



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



UNIVERSITY OF PRISHTINA “HASAN PRISHTINA”

Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences

Department of Biology

STUDY PROGRAM

BIOLOGY- MSc

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

March 18, Prishtina

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
INTRODUCTION	3
Site visit schedule	4
A brief overview of the institution under evaluation	5
PROGRAMME EVALUATION	6
1. MISSION, OBJECTIVES AND ADMINISTRATION	6
2. QUALITY MANAGEMENT	8
3. ACADEMIC STAFF	10
4. EDUCATIONAL PROCESS CONTENT	13
5. STUDENTS	17
6. RESEARCH	18
7. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES	20

INTRODUCTION

Date of site visit: March 18, 2025

Expert Team:

- Professor *Mladen Krajacic*, PhD
- Professor *Brigitte Vannier*, PhD
- *Elisa Knief*, Student-expert

Coordinator from Kosovo Accreditation Agency

- *Leona Kovaci*, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring
- *Arianit Krasniqi*, Director of Department for Evaluation and Accreditation

Sources of information for the Report:

- Self-evaluation report by the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences A
- Syllabi Documents
- Teaching Staff CV Documents
- On-site visit and meeting with representatives of the institution and the study programme, students, graduates and employers

Criteria used for institutional and program evaluations

- Standards and performance indicators for external evaluation according to the KAA Accreditation Manual
- Compliance with the overall mission statement of the Faculty, and the University
- Consistency with the National Qualifications Framework
- Consistency with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area

Site visit schedule

Programme Accreditation Procedure at Faculty of Mathematic and Natural Sciences at UP,	
Program:	Biology, MSc (with 2 specializations: 1. Botany, 2. Zoology), (Re-accreditation)
Site visit on:	18.03.2025
Expert Team:	Prof. Mladen Krajacic; Prof. Brigitte Vannier; Ms Elissa Knief, student expert;
Coordinators of the KAA:	Leona Kovaçi, KAA Officer Ilirijana Ademaj Ahmeti, KAA Officer

Time	Meeting	Participants
09:00 - 09:50	Meeting with the management of the faculty where the programme is integrated	Assoc. Prof. Kajtaž Bllaca - Dean Prof. Arben Haziri - Vice-dean Assoc. Prof. Ferim Gashi - Vice-dean Ass. Prof. Lulzim Millaku - Vice-dean MSc. Jeton Hyseni – Secretary
09:50 - 10:35	Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff	Ass. Dr. Kaltrina Jusufi Besnik Loxha Ardita Kastrati Shkumbin Tafilaj Artan Alidema
10:40 - 11:40	Meeting with the head of the study programme:	Prof. Avdulla Alija Assoc. Prof. Bekim Gashi Ass. Prof. Zenel Krasniqi
11:40 - 12:40	Lunch break	
12:40 - 13:25	Meeting with teaching staff	Assoc. Prof. Kimete Lluga Rizani Prof. Linda Grapci Prof. Halil Ibrahim Prof. Avni Hajdari Ass. Prof. Ilir Mazreku Ass. Dr. Naim Berisha Ass. Dr. Donard Geci Ass. Dr. Fisnik Asllani
13:30 - 14:15	Meeting with students	Xheneta Mehmeti Laureta Hamza

		Krenare Ibrahim
14:15 - 15:00	Meeting with graduates/alumni	Fitim Kastrati, Erzë Çoçaj, Ardiana Dragusha, Arta Shala
15:05 - 15:45	Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders	Afrim Berisha - Kosovo Environmental Protection Agency Valon Morina - Vitech Havushe Bunjaku – 99 LULE Qenan Maxhuni – KEERC
15:45 - 15:55	Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts	
15:55– 16:05	Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and program	Assoc. Prof. Kajtaz Bllaca - Dean Arben Haziri - Vice- dean Assoc. Prof. Ferim Gashi - Vice-dean Ass. Prof. Lulzim Millaku - Vice-dean MSc. Jeton Hyseni – Secretary
16:05 - 16:20	Visiting Facility	Ass. Prof. Lulzim Millaku - Vice Dean for Finance and Infrastructure Prof. Elez Krasniqi - Head of the Biology Department Ass. Dr. Qendrim.Ramshaj - Secretary of the Biology Department

A brief overview of the programme under evaluation

The *University of Prishtina* is the largest public higher education in Kosovo. The studies in mathematics and natural sciences started in 1960 at the Faculty of Philosophy. Since the *Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences* was founded in 1971, the five departments of the Faculty have been responsible for research and higher education activities in mathematics, physics, chemistry, geography and biology.

