



UNIVERSITY OF MITROVICA “ISA BOLETINI”

ACCREDITATION
MA Early Childhood Education and Care

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

22.05.2023, Prishtina

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: 12th April 2023

Expert Team (ET) members:

- *Prof. univ. dr. habil. Anca Greere*
- *Asnate Kažoka, PhD student*

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- *Mr. Arianit Krasniqi, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Accreditation*

Sources of information for the Report:

Information provided by the university

- *Self-Evaluation Report for the MA Early Childhood Education and Care, University of Mitrovica “Isa Boletini”*
- *CV’s of the academic staff members*
- *Administrative instruction (MEST) No. 09/2016 Application of affirmative measures and quotes for enrolment of candidates from the non-majority communities in the public institutions of higher education*
- *Assessment of the realisation of strategic plan for education in Kosovo*
- *Code of Ethics*
- *Competition for the admission of students in the first year of master’s studies*
- *Competition on appointment, reappointment and promotion of academic staff*
- *Copy of employment contract for academic staff*
- *Decision – the Center for Professional Development and Education*
- *Documents published on the University website*
- *Education Strategy 2022-2026*
- *Fulbright specialist program for the Faculty of Economics UMIB*
- *Composition of the Governing Council*
- *Human Resources Manual*
- *Link to the website of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center*
- *Key Performance Indicators, FEDU, 2021-2022*
- *Key Performance Indicators, UMIB, 2021-2022*
- *Kosovo Education Strategic Plan*

- *Law on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo*
- *Law on Labour*
- *Mission and Vision of the Faculty of Education*
- *Model for the opportunities created for people with disabilities*
- *Open Access Policy UMIB*
- *Open access research infrastructure in the Western Balkans support program*
- *Photos from the meeting with stakeholders*
- *Quality Assurance Guideline*
- *Composition of the Quality Assurance Office*
- *Regulation for Master's studies*
- *Regulation on elections at UMIB and the work of the faculty*
- *Regulation on procedures and criteria for selection, reselection and promotion of academic personnel in university*
- *Regulation on students disciplinary responsibility*
- *Regulation on internationalisation and mobility*
- *Regulations for publications at UMIB*
- *List of regulations at UMIB*
- *Regulations on evaluation procedures for the engagement of external associates*
- *Regulation on bachelor studies*
- *Report on SMU training*
- *Report UMIB Mining Programs Review*
- *Research Strategic Plan UMIB 2022-2026*
- *Information on Researchcult project*
- *List of scientific conferences at UMIB*
- *Information on the second building of the university campus*
- *Information on the student management system (SMU)*
- *Social welfare statistics Q4 2021*
- *Social welfare statistics TM3 2019*
- *Statistical yearbook 2021*
- *UMIB Statute*
- *UMIB Strategic Plan*
- *Information on student recruitment in bachelor studies*
- *Student Handbook*
- *Summary report on the evaluation of support services*
- *Information on supplementary competition for the admission of students in the first year*
- *Information on the teaching staff training*
- *Information about the first training module for students on media education*

Additional information requested by the expert team

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- [1] *Syllabi for all courses*
- [2] *Plagiarism software contract and any regulation indicating when/how plagiarism software should be used on any given program*
- [3] *Statistics at the Faculty level with academic breaches and action taken*
- [4] *List of CPD training organized, in the past 3 years, and attended by future staff of the program*
- [5] *List of CPD training planned following the program start-up, if any*
- [6] *Table of proposed staff for the program with name, discipline they will teach, full-time/part-time, PhD –YES/NO, If Yes, in which discipline, Publications over the past 3 years – how many and where; If they have taught at Master’s level before – YES/NO, If Yes, what disciplines and for how many years.*
- [7] *Job description for the Head of Program role*
- [8] *Explicit measures of success for the programme*
- [9] *Market analysis report with recommendations for program development*
- [10] *Minutes of industrial advisory board with recommendations for program development*
- [11] *Analysis on the prospective employment opportunities of the graduates, if performed*
- [12] *Analysis report of student surveys with endorsement for program implementation, if available*
- [13] *List of book titles purchased in preparation for this programme, if available*
- [14] *List of definitive careers the program prepares for and mapped onto the courses where relevant competences are developed, if available*
- [15] *Mapping of learning outcomes for the program and the courses which contribute to the achievement of the program learning outcomes, if available*
- [16] *Template for the questionnaire for external stakeholders*
- [17] *The external review report for the BA Preschool Education*
- [18] *Curriculum of the BA Preschool Education*

- [19] *Mapping of the program learning outcomes with the National Qualification Framework (if performed)*

[20] Detailed statistics on incoming and outgoing student transfer in the Faculty of Education for the last 6 years (year; program and institution from where the student was transferred and the program and institution to which the student was transferred)

Criteria used for program evaluations

- *Standards & performance indicators for external quality assurance – re-accreditation of bachelor and master study programs – according to the Accreditation Manual of KAA, 2021*

1.2. Site visit schedule

Time	Meeting	Participants
09:30 – 10:20	Meeting with the management of the faculty where the program is integrated	Prof. Besim Gollopeni, Dean Prof. Samire Bllaca, Vice dean Prof. Gentiana Imeraj, Chief of programs Irfan Oshlani, Faculty secretary
10:25– 11:05	Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff	Prof. Leonora Carkaj Prof. Fatbardha Hoxha Blerta Gashi Shpat Musliu
11:10 – 12:00	Meeting with the heads of the study programme	Prof. Merita Shala
12:00 – 12.50	Lunch break	
12:50 – 13:40	Meeting with teaching staff	Prof. Albana Sadiku Prof. Tringa Azizi Prof. Arbesa Uka Prof. Eliza Avdiu Prof. Hatixhe Gashi Prof. Saranda Kika
13:45 – 14:30	Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders	Laberi Luzha, Preschool division- MESTI Drita Kadriu – Director of Education Directorate of Mitrovica Lumnije Tahiri – Director of preschool Institution Sanije Raifi, Pedagogue in primary school ‘Eqren Cabej’ Mevlude Aliu, Pedagogical Institution of Kosovo Shukrije Lecaj - Caritas Switzerland in Kosovo
14:35 – 14:45	Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts	
14:45 – 14:50	Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and program	

1.3. A brief overview of the institution under evaluation

The University “Isa Boletini” in Mitrovica (UMIB) was established in 2013 as a public higher education institution. The mission of UMIB is to provide relevant and high-quality higher education for the preparation of cadres in unique fields for the labor market in Kosovo, region and beyond, committed to developing research, professional projects, professional advising and to serve better on sustainable development, wellbeing, and social advancement. UMIB consists of six academic units, that deliver in total 16 programmes of bachelor and master studies: Faculty of Geosciences, Faculty of Food Technology, Faculty of Mechanical and Computer Engineering, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Education. Currently, there are 1610 students at the bachelor’s level and 183 students at the master’s level.

The Faculty of Education (FE) started its operation shortly after the establishment of UMIB. In the academic year 2014/2015 it offered two bachelor study programs – Preschool Education and Primary Education. Since then the FE has gone through three processes of accreditation and re-accreditation. Currently FE offers only one study program – BA Primary Education – that is accredited until 30.09.2024. The BA Preschool Education was not submitted for accreditation in 2020 and consequently did not enrol new students after its previous accreditation term ended. However, the UMIB is committed to reapplying for the accreditation of the BA program after the MA Early Childhood Education and Care will be launched. According to the student statistics, the BA Primary Education has been more demanded and has enrolled on average twice as many students as the BA Preschool Education and this tendency has started already from the academic year 2014/2015.

2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

2.1. Mission, Objectives and Administration

The SER highlights the mission of the UMIB as aiming: “to provide quality teaching for the preparation of cadres in fields unique to Kosovo and the region, dedicated to providing scientific research, professional counselling and other professional activities that ensure wellbeing and social advancement.” This is supported by the desire, as expressed through its vision, to be: “a leading higher education institution in the region in education and scientific research, in the preparation of competitive staff in fields which are unique to Kosovo”.

The ET understands that the study program being proposed does render a unique educational offering, which currently is not made at any other university in the country, as confirmed by both program management and industry representatives, including ministerial representatives.

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The ET also understands that in time the UMIB has made unique proposals for Kosovo and the SER (p. 8) lists a number of such programs hosted by other Faculties, such as: Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology, Mineral Raw Materials, Materials and Metallurgy, Economic Engineering. This demonstrates an existing track record and one which the current study program can derive learning from, in how it may market its offering and how to maintain its relevance for communities in Kosovo. The ET believes that sharing of good practice is particularly relevant between the multiple Faculties that have successfully made such offerings in the past and the FE.

The study program under accreditation is based within the FE which in time has held accreditation for two bachelor programs (Primary Education and Preschool Education), however with the change in governmental regulations, a re-accreditation was not attempted for the Preschool program. This is why statistically the number of students has been going down at the level of the FE. The FE management has indicated that once the requirements are met (and this is in relation to PhD holders/ECTS in the program) a re-accreditation application will be submitted, as it currently only runs the Primary Education program at bachelor's level. The FE has not run master's level program before, as such this is a new development and one which the ET believes needs to be carefully prepared for. The ET recognises that other Faculties in the UMIB have experience of master's level education and encourages the FE to seek to organise formal opportunities to learn from the experience of the other faculties, in regards of how master's education needs to be delivered, what approaches may be taken and what challenges may be encountered, different to bachelor's education.

