, the experts acknowledge that this is a potential budget plan and may change.

The experts also inquired about the faculty's experience with students with special needs. Currently, no such students are enrolled in the faculty's programs. However, the Report indicates that the faculty is well-prepared for future cases. The infrastructure is accessible, and adjustments can be made to the study planning process if necessary. The University has a special agreement with a school for visually impaired individuals, assisting them by generating text in Braille (SER, page 80).

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations: n/a

3. FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

The Master of Science program in *Business Informatics* at the Faculty of Business of "Haxhi Zeka" University in Peja is **fully compliant** with the standards included in the KAA Accreditation Manual and, therefore, recommends accrediting it for a duration of 5 years. The included recommendations need to be considered to improve the program.


In conclusion, in line with the Manual requirements, the Expert Team recommends **to accredit** the program for **five years**, with maximum enrolment of 60 students per year.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

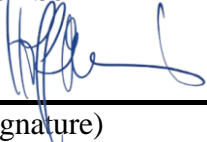
Student quota recommended 60 students per academic year / Five Years

Expert Team

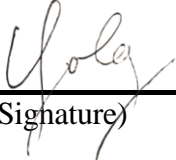
Member

	<i>Prof. Andrea Serban</i>	07.06.2024
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

Member

	<i>Prof. Miklós Hoffmann</i>	
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	<i>Mr. Arnoldas Solovjovas, Student Expert</i>	
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Member