The Department of Biology, a constitutive unit of the Faculty, is the only national institution performing research and delivering study programmes in biology. The Master's Study Programme in Biology is a subject of this evaluation.

PROGRAMME EVALUATION

The programme evaluation consists of 7 standard areas through which the programme is evaluated.

1. MISSION, OBJECTIVES AND ADMINISTRATION

(Please insert detailed comments, observations, commendations, and suggestions for improvement regarding the general area and its corresponding standards, as specified in the KAA Accreditation Manual. The evaluation must take into account the adequacy of the processes and the results achieved under each standard, considering both their individual impact and their cumulative effect on the general area.

In order to assess the level of compliance (non-compliance, partial, substantial or full, for each general area, you must evaluate the standards outlined within that area. Indicators are essential in determining whether a standard is fulfilled. Therefore, the evaluation should include a detailed review of each standard, considering its respective indicators, followed by a general assessment of how the standards collectively address the overall general area. The expert team must ensure that each indicator is elaborated within the report in two to three sentences).

Standard 1.1 The study program is in line with the higher education institution's mission and strategic goals, needs of society and it is publicly available. (ESG 1.1)

The Master Study Programme in Biology is in compliance with the published mission and vision of the University of Prishtina. The Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences and the Department of Biology aims to ensure high-quality education and research in the field of biology, as well as ecology and environmental protection. The programme recognises the specifics of the institution and its regional potential. The programme equips students with professional and academic competences and contributing to the national development and prosperity.

Standard 1.2 The study program is subject to policies and procedures on academic integrity and freedom that prevent all types of unethical behaviour. The documents are publicly available, and staff and students are informed thereof. (ESG 1.1)

The management, academic staff and students are committed to upholding ethical conduct in research, teaching and assessment. Properly developed and publicly available regulations related to ethical standards maintain academic integrity and prevent unethical behaviour. There are written procedures and mechanisms to address plagiarism and all forms of discrimination. The study programme has mechanisms for monitoring any potential unethical behaviour of students, lecturers and other stakeholders. Students are well informed about this issue.

Ethical conduct forms the foundation of trust, credibility, and excellence in academic endeavors, benefiting the entire academic community and contributing to the advancement of knowledge and scholarship.

Standard 1.3 Relevant information is collected, analysed and used to ensure the effective management of the study program and other relevant activities and such information is publicly available. (ESG 1.7)

Legal basis related to the curriculum and other academic issues are stated in the Statute of the University of Prishtina, as well as in a number of regulations that are available at the University website. Effective management at all the levels (university, faculty, department) ensures effective delivery of the study programme, including the teaching process, research, quality assurance and assessment principles. Both students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.

Standard 1.4 The delivery of the study program is supported by appropriate and sufficient administrative support to achieve its goals in teaching, learning, research, and community service. (ESG 1.6)

The administrative support for each study programme at the University of Prishtina is governed by the Statute. According to the Statute, the Study Committee is established within the academic unit as an advisory body for programme preparation. The committee is responsible for development and modifications, ensuring proper conduction of teaching process, research activities, quality assurance and students' assessment. There are policies ensuring adequate and efficient administrative staff and budgetary support. In general, administrative support is sufficient to ensure efficient learning process for students, as well as professional development of the academic staff (enhancement of both teaching and research skills).

Standard 1.5 The recommendations for quality improvement of the study program from previous internal and external quality assurance procedures are implemented. (ESG 1.10)

Recommendations for quality improvement of the study programme and the general teaching and research activities of the Department of Biology have continuously been implemented. The expert-team members highly appreciate improvements concerning syllabi documents quality, including properly defined learning outcomes, clearly presented course content (both lectures and practical work) and clearly defined and updated literature. Furthermore, we identified a significant quality improvement of the teaching staff CV documents, as well as publishing and English language proficiency.

ET recommendations:

1. *The institution is encouraged to present a strategic plan, including enrolment increase/number, retention rate, graduates' employability, new industry partnerships, increasing scientific publications, students' and staff number participating in international mobility...*
2. *It would be informative and useful to provide a list of alumni including their positions and professional development.*

2. QUALITY MANAGEMENT

(Please insert detailed comments, observations, commendations, and suggestions for improvement regarding the general area and its corresponding standards, as specified in the KAA Accreditation Manual. The evaluation must take into account the adequacy of the processes and the results achieved under each standard, considering both their individual impact and their cumulative effect on the general area.