The study program under accreditation, thus, aims to be the first master's level program in the FE and aims to mainly source its students from its graduates at bachelor's level. The ET notes a risk here on sustainability of the program. Whereas, the first cohorts of graduates who may have completed their bachelor's in previous years may wish to apply, it is important to have a strategy whereby there continues to be sufficient number of bachelor's level students who may potentially make the transition to master's level. With only one program currently left running at FE level, and this program up for re-accreditation in 2024, the interest may subside at medium or long-term. As such it becomes imperative for the FE to strive to re-accredit the second bachelor's program once all requirements are met, and efforts towards meeting the requirements need to be intensified. In parallel, developing a marketing strategy which can capture the attention of bachelor's graduates from other universities in Kosovo and the region can also prove helpful for sustainability purposes. This can be correlated with the FE marketing approach which the ET understands (SER, p. 12) targets students from various municipalities and states of Kosovo and abroad, with the majority coming from Kosovo and the region of Mitrovica.

Despite the fact that this is presented as a unique program with strong marketing potential, the mission statement for the study program, as per SER (p. 21): “is to provide high-quality teaching and learning that is in complete compliance with current educational standards and practices, by combining theory with practice in order to prepare students for labour market demands and serve as promoters of change by emphasising evidence based teaching and practices”. This formulation remains highly generic and provides no detail in relation to the actual unique content being explored in relation to Early Childhood Education and Care. Whereas this mission statement does pose an alignment with the UMIB and the FE missions, the ET believes that a more specific mission statement, which can highlight the specificities of the program and its particular proposal in respect to childcare, could be more beneficial, allowing future students to better understand what the program is aiming to achieve and to formulate their educational expectations accordingly. Such a statement can still be formulated in alignment with other institutional structures, but it would benefit from acting as a clearer and more direct description of program ambitions. The formulation on p.23 of the SER seems closer to a more specific mission statement, although it is not identified as such. This is: “the study program prepares students in the field of teaching and learning in preschool education by applying theories in order to develop understanding, critical thinking and creativity with a strong focus on using evidence to guide practice and interventions”. In the absence of a more specific statement, the ET sees a risk here to the marketing capabilities of the program, for the future, as it is difficult to discern from the current mission statement what sets this program aside from others and why students would benefit from being enrolled in this program and not others.

Along the same lines, it is important for the program to explicitly bring into focus the various careers that the program is preparing for. When the ET probed, the management and other stakeholders were keen to list the job roles which could be accessed or would be facilitated for access if a master’s qualification were part of the applicants’ portfolio. The ET believes these career opportunities deserve proper attention in the description of the program so that it is clear to those interested what the program specifically prepares for. These career options need to be in full alignment with the content of the program and it needs to be clear that there is sufficient content to ensure a comprehensive preparation for the careers identified. In this respect a mapping exercise may prove helpful, highlighting what components of the program contribute to which career profile. Such an exercise can give the management a clear view if sufficient knowledge, understanding and skills are proposed for development to relevantly represent the careers listed.

The program was developed with involvement from the labour market and endorsement by the Ministry, as noted in the interviews held during the visit. The FE set up a working group which considered input from various sources and stakeholders and crafted the proposal as it currently stands. The ET heard that various proposals, such as to include more practical

elements in the program, have been duly listened to and now feature in the program structure. The inclusion of a practice teaching in the curriculum is proof of these developments.

The intended learning outcomes for the study program are constituted in a list of 13 items, which highlight the acquisition of knowledge and understanding. These outcomes also include elements of applicability which prompt critical thinking and evaluative analysis, which correspond with level 7 emphasis according to the Dublin Descriptors and the EQF of the European Higher Education Area. The formulation of the learning outcomes presents itself as being able to guide assessment practices on the program and, thus, to measure student achievement in relation to these particular areas of development. Where the study program may find it could eventually struggle is to ensure that all the 13 learning outcomes are appropriately catered for, both through the content being presented in the courses and via the assessments which should collectively demonstrate that all learning outcomes are fully met. The mapping which the study program has presented in the additional documentation (evidence 14) shows that some learning outcomes are better covered than others: for example LO13 “Provide support and information to parents on many issues of children development and learning milestones” is covered via two courses only, while others e.g. “able to systematically observe and develop teaching strategy to successfully address challenges faced by children in the learning environment” or “Able to fully understand and practice activities that indicate the importance of art, science, health and physical activity as resources during academic hours of teaching” are only covered via the electives, meaning that not all students will achieve those learning outcomes equally. There is then also the learning outcome “Acting in accordance to Professional/Ethics Codes with the classroom and beyond, understanding and critical evaluation of policy-making processes and ability to advocate for the welfare of children”, which appears to combine two very important aspects seemingly requiring two separate learning outcomes if their achievement is to be tested appropriately. The Excel sheet supplied as evidence 15 shows a slightly different picture of the mapping process, where LOs are attributed to more courses than in evidence 14. The ET notes that it is important for the program to be consistent in its mapping and that any discrepancies can have the potential of translating negatively into the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment activities, as well as the development and implementation of the syllabi. Given that this is a one-year program it can become highly problematic to fully safeguard all learning outcomes as they are listed now, and as such the program management may find that some of the learning outcomes can at best be touched on tangentially, rather than acquired in detail and at full proficiency levels. (see also Standard 2)

The design of the program has benefited from specific expertise developed by the faculty staff during the QATEK EU-funded project, which aims “to enhance the quality of design and delivery of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) towards increasing the professionalism of the teaching profession in Kosovo through the implementation of European- inspired quality assurance mechanism.” The concept of the study program is derived by application of the

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framework of this project and by referring to its concrete findings. The study program presents itself as being coherently designed and logically organised. Being a one year curriculum means that the program design must be judiciously reviewed, at regular intervals, to include all elements necessary to meet the objectives.

There are Regulations at the level of the UMIB, dated 2022, which govern design and delivery of master's level programs and the ET was presented with evidence that these were considered to gain institutional approvals. The Albanian version of the Regulations is publicly available.

The ET met staff who spoke about their approaches to academic integrity for the bachelor's level programs, which are in the portfolio of the FE and staff have teaching obligations under. When probed on expectations about issues specific for master's level education, interviewees made little differentiation between bachelor's and master's level expectations, except for noting that they expected master's students to be more rigorous in their application of academic ethics and, hence, for there to be even fewer issues in relation to ethical standards. As the program also advocates a research element, via the various course assignments and the master's thesis, the ET found that this belief may be slightly optimistic and noted that it is important, especially for staff who have never been exposed to master's level education to receive appropriate training which can allow them to form objective approaches to academic integrity, or its types and likelihood of breach, at master's level. Staff would need to instruct students clearly via sufficient information about the advanced master's level requirements for their research, but if they themselves have little exposure to this understanding it could become problematic (see Standard 4 and 5). The ET observes that the inclusion of the course Academic writing and presentation can mitigate to some extent this problem.

The FE management presented a contract for plagiarism software plagiarismcheck.org. As the program is fully delivered in Albanian, the ET assumes that the contract covers effective plagiarism outputs for Albanian language essays. The interviews confirmed that all staff and master's students have access to this software and can use it, as needed. The current Regulations on master's studies (Art 22) include the following statement in relation to plagiarism handling: *"The anti-plagiarism report, provided by the mentor, must be part of the thesis. The level of the allowed percentage is 15%"*; however, there is no mention of any compulsory checks for any other assignments, just the master's thesis and there is no promotion of prevention approaches to plagiarism, which could be easily practiced if students also have access to the software and can use it in preparation of their written submissions. Imposing a consistent application of plagiarism checks on all written assignments, not just the master's thesis is advisable, and offering students sufficient information to develop preventive practices is particularly relevant at master's level education. (see also Standard 5) It is also important to note that international good practice uses a final human decision on plagiarism and does not remain at the level of the similarity percentage. Indeed, the similarity

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percentage can be a starting point but then it is advisable to have a human evaluator assess the relevance of this percentage in respect the subject matter being researched, so that any final allegation of plagiarism results from academic expert judgement rather than the automatic system.

The Code of Ethics covers the definition of plagiarism and self-plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity and indicates that the Ethics Council is the body responsible for determining the measures applicable depending on the violations. Possible measures are exemplified in the Code of Ethics. However, when asked for statistical evidence of breaches and their actions, the ET was provided with three different decisions in relation to specific complaints, but no data on how many cases of plagiarism had been investigated or confirmed or how many cases of cheating etc This may be because no cases have been brought forward either because none have occurred or none have been identified. It becomes thus important that for the new program, systematic checks are performed across all research materials, not just the master’s thesis. The ET finds that whereas staff and students may currently comply with the existing regulations, there is scope to extend the requirements relating to plagiarism and to ensure systematic checks for all assignments. The ET appreciates the further evidence submitted with the response to the draft report and the examples of plagiarism reports which the Faculty indicates are applied for in-semester assignments on a formative basis (3 examples of 2 full reports in Albanian dated 2 May 2023, 12 May 2023, and 1 abstract in English dated 21 November 2022; all 3 with noted author Merita Shala). Further to this it would have been helpful to understand who produced the assignments (as the ET assumes Prof Shala is the holder of the plagiarism check account and this is the reason why her name appears as author), for what courses, covering which assessment requirements listed in the syllabi. The reports submitted have similarity percentages under 8%; importantly, the ET would have been interested if higher similarity checks have been identified on any other assignments and what action, if any, the results may have generated. The ET maintains that the rigor and the completeness with which plagiarism checks are performed can use improvements to ensure that monitoring of any academic integral behaviour can be sufficiently robust and identification of breaches can result in more training for preventive purposes or penalty for breach, as necessary.

The UMIB has policies in place which consider regular review procedures for the programs; however, as this program is at its first accreditation exercise, the ET cannot yet have proof of such procedures being applied to this program directly. The cycle of quality assurance was confirmed in the meetings to be a two year cycle, with changes being possible in between review terms. The FE also confirmed that key performance indicators are used annually as a monitoring tool.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No

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<i>Standard 1.1.</i> The study program mission is in compliance with the overall mission statement of the institution.	X	
<i>Standard 1.2.</i> 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.	X	
<i>Standard 1.3.</i> The study program has a well-defined overarching didactic and research concept.	X	
<i>Standard 1.4.</i> There are formal policies, guidelines and regulations dealing with recurring procedural or academic issues. These are made publicly available to all staff and students.	X	
<i>Standard 1.5.</i> All staff and students comply with the internal regulations relating to ethical conduct in research, teaching, assessment in all academic and administrative activities.		X
<i>Standard 1.6.</i> 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.	X	

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Organise formal opportunities by which good practice can be shared between the FE and other faculties which have demonstrated track record of unique educational offerings and/or master's level programs;*
2. *Intensify efforts, at FE level, to ensure a sufficient and sustainable number of graduates of bachelor's programs who could be encouraged, at medium and long term, for the master's programs;*
3. *Develop a strong marketing strategy to ensure that the study program gets the necessary attention from graduates of other universities in Kosovo and the region*
4. *Revise the mission of the study program so that it becomes a more explicit statement of specificity which can create clear expectations in students applying to the program;*
5. *Determine a list of relevant careers which the program prepares for specifically and ensure these are appropriately communicated to interested parties;*
6. *Review the learning outcomes as mapped explicitly against the content of the courses, and consider if fewer learning outcomes may become more manageable given the time constraints on the program;*
7. *Ensure that all learning outcomes can be achieved via the mandatory components and that the elective components offer an add-on to the learning outcomes rather than cater exclusively to some of these;*

8. *Review requirements in relation to plagiarism and ensure that students are inducted to be aware of preventive practices in relation to academic integrity and that any final allegations of breach are the result of expert scrutiny and academic judgement. Ensure all assignments are checked for plagiarism and that this scrutiny is comprehensive and complete for all students, across all courses.*

2.2. Quality Management

The internal quality assurance system at UMIB is organised according to the UMIB Statute, Regulation for Quality Assurance and Assessment, Guide for Quality Assurance, Guide for ECTS, Document for the main performance indicators, Quality Measurements Instruments Package and Package of instruments for measuring quality from the project “Towards a system oriented towards quality of training of new teachers in Kosovo” (QATEK). As already mentioned under Standard 1, the QATEK project overall has played an important role in the development of the MA Early Childhood Education and Care and in providing the necessary methodological resources for it.

Before describing the compliance with each standard in detail, the ET would like to formally recognise UMIB’s commitment and efforts to implement a consistent quality assurance system and ambition to develop further. This is visible in how detailed and well evidenced the SER is presented, with helpful links and explicit descriptions in relation to the standards, showing considerable effort has been put in understanding the essence of the standards and responding to their requirements. The ET found the SER easy to follow and providing references to all major elements of the internal regulatory framework in English thus allowing the ET to focus on the substance of the review. In the future though, a more analytical approach to the SER would be recommended, clearly demonstrating the reasoning for different decisions and actions, for example, the strategic shift from the bachelor’s program to the master program’s and redistribution of the available resources.

During the interviews, the UMIB representatives emphasised that quality assurance processes are cyclical and embedded in their everyday work. Building a quality assurance system is among the strategic goals of UMIB for the period 2023 – 2025 and is also reflected in the FE strategic plan by three specific objectives – strengthening the quality assurance system (activities - increasing the number of quality assurance staff, training for the quality office staff), monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement of study programs (activities - reviewing and completing/ improving the SERs of the programs, development and reporting of questionnaires with the administration, academic staff and students, development of questionnaires for management, employers, graduates, review of curricula and programs and accreditation of programs) and enhancing quality culture (organisation of workshops,

roundtables, information sessions and conferences). Each activity has a budget line, related key performance indicator, time limit and expected performance outcome.

The internal quality assurance system at UMIB is composed of a number of different elements. The self-evaluation of the academic staff is an integral part of it. According to the SER and the Regulation for Quality Assurance and Assessment, this takes place twice a year, i.e. after each semester. The self-evaluation constitutes 20% of the staff performance evaluation. The academic staff members interviewed by the ET were well aware of the quality assurance mechanisms that they are subject to and their share in the overall performance evaluation. (see also Standard 3)

The Quality Measurement Instruments Package includes templates for all surveys conducted at UMIB – student evaluation of teaching, courses and resources, student evaluation of study programs and research work, evaluation for academic staff, self-evaluation for deans, evaluation for dean's work by the academic staff, deans' evaluation form for the academic staff, survey for external stakeholders, survey for alumni, survey for the administrative staff, survey for the academic staff, evaluation of support services. During the interviews, the ET received several confirmations that these tools are implemented in practice as the majority of interviewees made references to specific tools and were able to explain the overall processes. However, the ET would like to make a note that the quality assurance system at UMIB is to a large extent based on surveys and this creates a significant workload for everyone involved, and is likely to result in survey fatigue which is demonstrated internationally to reduce the efficiency and reliability of the data collected. The academic staff, in particular, is subject to several surveys. While surveys are a valuable tool, it is important to align them with other strategic processes so that the quality assurance actions would derive from the strategic objectives and the results would feed into the daily work of UMIB in order to reach these objectives. It is also important that the resources spent are appropriate for the value gained. When maintaining a large number of different tools, there is a risk of overloading with processes of gathering and storing data without actual analysis, where the community might eventually complain about the workload and report that they find little purpose and even less benefit. It is important that quality assurance processes are able to identify what and how much should be collected and this should be informed by the relevance of analysis outcomes and their impact for institutional progress. The ET would like for UIBM to consider how to re-balance this.

While the specific content of study programs is the responsibility of the program heads and academic staff in general, the quality assurance bodies should take a more significant and visible role in providing a framework and ensuring the consistency and quality of program parameters, e.g. mission statement, learning outcomes, mapping against the qualification requirements or mapping of study courses against the program learning outcomes (see Standard 1) and pre-screening the profiles of academic staff members to be involved in

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program delivery (see Standard 3). Perhaps, the quality assurance staff should be provided with continuous training to enable them to perform such tasks with confidence. As explained under Standards 1 and 4, the first program on master's level at the FE requires special attention, especially taking into account the length of the program and the high number of learning outcomes defined for it. There is a need to develop a mechanism for continuous monitoring of whether the learning outcomes defined for the program are actually achievable and achieved by the students.

In general, the quality evaluations provide an overview of quality issues for the overall program as well as for different components within it. Overall results of the surveys are presented on the webpage of UMIB: <https://www.UMIB.net/en/quality-assurance-reports>. However, the ET found that not all previously mentioned assessment instruments are reflected in these reports. There are general reports on the results of surveys for bachelor's students and master's students. Also, there are separate summary reports on the results of student surveys for each study level at each faculty, for example, the report on bachelor's study programs at FE (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Zf-R1x_7fQ8L-5DeRnVADdSj7OMsn_XP/view) There are also reports on the results of the academic staff self-assessment and alumni surveys. The written summaries of the survey of external stakeholders and administrative staff are, however, missing. While most of the reports contain some recommendations, it is not clear whether and how these recommendations were implemented, nor was it possible for the ET to understand how they might have been followed up with the various structures impacted. The ET appreciates the UMIB response that all recommendations are discussed in the faculty council and translated into concrete activities. However, the ET's comment is related to the fact that the recommendations and the resulting actions are not easily traceable and there is no procedural evidence that the decisions on implementing or not implementing the recommendation and the related actions would be communicated back to the authors of these recommendations.