In order to assess the level of compliance (non-compliance, partial, substantial or full, for each general area, you must evaluate the standards outlined within that area. Indicators are essential in determining whether a standard is fulfilled. Therefore, the evaluation should include a detailed review of each standard, considering its respective indicators, followed by a general assessment of how the standards collectively address the overall general area. The expert team must ensure that each indicator is elaborated within the report in two to three sentences).

Standard 2.1 The study program delivery is subject to an established and functional internal quality assurance system, in which all relevant stakeholders are included. (ESG 1.1)

The University of Pristina (UP) ensures quality management in its study programs through a well-defined internal and external quality assurance system, aligned with national laws, European standards (ESG), and institutional regulations. The Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (FMNS) follows UP's established procedures, including the Regulation on Quality Assurance and Evaluation (2016) which integrates ENQA guidelines.

Quality assurance involves multiple stakeholders, including the University Senate, Governing Council, and commissions. Internal mechanisms include student and staff evaluations, course assessments via SEMS (Students Electronic Management System), and continuous improvement cycles (Plan-Do-Check-Act). External evaluations are conducted by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA), ensuring compliance with national and European standards.

Standard 2.2 The study program is subject to a process of design and approval established by the HEI. (ESG 1.2)

The Master of Biology program of the University of Pristina aims to fill a gap in the labour market, ensuring that graduates have the technical skills required by employers in Kosovo and beyond.

An evaluation of the teachings and the professors is made every year to assess the content and the delivery of the courses.

A faculty council and a student committee are implemented to allow the exchanges between students and staff.

A career development centre helps students to explore the labour market and to find the positions that fit their skills.

Several trainings of the academic staff allow a continuous improvement of the teachings. An ethical committee helps to manage all the situations where issues occur and an example of a professor who was misbehaving has been mentioned.

Special needs of students are taken care of by a centre to address psychologic issues, stress or other problems.

Standard 2.3 The study program is periodically monitored and reviewed to ensure its objectives are achieved. The monitoring of the study program involves stakeholder participation. (ESG 1.9)

Advisory board meetings provide continuous feedback on the alignment of the study program with labour market demands. Changes to the curriculum are made in response to industry trends and technological advancements.

Surveys are conducted among students, faculty, and industry partners to assess program effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. The results of these surveys directly inform decision-making and curriculum updates.

Internships experiences are evaluated both by academic and professional supervisors. The quality assurance system has to be aware of all the components of the study programme, including quality syllabi content. Furthermore, it has to react to recommendations that have been raised in the previous accreditation reports. Unfortunately, the evaluation team could still identify failures in some syllabi.

Standard 2.4 All relevant information about the study program is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and is publicly available. (ESG 1.8)

The university has made all relevant policies, regulations, and guidelines publicly accessible on its official website, ensuring transparency and ease of access for students and stakeholders. These include the Regulations on Bachelor Studies, Regulation on Quality Assurance and Evaluation, and General Conditions for Registration, which provide essential details about the academic and administrative framework of the study program.

Admission criteria, qualification recognition, and enrolment quotas are clearly defined and published on the university's website and within the Regulation for Bachelor Studies. The study program details, including syllabuses, learning outcomes, credits, and assessment methods, are included in the student registration guidelines and official faculty publications. For other faculties, the university already provides pass rate and dropout reports on its website, ensuring that similar data will be maintained for this program as soon as it becomes available. For study program information published on webpages, no discrepancies were reported regarding accuracy, reliability, and objectivity in the meetings by users (e.g., students). Updates are managed and promptly communicated through the university's official website and public notices, ensuring that stakeholders receive the latest information on program details.

ET recommendations:

1. Quality assurance system should be aware of recommendations that have been repeatedly raised in the previous accreditation reports. The system has to ensure some syllabi of the study programme to be updated.
2. An intern promotion mentoring between students could be implemented to help new students to get accommodated with the university teachings and all the services.
3. Another mentoring that could be interesting is the mentoring with new graduates that are now working and help the students to know the different skills that are required in the labour market.
4. Ask the students to set up a LinkedIn profile to make them realize how important the network in their career will be.
5. Organize a day where professional come to present jobs and skills needed to students to helps them to choose what they would like to work on.
6. It's recommended to ensure proper functioning of the web page and public accessibility of all the regulations and information demanded under 2.4. substandard.