UMIB publishes annual reports on the monitoring results of key performance indicators (KPI). While the existence of these reports is appreciated and they provide extensive statistical information – some on the level of each faculty and some on the level of each study program – the targets and the analysis on the achievement of targets for the KPI are missing. Also, when specifically asked about the explicit measures for the success of the study program, the FE representatives were very broad and general, stating the explicit measures would be, for example, the discussions and analysis of executive structures in the faculty. In order to say that quality assurance procedures ensure that required standards are met there is a need to define the standards and make them measurable. This is the reason why the ET has judged standard 2.5 as “not compliant”. The ET would rather suggest an approach of defining a target for each of the KPI on the level of each faculty or program and regular analysis on whether these targets are achieved or not achieved and the reasons for that.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
Standard 2.1. All staff participate in self-evaluations and cooperate with reporting and improvement processes in their sphere of activity.	X	
Standard 2.2. Evaluation processes and planning for improvement are integrated into normal planning processes.	X	
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.	X	
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.		X
Standard 2.5. Quality assurance processes ensure both that required standards are met and that there is continuing improvement in performance.		X
Standard 2.6. Survey data is being collected from students, graduates and employers; the results of these evaluations are made publicly available.		X
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.	-	-
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.	X	
Standard 2.9. The quality assurance arrangements for the program are themselves regularly evaluated and improved.	X	

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

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1. *Enable and intensify the contribution of the quality assurance bodies in ensuring a unified and professional approach to the formulation of program aims and learning outcomes and mapping them against the relevant framework;*
2. *Define measurable targets for each of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) already proposed for the program level and monitor their achievement as part of the FE and UMIB annual reports;*
3. *Pay special attention to the application of current mechanisms for whether the learning outcomes of program are formulated to be measurable and achievable within the parameters of the program and take relevant measures in case needed;*
4. *Ensure that the results of all surveys conducted at UMIB and FE are reflected upon in summary reports that are publicly available and monitor the suitability of surveys and their potential to constantly render relevant outcomes which can lead to correction or improvement measures in reasonable timeframes;*
5. *Monitor the data collected to ensure it is maintained relevant and that it continues to be an accurate reflection of the program performance; constantly test to confirm if there continue to be sufficient resources for the analysis of all data collected and that follow-up actions resulting from the analysis of data can be properly coordinated across all institutional structures;*
6. *Ensure that all quality assurance reports include recommendations that are later followed up by the relevant structures and that the results of their implementation are documented and communicated to UMIB staff, students and stakeholders.*

2.3. Academic Staff

Employment measures at UMIB and FE are clear and in accordance with the Labour Law in Kosovo. The staff the ET spoke to indicated that they had been presented with explicit responsibilities in relation to their engagement with the program and the Head of Program job description was presented to the ET as part of the additional evidence request. This is found to be clear and explicit and to incorporate the elements expected for such a role, including the quality assurance responsibilities which would see the Head of Program monitor the new program for appropriate implementation and gather feedback to know what adjustments may be necessary.

The Head of the Program is also the full-time staff, identified PhD holder which covers the 60 ECTS credits in the study program.

New staff had been employed to serve on this particular program. In fact, the interviews confirmed that 8-9 new staff members had been employed last year to contribute to this new master's program. The ET observes that in a total list of 10 teachers proposed as full-time to have 8-9 staff members completely new to the institution poses a risk in implementation, until new staff members can be fully familiarised with policies and practices at UMIB. The ET also observes some contradictions in the statistics provided, e.g. the list of CPD training goes back to 2020, with 8 members of staff being declared as having participated. If 8-9 members of staff were recruited last year, it is difficult to understand how the same 8-9 could feature on the lists of CPD going back back 2-3 years. If staff members were in previous years part-time staff and have recently had their contracts changed to full-time staff to ensure compliance with the KAA standards for any given program, this could account for the discrepancy identified. However, no such clarification was provided by the program management.

The ET spoke to some newly hired staff members who found the employment process helpful and they believed they had all the information need to function properly in the role. As some of them had been employed for the knowledge in relation to specific courses on this program, the ET probed what would happen if the program did not receive the necessary approvals how would the new staff members be managed. Confirmation was received that there were other courses at bachelor's level they had been allocated and which they could continue with in such eventuality and they there was no concern about workload for the future. Indeed, if the program were to be approved, the workload would be redistributed to give higher priority to activities on this program. It was also noted by the management staff that if the program were to receive accreditation, the workload of existing staff would be re-assessed to ensure that their contribution to the program does not constitute overload for staff to be able to successfully handle all their work requirements in relation to this new program. The staff confirmed that concrete discussions had taken place and they were confident this would be successfully achieved.

The SER (p. 36) indicates the list of staff proposed for this program with the working hours anticipated to be allocated once the program starts. The list shows 10 full time members of staff and 2 part-time (different to the additional evidence which shows 14 staff members and different to the CVs supplied which are for 16 staff members). From 10 teachers with regular employment, 1 associate professor and also the head of the program, 2 are assistant professors, and 6 are assistants. Across all 10 full staff members, only 3 hold a PhD qualifications, 3 are PhD candidates, whereas the rest of 4 hold a MSc. No details have been provided for part-time staff in the SER, however in the additional evidence it is noted that they act as assistant professors and both hold a PhD. The additional evidence also concurs with the SER in relation to full-time staff. The ET believes that for teaching at master's level, the fact that only 3 members of staff hold a PhD is problematic and means that collectively there are insufficient qualifications to ensure appropriate teaching, learning and assessment for master's level. This is also particularly problematic as it is still just the same three staff

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members who have had experience of teaching at master's level before, whereas the rest will now be learning the necessary approaches for master's education. The percentage of experienced versus inexperienced staff for master's education is at 30%-70%, if we do not consider the part-time staff for whom no indication of experience at master's level has been provided. If we assume no experience, the percentage goes down to 25%-75%, which is particularly low and poses a direct risk to students and their capacity to be guided through a Level 7 master's experience. The ET finds this problematic and in consideration of international good practice (as cited in Administrative instruction on Accreditation Article 25 section 1.4.2) at master's level it is expected that more PhD holders would be teaching. The list of staff as it currently stands shows a distribution of only three such staff and only one hold more senior position of associate professor.

Participation in the QATEK project has given some staff members, not all, the opportunity for areas of specific training in modern teaching methodologies. The additional evidence nr4 shows the distribution of training sessions across 14 members of staff (different to the SER which indicates 10 full-time staff members and different to the CVs which are for 16 staff members). Attendance has been between 2020 and 2023. Some CPD sessions under QATEK are listed to have been attended by all 14 staff members included in the list, such as: Problem-based learning in higher education; Supporting students' development and effective learning; Teacher leadership and teachers' role in school improvement; but many also have low attendance of 2-3 members of staff from the proposed program, such as Towards a Quality Oriented Initial Teacher Education to Increase Teacher Professionalism in Kosovo; and it is noted that those which aim at building research capacity and project involvement skills seem to be of lesser attendance. Notable, is the fact that all the CPD sessions appear to take a generic approach to education and do not differentiate between levels of study – an aspect which could be particularly pertinent for a faculty aiming to open up a completely new level of study (i.e. master's) for the very first time.

It is important to note that as the FE has not run any master's level programs before this proposal, staff members require a clear understanding and explicit guidance of how to conduct master's level education and what constitute the differentiating factors to bachelor level teaching, learning and assessment practices. A number of staff members, i.e. 3 out of 10 as presented in the additional evidence, have taught at master's level before; however, the rest are confirmed as not having had experience at this educational level. The staff whom the ET met indicated that the Center for Excellence organises training and that some had participated in sessions on what are new teaching methodologies and how to design LOs and syllabi which staff claimed was applicable also to master's level education; however, the additional evidence received (as compared with the SER), highlighted varying degrees of attendance and it did not clearly differentiate if master's level specificities were targeted in the training sessions organised. These were organised in 2020, with a 2023 refreshers on Learning Outcomes: "Achieving Strategic Educational Goals by Amending the Concept of Learning Outcomes", however this had only been attended by 3 members of staff proposed for the new

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program. The ET notes that it becomes important that specific training is organised to induct teachers into teaching methodologies and broader educational approaches specific for master's level education. This could be arranged inter-Faculty as other faculties of the University have been organising master's education for a while now, it was confirmed to the ET. Although more generic training has been provided, as evidenced via the CPD lists, this was only attended by few members of staff appointed to this program, and only three of the members who had not taught at master's level before. The ET understands that CPD is on a volunteer, individual basis; however, in the aim to start teaching at a new level of education and to open a completely new program, the management would need to take a strategic approach by which training is deemed mandatory to all staff proposed on the program. If this program is to be successful, the ET believes the FE should set a strategic objective for the methodological training of their staff in preparation of its launch, with a clear steer on master's specificities. The Staff Development Plan can be used as an instrument to ensure this is put in place.

The SER (p. 37) confirms that the staff members who are responsible for teaching do not exceed the equivalence of 1+½ teaching positions, across bachelor level and master's level. As this is the only master's level proposal by the FE, the ET assumes that this is a predictive equivalence for when the program will start. The workload is monitored by the UMIB Office for Academic Issues, the faculty management, and the UMIB Senate, which aim to align with the Administrative Instruction for Accreditation and the MEST administrative instructions.

Staff members have the following areas of responsibility as per the University Statute (SER p. 40). These were confirmed via the interviews: academic teaching; scientific research; publications in scientific journals with colleagues and students; 6 hours of teaching per week (Doctor of Science) or 10 hours of teaching per week (University Assistant); 2-3 office hours per week-consultations with students [1 hour per subject]; Student assessment; student mentoring including thesis supervision; supervising student internships; participation in various conferences; responsibility to be part of the structures of the University and the unit (Member of committees, member of the senate, head of the program, coordinator for development and quality, member of the faculty council); and community service.

Academic staff are evaluated on their performance based on the Quality Assurance Office Work Plan, and it is organized through questionnaires and structured reports. This is supported by the Quality Measurements Instruments Package which engages the following: students' evaluation for the academic staff; staff self-evaluation; evaluation by peers; evaluation by line managers; evaluation by independent evaluation commissions. The academic staff members interviewed by the ET were aware of the mechanisms and processes for their performance evaluation. The Quality Assurance Guideline stipulates that 10% of positive results should generally be made public, these are also the ones which will receive some commendations; whereas the lower evaluations will be discussed with the dean of the faculty and an intervention plan for improvement agreed and subsequently monitored. The

ET understands the rationale for only publishing positive results, as any negative results need to be given the opportunity for correction otherwise a public notification could dissuade the staff member to continue their commitment to the UMIB, still the standard is explicit on the fact that all evaluations need to be publicly available.