3. ACADEMIC STAFF

(Please insert detailed comments, observations, commendations, and suggestions for improvement regarding the general area and its corresponding standards, as specified in the KAA Accreditation Manual. The evaluation must take into account the adequacy of the processes and the results achieved under each standard, considering both their individual impact and their cumulative effect on the general area.)

In order to assess the level of compliance (non-compliance, partial, substantial or full, for each general area, you must evaluate the standards outlined within that area. Indicators are essential in determining whether a standard is fulfilled. Therefore, the evaluation should include a detailed review of each standard, considering its respective indicators, followed by a general assessment of how the standards collectively address the overall general area).

Standard 3.1 The study program delivery is supported by teaching staff who are recruited in line with national legislation, and internal regulations in effect, and it is based on objective and transparent procedure. (ESG 1.5)

The procedures for selecting, employing, and advancing academic staff at the University of Pristina (UP) are transparent and regulated by the UP Statute and other relevant regulations. The process includes initiating competitions, announcing them on the university website and in daily newspapers, and making public reports on candidate evaluations.

The institution has adequate procedure for selection of the best candidate. The Senate of UP decides on the selection of academic staff based on proposals from Faculty Councils and preliminary evaluation commissions with at least three professional members. Contracts with selected academic staff are signed by the Rector.

Candidates for employment are provided with full position descriptions.

Standard 3.2 The study program is supported by sufficient permanent academic staff who are adequately qualified to deliver the study program. (ESG 1.5)

The Department of Biology provides sufficient full-time teaching staff (28) to supply the study programme, including those ranking from assistant professor to full professor (18) as well as teaching assistants (10). They do not cover more than two teaching positions (one full-time and one part-time). The ratio of the academic staff and students' number is significantly below the upper limit and is appropriate for the students' successful achievement. Their teaching workload (6 hours per week) makes them feel comfortable, leaving enough time for research activities and scientific mentoring of students. This issue is regulated by relevant legislation. For each student group and for every 60 ECTS in the study programme, the institutions ensured a full-time staff member (there are two heads of the study programme).

The academic staff comply with the legal requirements, regulated by the university statute and related acts. However, as a result of weak criteria and legal requirements in the past a majority of staff members are full professors which is not stimulative enough to ensure even better progress of the Department and the Faculty. According to their CV documents and scientific publications the vast majority of staff members are considered qualified for the courses they teach.

Standard 3.3 The study program is supported by teaching staff who are subject to advancement and reappointment based on objective and transparent procedures which include the evaluation of excellence. The advancement of staff arises from the higher education institution's strategic goals and is in line with the legislation and internal regulations in effect. (ESG 1.5)

The procedures for the advancement and reappointment of academic staff are regulated by the UP Statute and other regulations (886-27.4.2022). They are considered transparent and objective, including vacancy announcement, appointment of selection committee, a committee report and decision. The criteria for the advancement of academic staff are defined in the statute and the institutional regulations, where a certain number of scientific publications indexed in WoS or Scopus databases is required for each academic rank. The entire process of recruiting academic staff is transparent, starting from the initiation of the competition to the announcement of the competition on the university website and in daily newspapers.

All reports on the evaluation of candidates are public. The final decision on the selection of academic staff is made by the Senate of UP based on the proposal of the Faculty Council and the selection committee comprising at least three qualified staff-members in the relevant field.

Standard 3.4 The academic staff engaged in the delivery of the study program is entitled to institutional support for professional development. (ESG 1.5)

According to the *Self-evaluation Report*, the academic staff constantly strives to improve teaching methodologies, taking into account the weaknesses identified during the evaluation process. It seems that is a valid statement for vast majority of staff members. It is reflected in obvious progress that the Faculty and the Department present year by year. Annual operational plan for the professional development of the academic staff reflects the institutional engagement in supporting their continuous improvement in terms of teaching skills, research environment and scientific reputation.

The university supports the advancement of teaching methodologies by offering staff training opportunities at the *Centre for Excellence in Teaching*, where basic and advanced training sessions are organized annually for this purpose. Furthermore, the university encourages and rewards academic staff for participation in international scientific conferences and for publications in impacted scientific journals.

Staff members can apply for Erasmus+ programs each academic year or semester, allowing for staff exchanges for teaching or training at partner universities. The University supports staff participation in international scientific projects.

Although the management and the programme heads claim that the institution implements numerous measures to facilitate staff development, we could identify a weak link in the chain:

- There are still academic staff members who are not able to follow cutting-edge discoveries and cannot ensure alignment of their course content with recent knowledge in the field

Insufficient number of staff members are involved in mobility programmes, international collaboration and international research activities.

Standard 3.5 External associates who teach at the study program have adequate qualifications and work experience for the delivery of the study program and achievement of the intended learning outcomes. (ESG1.5)

There are no external associates - all the academic staff members engaged in the study programme, are full-time employees.

ET recommendations:

1. *There is saying, “A chain is as strong as its weakest link”. The institution is encouraged to ensure all staff members engage with recent English literature and align their course content with contemporary knowledge in the field.*
2. *The Department of Biology should be aware that an overrepresentation of Full Professors and small proportion of Assistant Professors could slow down the progress and further development of both research and educational quality.*
3. *The institution is recommended to not only offer, but also ensure greater staff engagement in mobility and international activities.*

4. EDUCATIONAL PROCESS CONTENT

(Please insert detailed comments, observations, commendations, and suggestions for improvement regarding the general area and its corresponding standards, as specified in the KAA Accreditation Manual. The evaluation must take into account the adequacy of the processes and the results achieved under each standard, considering both their individual impact and their cumulative effect on the general area.

In order to assess the level of compliance (non-compliance, partial, substantial or full, for each general area, you must evaluate the standards outlined within that area. Indicators are essential in determining whether a standard is fulfilled. Therefore, the evaluation should include a detailed review of each standard, considering its respective indicators, followed by a general assessment of how the standards collectively address the overall general area).

Standard 4.1 The study program intended learning outcomes are formulated clearly, precisely, and comprehensively according to the best practices; they are aligned with the published institution’s/academic unit’s mission and strategic goals and are publicly available. (ESG 1.2)

The Master's program in Biology at the University of Pristina's Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (FMNS), focus on its alignment with Standard 4.1–4.8 of quality assurance in higher education. It is structured to ensure clear, achievable learning outcomes compliant with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and European Qualifications Framework (EQF) at Level VII (Master's). The curriculum is coherent and research-oriented, offering specializations in Botany and Zoology, with a strong emphasis on practical fieldwork, laboratory skills, and thesis research.

The program follows a student-centred approach, integrating ECTS-based workload measurement (120 ECTS total). Courses include advanced cell biology, molecular genetics, ecosystems ecology, and applied zoology/botany, with elective options for specialization. Learning outcomes are regularly monitored through internal evaluations (student/staff feedback via SEMS) and external reviews by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA). The teaching combines lectures, seminars, lab/fieldwork, and digital tools (e.g., GIS applications). Assessment includes continuous evaluation, exams, and thesis defence. Practical Trainings relies on fieldwork and lab exercises (e.g., herbarium preparation, faunistic surveys) are integral, though **internships remain optional**. Challenges are limited funding, infrastructure gaps, and declining student enrolment pose threats, while opportunities include Erasmus+ collaborations and potential program delivery in English.

The **SWOT** Analysis highlights the **strengths** of the program (Strong alignment with European standards (ENQA), active staff involvement, and modernized curriculum). Some are that there is no mandatory internships and an uneven student English proficiency. **Opportunities** could be explored by an expansion of international partnerships and dual-language (English/Albanian) offerings.

One **Threat** lies in Migration of youth and preference for social sciences over STEM fields.

Standard 4.2 The study program intended learning outcomes comply with the National Qualification Framework and the European Qualifications Framework level descriptors. (ESG1.2)

The intended learning outcomes of the study program overall comply with the National Qualifications Framework and the descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) belong to this level of study. The program and curriculum are adequately structured with the classification of learning outcomes to three components: knowledge, skills, and competencies, and these outcomes are in line with the level and profile of qualification gained by the students.

Improvements could be brought by renewing some courses syllabus. Moreover, regarding just a few courses, their syllabi should be updated as recommended in the previous evaluation reports.

- 1) Improvements and updates are expected in some course's syllabi.
- 2) A master in "Biology" might be a little bit too general and may be different masters could be created if there are enough students.
- 3) Courses content could be improved on several levels. For example, courses in microbiology could address the metagenomic approaches.
- 4) The course of Molecular genetics could cover new techniques like *New Generation Sequencing* techniques (*Illumina*, *Nanopore*). Open sources platforms like *Galaxy* (<https://training.galaxyproject.org/training-material/events/2025-05-12-galaxy-academy-2025.html>) could be used to train the students to the basics of sequences analysis.
- 5) Cell metabolism could detail the new tools like KEGG or *Cytoscape* or other platforms to model the metabolism in a cell

Standard 4.3 The content and structure of the curriculum is coherent and enable the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes and to progress smoothly through their studies. (ESG 1.2)

The curriculum contains a lot of courses. It covers very different topics such as microbiology and GIS which could be good for interdisciplinary projects but could also be a weakness for the specialization of the student on one domain.