The Faculty management confirmed that the assessment of regular and part-time academic staff is done semesterly and annually. The ET agrees that course evaluations, which may also contain teaching staff assessments, are best administered semesterly to allow for adjustments to be implemented so that the same cohort could still benefit before graduation.

The Regulation on Procedures and Selection Criteria, Re-Election and Promotion of the UMIB Academic Staff establishes the criteria for the academic staff in the case of their advancement to higher academic titles, related to: the quality of teaching, number of publications, participation in conferences, publication of books, and participation in projects. The ET met with staff members who confirmed they knew what the criteria for advancement were and how to prepare for upcoming promotions.

The SER (p. 43) indicates that by alignment with national and institutional regulations staff will be expected to retire at the age of 65, after which staff may be hired as part-time staff or be given the status of Professor Emeritus.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
<i>Standard 3.1.</i> 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.	X	
<i>Standard 3.2.</i> The teaching staff must comply with the legal requirements concerning the occupation of teaching positions included in the Administrative instruction on Accreditation.		X
<i>Standard 3.3.</i> 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.	X	
<i>Standard 3.4.</i> 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.	X	
<i>Standard 3.5.</i> 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.	X	
<i>Standard 3.6.</i> Opportunities are provided for additional professional development of teaching staff, with special assistance given to any who are		X

facing difficulties.		
<i>Standard 3.7.</i> The responsibilities of all teaching staff, especially full-time, include the engagement in the academic community, availability for consultations with students and community service.	X	
<i>Standard 3.8.</i> 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.		X
<i>Standard 3.9.</i> Strategies for quality enhancement include improving the teaching strategies and quality of learning materials.	-	-
<i>Standard 3.10.</i> Teachers retired at age limit or for other reasons lose the status of full-time teachers and are considered part-time teachers.	X	

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Revise the list of staff to be involved in the program to ensure that qualifications held are commensurate with master's level educational requirements; the proportion of PhD holders and more senior staff members would need to increase to ensure a quality educational experience for students.*
2. *Ensure that all new staff members are fully on-boarded and become familiarised with institutional policies and practices before they commence their engagement on the new program*
3. *Consider CPD for staff teaching new at master's level as a strategic objective and provide training on methodological aspects specific for master's level education.*
4. *Make sure that the overall and specific results of academic staff evaluation are available, as requested by the KAA standard.*

2.4. Educational Process Content

The study program is designed to be conducted in-person, with no online delivery scheduled. It is planned to involve lectures and practical activities such as exercises or presentations of seminar papers/essays. As a one-year program, divided into two semesters, the ET recognises it is difficult to propose internship opportunities or mobility exchanges. However, this reduces the availability of students to become familiarised with comparative content from other cultural contexts specific nationally and institutionally, which in light of the objectives of the program can be very important. The interviews indicated that the FE is actively looking for ways of encouraging mobility and the ET was told that practice (which can resemble internships) is organised as part of the requirements of given courses. However, the syllabi

received by the ET do not reflect any practical activities included, which could involve the participation of students in specific workplaces which have employed graduates with similar career profiles. The example given was that teaching practice was organised and becomes a compulsory requirement in the curriculum; however, this too is not reflected in the syllabi or the curriculum overview and does not separately evidence allocated ECTS. It may be that there is the intention to send students to various employers as they are conducting the activities for their dissertation, however, this, too, is not explicitly detailed in the documentation received. As such, the ET finds it confusing to know what the reality on the ground is likely to be once the program is launched and would urge the institution to clarify this aspect as a matter of urgency. The interviews were explicit in talking about teaching practice while the written documentation indicates that the program does not offer internship opportunities in its current design, nor can it facilitate any form of mobility. This said, the employers whom the ET met indicated that they do receive bachelor's level students on internships and were looking forward to do the same for master's students when the situation arose. The employers, too, in the interviews were fairly confident that internships would be organised and some representatives indicated that this had been discussed in the faculty board.

The study program curriculum is composed of compulsory and elective courses, with each course designed to be completed within one semester. The components focus on legal, medical, social, educational and methodological aspects which come into focus when working with children and young adults. The elective courses constitute clear tracks from one semester to another, i.e. if students want to follow an area of interest they can do so across the two semesters, like for example arts and music (semester 1) with dance and drama or free time activities (semester 2), or inclusive education (semester 1) with development disorders (semester 2). This increases the coherence of the program and allows students to consider the courses on the program as forming a unit which they can then direct towards their career choices. Given the logical and comprehensive structure of the content proposed, it is unfortunate that the mission statement for the program does not work in alignment with this content and avoids to explicitly refer to the components tackled in the program. The ET believes (seem Standard 1) that a redraft of the mission will prove beneficial and has the potential to give students a clearer vision of how they may interpret the benefits and career usability of the structural components of the program.

The composition of the program also includes reference to methodological elements, specifically through the course entitled "Action Research in Early Childhood Education", which describes via its learning outcomes the focus proposed for conducting quantitative and qualitative research, as appropriate for the topic of the program. This course also constitutes a relevant support for the compulsory master thesis defence which carries 8 ECTS. This is an important component and a direct contributor to the verification of achievement of the overarching program learning outcomes. As the program is not yet running, the ET could not check the level of the structure proposed and the topics accepted for the master thesis;

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however, it is relevant to caution that the level needs to be commensurate with master's level education, EQF level 7, and as such should aim to demonstrate high research capacity and robust research methodology. In light of the concerns expressed relating to the experience of staff at master's level (see Standard 3), it may be pertinent to allocate supervisory responsibilities in the first years of the program implementation to staff members who have already had an experience of coordinating master's dissertations – this while the other staff members are being trained and/or mentored into appropriateness of level for the master's thesis.

The ET has noted that the course titles in the SER (p. 54-55) and the syllabi submitted present some variations, e.g. MECEC6 is first referred to as “Investigating young children's holistic learning and development” and then “Holistic approach on children development and learning” and similar to MECEC7 or MECEC11. To avoid any confusion with students, it is important that all documentation aligns in how the components are presented.

The syllabi presented to the ET show course learning outcomes formulated around action verbs such as analyse, evaluate, design etc which show a clear inclination to develop abilities and attitudes as knowledge and understanding is acquired. This is important to ensure students gain learning autonomy and are able to react in response to higher academic demands at master's level, i.e. in alignment with the Dublin Descriptors and Level 7 EQF education. The program management will want to note that the ET has expressed a concern (see Standard 3) in relation to many members of staff not having taught at master's level and not having received any training in regards educational approaches at master's level in comparison bachelor's level. It will be important that the objectives of a Level 7 EQF program can be maintained at level and do not fall to lower levels during the delivery process. For this reason, robust on-going monitoring is recommended by the ET once the program commences.

The ET also observed that the content proposed in the syllabi and the learning outcomes correspond and note that the management has supplied a mapping sheet between the program learning outcomes and the courses proposed. To aid the program management in determining the level of alignment, it would be important if this were further detailed in a direct comparison between program and course learning outcomes, and even course content components which serve a particular learning outcome. The ET appreciates that it is the holistic design of the courses and the program which will ensure learning outcomes are achieved; however, it sees such a detailed mapping exercise as beneficial especially in the first years of the program so that a clear monitoring approach can be instituted and which would identify any changes to content and their implications on the stated learning outcomes.

The syllabi are detailed about the assessment procedures and the components which form a final grade, and performance measures are listed explicitly. In general, there is a combination of elements which form the grade and these are inclusive of seminar participation, mid-term

test, presentations of case studies, and a final test. This clarity is important for students and, on delivery, the teachers should introduce the assessment requirements at the beginning of each course, so that students can fully engage and prepare for the components which form the final grade.

It must be noted that on some syllabi the bibliography list shows titles which are fairly old and an update could be helpful. The program submitted a list of books which have been purchased via the Erasmus+ projects they are partner in and notes that many electronic books can also be found on EBSCO and the Kosovo National libraries. It would be important to create relevant updates for the courses proposed, also by making use of the availability on the databases.

The program is proposed to be delivered in the Albanian language, in full. The SER (p. 50) notes that: “Considering that one of the goals of UMIB and FE is internationalisation, in the framework of Erasmus+ and mobility, FE staff are able to teach in English language when there are mobility students from abroad. There is a large number of staff in UMIB that will teach in English language, while abroad students mobility to UMIB”. The management did not provide any clarifications in respect to how this might work and whether this is applicable also for the program being proposed. The ET considers that the competence of staff in English is insufficient to ascertain that English-medium teaching could be switched to and believes that appropriate institutional policy and support needs to be in place, before such switching could be successful. The major problem is that in a multicultural and multilingual classroom, students admitted directly in the program, who are natives of Albanian, need to receive the content in Albanian, as the language they enrolled for education. There is a high risk to the student experience and their capacity to learning when a different language is introduced and one where the competency levels of both staff and students may be of variable quality. The ET would like to urge the program to make sure that if exchange students are permitted to join the classes, this is considerate of the language needs of students enrolled on the program already and only if all students can and do understand English sufficiently to operate with it effectively in the learning, teaching and assessment activities. Otherwise, this can become very confusing and frustrating for students who do not have sufficient proficiency in English to engage with the topics. If such an approach is to be promoted, the faculty needs to put in place concrete measures to support students and staff in foreign-medium delivery. This may include establishing a clear language requirement as a compulsory admission criteria, possibly at B2 to allow for specialised content in the specific disciplines taught to be fully understood and engaged with. For now, the ET will assume that, as declared, the language of teaching is Albanian and no English interaction is yet envisaged, as such the cautions above should be read in the context of future developments.

Currently, there is no English language requirement stipulated in the admission criteria and the announced language of the study program is Albanian only. The ET understands that there is a lack of books in Albanian and many bibliography titles of direct relevance are to be

found in other language; however, the program cannot rely on English books, exclusively, if students are not informed in advance that in order to complete the program successfully (i.e. in order to have access to the titles relevant for the courses) they need to have a good level of proficiency in English, which is likely to need to be B2 or beyond before English books can be relied on without an Albanian counterpart. The syllabi presented have compulsory recommended materials in English in extensive numbers.

The program does not include a practical component as an internship, which could carry separate ECTS. Although in the interviews, it was noted that a form of teaching practice would be organised as compulsory, the ET could not locate this component in the program schedule or the course syllabi, concluding that there might have been a misunderstanding during the interviews (see discussion above about internships). The documentation as it currently stands does not highlight internship opportunities and, indeed, the ET considers these to be difficult to manage given the limited time on the program of just two semesters. However, in the discussions with employers, it was clear that agreements are in place for observation or other types of practical activities which could be organised as part of the various courses. Employers confirmed their commitment to the faculty and their satisfaction with the level of competences and the constructive attitudes of students and graduates from bachelor's level program and anticipated a similar collaboration with master's students. In the response to the draft report the program management confirmed the agreements of the FE with "the municipalities of Mitrovica, Vushtri and Skenderaj and consequently with all school and preschool institutions in these municipalities". Agreements were also noted to be in place with some private institutions. However, as the program does not formally state internship requirements, although some intentions in this respect seem to be considered, the ET assumes that the FE will need to re-negotiate some aspects of the agreements to extend them to master's education and the specificities required for master students to have an advanced experience which would be commensurate with the learning outcomes of the master's program and allow them to achieve performance in alignment with Level 7 requirements. While the program clarifies its position in respect of internships, the ET maintains that for now it is unclear if and how internships may be incorporated and understands that no addenda to agreements have been negotiated to accommodate master's level requirements for activities to be conducted at internship providers. The ET does not have any doubts that once clarity is gained and a firm decision reached in relation to ECTS-bearing internships, the FE will make every effort to put in place the necessary arrangements.

In the absence of students, the teacher-student relationship could not be tested directly and the ET can only assume that it will be based on a partnership in which each assumes the responsibility of reaching the learning outcomes, and that learning outcomes will be appropriately explained and discussed with students from the perspective of their relevance to the students' development. The SER (p 9-10) indicates that the professor-student ratio at UMIB for the academic year is 1:14. At the FE, this ratio is 1:15-17 staff for 255 students

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across all programs being offered. This is a good ratio and the ET concludes that there is capacity to cover the master's program successfully without any risk to other programs being offered at bachelor's level, even when the discontinued program will be reinstated.

As the program is not yet running, the ET can only assume via the descriptions provided, and in comparison with bachelor's level performance, that the teaching methodologies will be appropriate, the assessments will be well calibrated and conducted fairly, and that student achievement will be construed in alignment with the learning outcomes; however this cannot be tested in the absence of actual delivery on the course. The achievement of these requirements are also dependant on the staff's relationship and understanding of master's level education (as noted above and in Standard 3) and the FE and program management needs to ensure appropriate mechanisms to allow for teaching and assessment approaches to be monitored for compliance with Level 7 descriptors.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
<i>Standard 4.1.</i> 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.	X	
<i>Standard 4.2.</i> 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.	X	
<i>Standard 4.3.</i> 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.	X	
<i>Standard 4.4.</i> 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.	X	
<i>Standard 4.5.</i> 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>Standard 4.6.</i> 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>Standard 4.7.</i> 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>Standard 4.8.</i> Student assessment mechanisms are conducted fairly and objectively, are appropriate for the different forms of learning sought and are clearly communicated to students at the beginning of courses.	-	-
<i>Standard 4.9.</i> 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>Standard 4.10.</i> Policies and procedures include actions to be taken in to dealing with situations where standards of student achievement are inadequate or inconsistently assessed.	X	
<i>Standard 4.11.</i> 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.		X
<i>Standard 4.12.</i> In order to facilitate the practice stages, the higher education institution signs cooperation agreements, contracts or other documents with institutions/organisations/practical training units.		X

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Consider ways in which internship and mobility exchanges can become an integral part of the curriculum.*
2. *Ensure that supervision of dissertation thesis is allocated to staff with prior experience at master's level, until all staff can be trained and/or mentored to become accommodated with approaches at EQF level 7.*
3. *Ensure that the information describing the program is consistent across all documentation to avoid any confusion and to maintain accuracy.*
4. *Continue the mapping exercise and take it to the level of CLOs and the course content being proposed so as to ensure a monitoring tool which could guide decisions about future content changes*

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5. *Update the bibliography in the syllabi ensuring that as far as possible the list contains more recent titles to be accessed via procurement measures or the databases and that none of the titles in the compulsory bibliography is in any language which is not required/tested on admission*
6. *Develop and implement a clear policy for teaching, learning and assessment which embeds English language delivery alongside Albanian, if English is likely to be used for exchange students in classes alongside Albanian students*
7. *Ensure ongoing monitoring mechanisms for teaching and assessments are robust and can render the results needed to prompt relevant corrections or improvements of delivery approaches*
8. *Decide and clearly communicate to potential students and other stakeholders whether there is an internship opportunity made compulsory in the programme, and, in case there is, clearly reflect it in the curriculum documentation and develop all the methodological materials that should be in place in such case (regulation on the organisation of practice, specific aims, relevant templates etc.) If internships are to become an integral part of the program and to bear ECTS, agreements with providers would need to be extended to explicitly align with master's level requirements and to offer activities which support students to achieve Level 7 learning outcomes.*

2.5. Students

The MA Early Childhood Education and Care is open to all candidates that have previously obtained bachelor degree in Preschool Education in Kosovo or abroad. During the application process the average grade during studies and the results of entrance examination are evaluated, the average grade constitutes 60% of the result while the entrance examination – 40%. According to the general regulation, priority is given to applicants with an average grade of 8 and above. There are no specific admission requirements foreseen for the MA Early Childhood Education and Care. The ET would, however, point out the issue described under Standard 4 and Standard 7 that currently majority of literature sources included in the syllabi are in English. If that is the case, the prospective applicants would need to be made aware of this before applying and an English test (or recognition of certificates issued by professional language testing authorities) should be introduced as part of the application process.

As this will be the only MA program in Preschool Education in Kosovo, UMIB expects that the bachelor's graduates from other institutions will come and study at UMIB and the admission requirements are formulated accordingly – with entrance examination that applies to everyone and without any favourable conditions except those demonstrated by the previous academic performance.

There is an internal regulation on the size of student groups for different activities, the size is differentiated for faculties. For the FE the group size is up to 40 students for mandatory lectures and at least 10 students for lectures in elective subject; 20 for mandatory exercises and 10 for exercises in elective subjects. The ET considers the size of student groups appropriate, taking into account the planned enrolment of 30 students that would constitute one group for mandatory lectures and two groups for mandatory exercises. ET considers it as benefit for students and for teaching staff as well, because it will possible for the teaching staff to take into account student interests and needs, which is not possible in bigger lecture groups.

In the SER UMIB states that the assessment procedures for study subjects are discussed at the beginning of each semester and jointly agreed with the students. UMIB uses the formative assessment where the final mark is formed by several components. The final exam does not exceed 70% of the mark and the rest is collected from written assignments, presentations and membership in research projects.

The results of student assessments are placed in the University Management System (SMU), through which at the end of the studies the transcript of grades as well as the exam result statistics are automatically generated. According to the Regulation for Master Studies Article 16, the regular exam dates include: January, June and September. The exact period for each term is determined by the general calendar of studies, which is accepted by the Senate and is available publicly. The Article 17 of the Regulations on master's studies defines the specific situations in which flexible treatment is foreseen, e.g. the student participates in an international study exchange program or is doing practical training abroad during the period assigned for the exam. However, the ET would like to suggest a broader formulation of such cases to allow more flexibility for the dean to decide, for example, in case of urgent health issues, family conditions, disabilities and other. It would be important that such special cases are not counted as a failure of the exam and do not prevent the student from receiving a scholarship or other benefits.

The SMU is also used to generate various statistics, also according to the KPI defined by the UMIB, including the student completion rate and statistics on student grading. These statistics are included in the quality assurance reports on the UMIB level.

The concept of plagiarism is referred to in the Code of Ethics and the UMIB Statute. As several other universities in Kosovo, UMIB is part of the Erasmus+ project ResearchCult which includes a plagiarism check system. In 2021, following this engagement, the UMIB (International Business College Mitrovica) has concluded an agreement with the Ltd. Teaching Writing Online on the use of the software plagiarismcheck.org which is embedded in the SMU platform. According to the SER, the academic staff has been trained to use this software and the software is also available to students through the SMU platform. However, as discussed under Standard 1 there are several problematic issues related to the actual application of anti-plagiarism measures. The Regulation for master's studies suggests that

only master's thesis would be subject to a compulsory plagiarism check. It specifically states that the allowed percentage for similarities for the master's thesis is 15% and there is no mention of other assignments that would be checked. A threat is also posed by the fact that the academic staff needs to be aware of the advanced master's level requirements for the students' research in order to guide them but a number of academic staff members proposed for the study program have not been exposed to master's education before or are not aware of the differences from bachelor's level education in this regard.