With more detailed courses, student time could be used to gain more knowledge in the newest techniques like metagenomics, NGS (new sequencing technologies) or molecular biology in general.

Standard 4.4 If the study program leads to degrees in regulated professions, it is aligned with the EU Directives and national and international professional associations. (ESG 1.2)

The profession of Biologist is not regulated in Europe.

The SER shows that the study program has been designed to take in account the opinion and recommendations of the industrial sector of the region through the Advisory Board.

The needs of the private sector in the coming years could be more detailed and the program evolution could be also presented. Artificial intelligence will impact science and should be part of the teaching for all the students in the near future both to use it wisely and to measure the impact that it will have on the job market.

Standard 4.5 The intended learning outcomes of the student practise period are clearly specified, and effective processes are followed to ensure that learning outcomes and the strategies to develop that learning are understood by students (if applicable). (ESG 1.2)

There is no compulsory internship in the program, and it is not obligatory according to the national legislative. However, in the European Higher Education Area it is considered highly recommendable component. It could improve the practical skills and employability of the students.

Standard 4.6 The study program is delivered through student-centred teaching and learning. (ESG 1.3)

Different teaching methods are used as: case studies discussion with students, the use of IT in the teaching process. The study programme is delivered through student-centred teaching and learning.

Standard 4.7 The evaluation and assessment used in the study program are objective and consistent and ensures that intended learning outcomes are achieved. (ESG 1.3)

The course syllabus is presented to students right from the first class. In this syllabus, in addition to the course content, aim, objectives, and topics to be lectured each week, the assessment method is also specified. Assessment terms and passing criteria are regulated by the UP Statute. Assessment is objective and certified through registration in the student electronic management system.

Standard 4.8 Learning outcomes are evaluated in terms of student workload and expressed in ECTS. (ECTS 1.2)

The learning outcomes at the course level in the program are defined to correspond to the learning outcomes at the program level and its successful completion; in fact, they are part of it. The student workload for each course, semester, and academic year of study is expressed numerically through ECTS. 1 ECTS is equivalent to 25 hours of student workload, which includes activities at the faculty (lectures, exercises, exams, seminars, assignments, etc.) and independent work the student undertakes to achieve the expected learning outcomes. The Biology MSc program is offered over 4 semesters, or two academic years, and to graduate, a student must accumulate at least 120 ECTS which corresponds to the European standard.

ET recommendations:

- 1. The overall organization of the Master could be improved by more specialization of students.*
- 2. The institution is encouraged to consider implementing a compulsory internship in the study programme content.*
- 3. English courses or projects in English should be implemented. A certification of English should be used to assess the level of English of students (TOEIC for example).*

5. STUDENTS

(Please insert detailed comments, observations, commendations, and suggestions for improvement regarding the general area and its corresponding standards, as specified in the KAA Accreditation Manual. The evaluation must take into account the adequacy of the processes and the results achieved under each standard, considering both their individual impact and their cumulative effect on the general area.

In order to assess the level of compliance (non-compliance, partial, substantial or full, for each general area, you must evaluate the standards outlined within that area. Indicators are essential in determining whether a standard is fulfilled. Therefore, the evaluation should include a detailed review of each standard, considering its respective indicators, followed by a general assessment of how the standards collectively address the overall general area).

Standard 5.1 Clear admission policies, including requirements, criteria and processes for the study program are clearly defined and are publicly available. (ESG 1.4)

The admission requirements and criteria for the Master of Science in Biology program at UP are clearly and comprehensively defined and are publicly available through the Faculty of Mathematical and Natural Sciences, in accordance with the university's Statute. As stated in the SER, applicants must have achieved a minimum average grade of 7.5 in their bachelor's studies to be eligible for enrolment. Additionally, the admission process ensures the selection of candidates with appropriate prior knowledge and competencies by requiring them to take an entrance exam in the relevant subjects at the Faculty to which they have applied. Furthermore, the admission criteria and procedures are consistently and fairly applied to all students, ensuring transparency and equal access. As the SER states, UP is committed to fostering an inclusive and non-discriminatory environment, providing equal opportunities to all applicants regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, marital status, language, religion, political beliefs, nationality, ethnic or social affiliation, membership in a national community, financial status, birth status, or any other characteristic.