According to the SER, the students' rights and obligations are defined in several regulatory documents, including the Regulation on master's studies. While these documents are available on the UMIB website, UMIB uses a number of other tools to inform the students about their rights and obligations. These include the Student handbook, orientation day, newsletters. The possibility to complain is foreseen, too, although the ET could not assess its application in the program submitted for accreditation.

There is a separate Regulation on Transfer of Studies at UMIB. It foresees the possibilities of transfer of studies from abroad, change of department (internal transfer) and change of curriculum. However, only the possibility to transfer from abroad or internal transfer within UMIB are foreseen. At the same time, the Regulation for Master's Studies state that *“for the change of the study program or for the transfer of the student from another Program (Faculty) of UMIB, or from any other accredited University in the country or abroad, the provisions of the relevant Regulation for the transfer of studies at UMIB apply”*. In the view of the ET, UMIB would benefit from a clearly regulated possibility for the students of other universities in Kosovo to transfer to UMIB, through the Regulation on Transfer of Studies.

According to the UMIB internal regulations, each academic staff has to dedicate one hour per week for consultations with students. In addition, there would be separate time for consultations on thesis. There is also a Center for Psychological Support and Wellbeing that provides specific support in case needed.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
Standard 5.1. There is a clear and formally adopted admission procedure at institutional level that the study program respects when organising students' recruitment. Admission requirements are consistently and fairly applied for all students.	X	
Standard 5.2. All students enrolled in the study program possess a high school graduation diploma or other equivalent document of study, according to MEST requirements.	X	

Standard 5.3. The study groups are dimensioned so as to ensure an effective and interactive teaching and learning process.	X	
Standard 5.4. Feedback to students on their performance and results of assessments is given promptly and accompanied by mechanisms for assistance if needed.	-	-
Standard 5.5. The results obtained by the students throughout the study cycles are certified by the academic record.	X	
Standard 5.6. Flexible treatment of students in special situations is ensured with respect to deadlines and formal requirements in the program and to all examinations.		X
Standard 5.7. Records of student completion rates are kept for all courses and for the program as a whole and included among quality indicators.	X	
Standard 5.8. Effective procedures are being used to ensure that work submitted by students is original.		X
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.	X	
Standard 5.10. The students' transfer between higher education institutions, faculties and study programs is clearly regulated in formal internal documents.	X	
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.	X	

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *In case it is planned that the study program would rely on English literature sources (as suggested by the syllabi), ensure that the ability of students to use English language is properly tested as a part of the admission procedures;*
2. *Consistently apply plagiarism checks on all written assignments and offer students sufficient information to develop preventive practices;*
3. *Review the Regulation on Transfer of Studies so that it clearly foresees a procedure for transfer from other universities and study programmes in Kosovo;*

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4. *Revise the regulations in regard to flexible student treatment in exams in cases where the student is not able to participate in the exam due to objective reasons other from those currently prescribed by the regulation and ensure that such special cases would not be counted as a failure of the exam and would not prevent the student from receiving a scholarship or other benefits.*

2.6. Research

UMIB has defined its priorities and strategic research objectives incorporated in a 2022 Strategic Plan for Scientific Research. The program aims to contribute to these objectives and has identified specific areas for research outputs which can take an interdisciplinary approach. An express target is increasing the productivity of publications in internationally renowned scientific journals with an impact factor, specifically those indexed on internationally renowned platforms, such as Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus – this is also embedded in UMIB policies which define the recognition of research outputs, relying on the MEST Administrative Instruction 01/2018 on the principles of recognition of platforms and international peer-reviewed journals.

It is the understanding of the ET that financial, logistic and human resources to be used are those allocated at FE level already, given that all staff members are already employed, including those who were more recently on-boarded in light of implementing this new program. The ET noted that financial resources were not deemed problematic and management and staff were confident they could appropriately resource this study program, especially in light of the bachelor program being discontinued, for now. It is important that this continues to be monitored so that the program ensures its sustainability of research objectives, over time.

According to the SER, scientific publications and participation in conferences are considered in the staff evaluation process; this is consistent for all staff members. The evaluation occurs once a year and the main requirement under research is the publication of at least one scientific paper in recognised journals. This criterion is also used in promotions as regulated by the UMIB Statute and the Regulation on Promotions. The staff members who were interviewed by the ET confirmed they were aware of their obligations in relation to research and confirmed that some funding was available for support with research initiatives. It is noted in the SER (p. 42) that financial support can be received for publications and participation in conferences. The Strategic Research Plan 2022-2026 has also instituted an Academic Prize annual reward fund, which can acknowledge performance in research for those who publish papers in scientific journals indexed on the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus platforms. Whereas the ET appreciates this initiative, it is important to also highlight that measures need to be in place to support researchers before publication, and these would also require appropriate budgeting. Many journals require open-access fees or professional

proofreading, which should not come out of the personal budget of the researcher but should be captured in support systems of the institution – this can help increase productivity, where staff know they can rely on funds to progress their publications during the application and peer-review stages.

The SER (p. 68) states that “a considerable number of scientific articles and research findings related to their teaching activities and scientific research” and directs the ET to a platform where research outputs are recorded. Despite this statement by the institution, the ET could not concur that there is a considerable number of scientific articles; in fact, the ET finds that the number is low and deemed insufficient for what would be required to underpin a master’s program. The ET is concerned that collectively staff members proposed for the program do not have a sufficient track record in conducting research and publishing their results. Apart from the proposed Head of the Program, other staff members have one or two publications, which do not always align with the topics proposed for their teaching. There are also three proposed staff members who have no publications to date and one who was not included on the list of research activities, neither in the SER nor in the additional evidence. As such the ET notes that there is insufficient critical mass of publications which consider the topics of teaching as highlighted in the program and this makes it difficult to assume that staff can eventually bring their own research into the classroom, as and when pertinent for the courses being taught. As the program is not yet running, the ET could not test the degree to which research may already be brought into the classroom; however, given the limited research output presented to the ET, it is unlikely that this can be done successfully.

The list of publications supplied to the ET, including direct links to publications, demonstrate that, where there are publications, staff publish their work in speciality magazines or various publishing houses, and there is also dissemination at conferences and other events inside the country and abroad. However, as indicated above not all future staff members could be verified to have at least one publication averaged across the last three years, with some having no publications at all. The ET acknowledges that publication in indexed Journals takes time and it may not always depend on the researcher if the article appears within the allocated time by the institution; however, the proposal to teach at master’s level needs to be underpinned by appropriate research being conducted. The ET understand that some proposed staff members may have a stronger professional background, however this still does not absolve them of the national requirements in research.

The ET observed that in the CPD list provided in the additional evidence many training sessions delivered did target directly the development of research capacity. Such sessions included: “Research capacity building to strengthen Empirical Education Research on Social” (attended by 3 staff); Research in Teacher Education/ Statistical test and statistical associations using SPSS QATEK (attended by 5 staff); Academic integrity in scientific publishing - avoiding questionable publishers QAIN (attended by none of the staff proposed for this program) or EBSCO - basic and advanced searching (attended by 8 members of

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staff). The ET finds it unfortunate that not more staff members could find the time and interest to participate, as it is likely that a participation could have boosted their research performance overall and ensured a stronger staff profile in the presentation of this new master's program.

As far as possible and where the links provided could be successfully accessed, the ET verified that most staff members publish under the name of the institution in Kosovo they are affiliated to as full time staff. However, there are some publications where the authors do not have their affiliation listed and/or where a different affiliation is provided; however in the latter situation, it might be the case that staff have more recently moved to UMIB from a different affiliation, in which case the institution will be different. In the cases described, the ET could not verify the year of recruitment to be able to state for sure that a change in employment is at the basis of a different affiliation. Equally, the ET understands that staff who may have been part-time and recently made full-time will display a different affiliation on publications produced when they were full-time elsewhere.

UMIB promotes the Regulation on intellectual property, management and technology transfer. This is reinforced by Law No. 04/1-065 on Copyright and Related Rights. However, the interviews could not articulate arrangements in place that would be explicit enough for them to be aware in case of income-generating research outputs. The ET believes this is particularly important especially in the digitalised world we currently live in where intellectual property right can be easily breached if not explicitly protected by the institution where the researcher has their affiliation. Consequently, the institution would need to do more to disseminate its policy to all researchers which may publish under its affiliation.

In regards the organising of research collectively with students, the ET acknowledges that as the time span for the delivery of the program is so short students will not be enrolled enough time to be able to properly engage with more complex research initiatives, beyond their master's dissertations. The ET thus encourages staff to aim to explore if the master's dissertations could be designed to form sections of a larger, more comprehensive research project, if this were something found desirable by the teaching team. Evidence was provided to the ET that students are involved supported with extracurricular activities; however, less detail was included in the SER in relation to involvement of students on research projects, per se, with only one example of student included on a publication with staff. The ET believes that the Faculty needs to develop this dimension to ensure students are brought into a research culture early on.

The ET spoke with representatives of employers and concluded that the Faculty has strong ties with the community, local institutions and other public/private institutions. This important also in future initiatives where validation of research outputs could be attempted via the community partners. As the program is not yet running, the impact of any community collaborations on the program cannot yet be determined but the ET appreciates that these

areas of collaboration are actively being explored. This can be further encouraged at institutional level by developing explicit policy for implementation and monitoring of research-based teaching practices, which can draw on direct community experiences.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
<i>Standard 6.1.</i> 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.	X	
<i>Standard 6.2.</i> 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.	X	
<i>Standard 6.3.</i> 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.	X	
<i>Standard 6.4.</i> The academic staff has a proven track record of research results on the same topics as their teaching activity.		X
<i>Standard 6.5.</i> 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.	X	
<i>Standard 6.6.</i> Research is validated through: scientific and applied research publications, artistic products, technological transfer through consultancy centres, scientific parks and other structures for validation.	X	
<i>Standard 6.7.</i> 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.		X
<i>Standard 6.8.</i> Academic and research staff publish under the name of the institution in Kosovo they are affiliated to as full time staff.		X
<i>Standard 6.9/6.8.</i> 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>Standard 6.10.</i> Policies are established for ownership of intellectual property and clear procedures set out for commercialization of ideas developed by staff and students.	X	
<i>Standard 6.11.</i> Students are engaged in research projects and other activities.		X

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Ensure that appropriate funds are maintained and properly allocated in the future, also, so that sustainability of research objectives can be guaranteed;*
2. *Intensify support for staff members to ensure they can meet the publication targets and ensure appropriate dissemination of these support measures so that staff can access them in a timely manner;*
3. *Build research capacity in all staff members proposed for the program so that they can demonstrate the profile necessary for master's level education;*
4. *Allocate explicit funds in support of publications to be benefited from during the application and peer-review stages, additional to the post-publication incentives;*
5. *Consider developing policy to systematically encourage and monitor how research outputs can be incorporated in teaching and learning activities and promote that this is done consistently, especially at master's level;*
6. *Develop and implement explicit intellectual property regulations which can be considered by all staff and ensure full dissemination of these amongst all researchers;*
7. *Explore and implement effective ways of engaging students in research projects.*

2.7. Infrastructure and Resources

UMIB possesses a recently built university campus. According to the SER, the FE is located in a building with 32 classrooms, 3 amphitheatres (for 140 – 350 students) and a library. 8 classrooms (30 – 64 places each) are dedicated to FE only and the 3 amphitheatres are used jointly with other faculties. Also, there are 16 offices for the administration and the academic staff

As UMIB is a public university, no fees are foreseen for the students and the main source of income is the state budget. Similarly to other public institutions in Kosovo, the budget is calculated on the institutional and faculty levels and no separate budget lines are foreseen for study programs. The budget of FE is predicted to be stable for the period 2022 – 2023 and constitutes EUR 275,785.00 a year. The major part of the budget is used to finance the salaries and daily fees. As the campus is newly built, no capital investments have been foreseen for this period and in the near future. The overall budget is further divided by the general and specific strategic objectives of UMIB.

While the ET understands that strategic decisions on the reallocation of the budget are made at the FE level, thus allowing to shift the necessary resources where needed, the ET would still recommend developing a budget line for each study program separately, to see whether and when the study program is or becomes self-sustainable.

The expected number of students for this study program is 30. As this would be the only master's study program in Kosovo of this kind, the FE representatives were confident that the

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number will be reached. When asked about the financial sustainability of the study program, the management representatives stated that minimum expected number of students is 20 students, though not basing this number on any specific financial consideration.

In the SER UMIB states that for each piece of basic (mandatory) literature included in the syllabus, there are at least five copies available at the UMIB library. Also, there is an agreement with the National Library of Kosovo and UMIB claims that it improves the opportunities to access online libraries.

Although, when looking through the UMIB library stock that was referenced in the SER, most of the books in the area “Child Education, Research” have only one copy and only a few of the sources mentioned in the syllabi for MA Early Childhood Education and Care are available. The syllabi do not include any distinction between the mandatory literature and the supplementary literature therefore the ET assumes that all items listed are mandatory literature and that all items should have at least five copies. No information on the planned purchase of (additional) books or their availability through electronic means has been presented to the ET. Also, while the absolute majority of the literature sources included in the syllabus is in English, the UMIB library stock includes mostly books in Albanian. Judging from the information currently presented, the ET cannot conclude that the available literature is sufficient for implementing the MA Early Childhood Education and Care. Moreover, the presented library stock also does not comply with the internal requirement set by UMIB.

As the UMIB campus is newly built, several accessibility measures have been implemented, for example, a special parking lot, ramps at the entrance, elevators, the possibility to access the amphitheatres, and adjustments to the student dormitory. In the SER UMIB states that students with special needs are usually arranged in smaller groups and provided personal support. While students with physical disabilities are catered for, it is important for UMIB, in alignment with international good practice, to consider cognitive disabilities, e.g. learning disabilities, for which students may be less at ease to disclose these, but where reasonable adjustments would be in support of the students. If this were to be addressed, staff would need to be formally trained to be able to identify students and refer them to specialised services. The ET understands that this is not an easy process as strong counselling abilities are required; still steps in this direct are important. The ET would like to specifically highlight the fact that UMIB has signed cooperation agreements with the NGO “Little People of Kosovo - Mitrovica”, Kosovo Association of the Deaf thus committing to creating a more inclusive society for persons with different disabilities. The ET hopes that this partnership will lead to the necessary arrangements at UMIB to also eventually admit deaf or hard-of-hearing students on its programs, as the Association could supply interpreters for educational purposes. In time, it could be specifically useful to consider also infrastructure for blind students who could benefit from education in these fields and could become valuable ambassadors of the inclusivity promoted by UMIB.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
<i>Standard 7.1.</i> 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.	X	
<i>Standard 7.2.</i> 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.		X
<i>Standard 7.3.</i> 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: a. a) owned or rented spaces adequate for the educational process; b. b) owned or rented laboratories, with the adequate equipment for all the compulsory disciplines within the curriculum, wherever the analytical syllabus includes such activities; c. c) adequate software for the disciplines of study included in the curriculum, with utilisation licence; d) library equipped with reading rooms, group work rooms and its own book stock according to the disciplines included in the curricula.	X	
<i>Standard 7.4.</i> 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.	X	
<i>Standard 7.5.</i> The education institution's libraries must ensure, for each of the study programs: a. a) a number of seats in the reading rooms corresponding to at least 10% of the total number of students in the study program; b. 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; c. 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; d. 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; e) a sufficient number of subscriptions to Albanian and foreign publications and periodicals, according to the stated mission.		X

Standard 7.6. The infrastructure and facilities dedicated to the implementation of the program is adapted to students with special needs.	X	
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Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Develop a three-year plan on the financial stability of the study program.*
2. *Ensure that the literature sources included in the syllabi are available at the UMIB library, at least in the quantity required by the UMIB internal regulations.*
3. *Indicate in the syllabi where exactly each literature source is available (UMIB library stock; another library, electronic means).*

3. FINAL RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

The ET appreciates the intention of FE to establish the first master’s study program at the faculty. The ET acknowledges the strategic decision that has been made by UMIB and FE to support a new and unique master’s study program rather than allocate resources for boosting up an existing bachelor’s program. The evidence presented by the FE clearly demonstrates that the concept of a MA Early Childhood Education and Care has been designed with consideration and full commitment by the program head and with full support by the FE and stakeholders.

At the same time, the ET has rigorously evaluated all of the information received via written evidence and during the interviews and it finds that the MA Early Childhood Education and Care, as it is developed now, lacks the resources necessary for its successful delivery. While the program head has the necessary experience and skills, collectively the program staff does not meet the requirements for a master’s level program and this would have an impact both on the quality of program delivery and also the research component within it. Also, currently the UMIB’s library stock does not support quality implementation of study program on such level.

The ET has provided a number of recommendations for each standard and specifically the two standards concerning the academic staff and infrastructure. While these recommendations are not legally binding and it is the choice of UMIB to accept or disregard them, the ET believes that by considering them the UMIB and FE will be able to eliminate the shortcomings in a relatively short period of time and successfully submit a new application for accreditation in the near future.

Standard	Compliance level
1. Mission, objectives and administration	Substantially compliant

2. Quality management	Partially compliant
3. Academic staff	Partially compliant
4. Educational process content	Substantially compliant
5. Students	Substantially compliant
6. Research	Partially compliant
7. Infrastructure and resources	Partially compliant
Overall compliance	Partially compliant

In conclusion, the ET finds that the study program is **partially compliant** with the standards included in the KAA Accreditation Manual and, therefore, recommends the above study program **not to be accredited** before the recommendations made are given full consideration and amendments are made accordingly.

The ET appreciates the constructive response to the draft report and notes that it has the confidence that the program management will be working towards addressing the recommendations to allow it to propose an improved program which could gain accreditation in the future. The ET retains the uniqueness of the program and encourages the FE to put in place all necessary measures to see that the program proposal reaches the level of quality necessary and becomes compliant with KAA standards.

Expert Team

Member



(Signature)

Prof. univ. dr. habil. Anca Greere

22.05.2023

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(Signature)

Asnate Kažoka

22.05.2023