Standard 5.2 Student progression data for the study program are regularly collected and analyzed. Appropriate actions are taken to ensure the student's completion of the study program. (ESG 1.4)

A functional system for monitoring students' progress is established by UP, involving both academic and administrative staff. However, no support is offered to students who struggle with academic achievement or who have failed their exams. The faculty should establish mechanisms to analyse students' performance and provide support to those facing challenges. Moreover, students have a clear understanding of their progression opportunities.

Standard 5.3 The study program ensures appropriate conditions and support for outgoing and incoming students (national and international students). (ESG 1.4)

UP has various mobility agreements, and students enrolled in the study program are regularly informed about international exchange opportunities and supported, for example, in matters related to scholarships. The institution has a clear regulation for the recognition of ECTS credits. Moreover, UP actively attracts foreign students. Additionally, UP offers foreign language courses to support international students.

Standard 5.4 The study program delivery is ensured through adequate resources for student support. The needs of a diverse student population (part-time students, mature students, students from abroad, students from under-represented and vulnerable groups, students with learning difficulties and disabilities, etc.) are taken into account. (ESG 1.6)

UP possesses adequate resources for student support, taking into account the needs of a diverse student population. The number of professional, administrative, and technical staff involved in providing student support for the study program is sufficient and adequately qualified. As mentioned above, UP could establish support mechanisms specifically for students experiencing difficulties and challenges in academic achievement within the program.

ET recommendations:

- 1. Consider introducing support mechanisms particularly relevant to students who may be experiencing problems and challenges in terms of academic achievement in the program.*

6. RESEARCH

(Please insert detailed comments, observations, commendations, and suggestions for improvement regarding the general area and its corresponding standards, as specified in the KAA Accreditation Manual. The evaluation must take into account the adequacy of the processes and the results achieved under each standard, considering both their individual impact and their cumulative effect on the general area.

In order to assess the level of compliance (non-compliance, partial, substantial or full, for each general area, you must evaluate the standards outlined within that area. Indicators are essential in determining whether a standard is fulfilled. Therefore, the evaluation should include a detailed review of each standard, considering its respective indicators, followed by a general assessment of how the standards collectively address the overall general area).

Standard 6.1. The study program aligns with the institution's/academic unit's mission and the research strategic goals.

The University of Prishtina department of Biology aims to conduct research activities that also support the teaching activities of this department. However financial resources should be increased to allow the researcher to improve their skills and their teachings. Researchers receive a part of their funding from the Ministry of Higher Education and complete their budget by applying to calls for foreign organizations. All the academics staff and their students have published more than one publication per year in the last three years.

A conference is organized by the staff to present the research work to the community.

Standard 6.2. The academic staff engaged in the study program is committed and supported to achieve high-quality research work and/or professional activity.

As mentioned above all the staff has active publishers. The list of publication in the SER shows that the research work is published in international review. The impact factor of the journal is not given and this metrics could also be discussed. As USAID has stopped its support, a negative impact is expected in the development of the research but other grants are obtained by the teams.

Standard 6.3 The academic staff engaged in the delivery of the study program is encouraged to participate in different aspects of cooperation with national and international partners.

Faculty members regularly work with colleagues from other higher education institutions on joint research activities (Erasmus Plus, international collaborations with foreign universities (Italy, Germany, Croatia, France, Turkey).

Here are several ongoing projects

Vitro-BioNat - In vitro biotechnological production and chemical and physiological characterization of the bionatural products of *Hypericum perforatum* L under abiotic stresses for spontaneous populations in Albania and Kosovo. Bilateral Government projects of Kosovo-Albania 2024.

ETHCSTWIN – Reinforcing the Scientific Excellence of the Institute for Ethnopharmacological Studies and Phytotherapy (IESP) through Twinning with Computer Science (CS). 2024-2027. Founded by EU Horizon program (HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-02-01).

Physiological and molecular mechanisms of cold and freezing tolerance of resurrection plants from the Gesneriaceae family in Kosovo. University of Prishtina - Project no. 2/963 - 9

Biomonitoring of oxidative stress responses in maize due to soil contamination in the vicinity of the Ferronikel smelter in Drenas. Ministry of Education, Sciences and Technology, Government of the Republic of Kosovo - Project n. 2-2459/1.8

Transboundary nature conservation and sustainable regional development for a planned UNESCO biosphere reserve in the Buna Region, Montenegro/Albania (Short: Together for Buna)' within the programme 'East-West Dialogue: Higher Education Dialogue with Western Balkan Countries 2023' of the German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst / DAAD).

Standard 6.4 The teaching staff engaged in the study program has a proven record of research results on the same topics as their teaching activity.

In spite of a number of unfavourable aspects, a progress accomplished by some staff members was reported in the previous accreditation reports. In the recent report, it has to be emphasised that this positive movement has been continued. The staff members have published scientific papers in impacted journals and included younger colleagues in their research projects. A number of successful collaborative research arrangements with colleagues from the international community have been developed. It seems that it is not a result of some individual effort anymore – research progress is now the rule and not an exception.

The Department of Biology published impressive number of research papers of in the last five years.

ET recommendations:

1. *New projects with more molecular techniques could be interesting to increase the technical expertise of teachers on new techniques that could be in turn taught to the students.*
2. *Interdisciplinary projects could be interesting to develop new skills in all the teams and could improve the chance to get a grant.*

7. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

(Please insert detailed comments, observations, commendations, and suggestions for improvement regarding the general area and its corresponding standards, as specified in the KAA Accreditation Manual. The evaluation must take into account the adequacy of the processes and the results achieved under each standard, considering both their individual impact and their cumulative effect on the general area.

In order to assess the level of compliance (non-compliance, partial, substantial or full, for each general area, you must evaluate the standards outlined within that area. Indicators are essential in determining whether a standard is fulfilled. Therefore, the evaluation should include a detailed review of each standard, considering its respective indicators, followed by a general assessment of how the standards collectively address the overall general area).

Standard 7.1. The HEI ensures adequate premises and equipment for performing education processes and research. ESG (1.6)

As long as the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, including the Department of Biology remains housed in the old building, the implementation of the study programme will be substantially (but not fully) ensured concerning infrastructure and resources. However, the number of teaching and seminar rooms, as well as laboratories, has been sufficient for students involved in the study programmes delivered so far. The supply of laboratory equipment has continuously increased, and chemical reagents have become more available year after year. While some parts of the Department may not appear very modern, this has certainly not been a crucial bottleneck in the development of the study programme. The improvement in the equipping of laboratories and teaching rooms is evident – a significant amount of laboratory equipment has been added to the Department of Biology in the past decade.

Standard 7.2 The HEI ensures adequate library resources for study program. (ESG 1.6)

The students of the Department of Biology have access to the premises of the University Library, located within the University Campus (next to the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural sciences building). The UP library provides numerous books in the field of biology, along with digital platforms such as ScienceDirect, BioOne, and others. Additionally, there are three smaller libraries within FSHMN that are available to Biology students. The teaching staff makes an effort to provide alternative sources of literature, including online books, scientific journals, and other internet resources to supplement the available materials.

All literature provided to students in the program is outlined in the syllabus of each course. While most subjects feature literature in Albanian, additional resources in English are also included.

Standard 7.3 The study program is appropriately funded to deliver its intended educational activities and research. (ESG 1.6)

The Department of Biology has an annual financial plan for chemicals, consumables, equipment, transportation and accommodation, necessary for laboratory and field work, including the needs of the Master's Study Programme in Biology. New equipment, purchased since the previous accreditation (three years ago) reflects the institution's commitment and demonstrates that the sustainability of the study programme is expected for the next five years. Several items have been supplied through international projects and cooperations, showcasing the department's ability and readiness to secure additional financial sources for the development of the study programme.

ET recommendations:

1. *The Department of Biology is encouraged to further engage in acquiring international, English-language literature to support the delivery of the study programme.*

Final recommendation of the Expert Team:

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

In conclusion, the **Master's Study Programme in Biology**, offered by the *Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences – the Department of Biology*, is considered **substantially compliant** with the standards included in the KAA Accreditation Manual. Therefore, it is recommended **to be accredited** for a duration of **3 years** with a number of **30 students** to be enrolled in the programme.

Expert Team

Chair



Mladen Krajacic

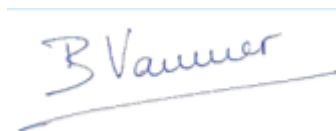
March 08, 2025

(Signature)

(Print Name)

(Date)

Member



Brigitte Vannier

March 08, 2025

(Signature)

(Print Name)

(Date)

Member



Elisa Knief

March 08, 2025

(Signature)

(Print Name)

(Date)