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UNIVERSITY OF PRIZREN “UKSHIN HOTI”

Computer Science and Communication Technology (MSc)

REACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

March 2024, Prishtina



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Program Accreditation Procedure at University “Ukshin Hoti” in Prizren	
Programs:	Computer Sciences and Communication Technologies, MSc, 120 ECTS (Re-accreditation) Software Design, Bachelor Professional, 180 ECTS (Accreditation)
Site visit on:	26 March 2024
Expert Team:	Dr. Peeter Normak Dr. Miklos Hoffmann Issabek Muratov, Student Expert
Coordinators of the KAA:	Milot Hasangjekaj, KAA Ilirjana Ademaj Ahmeti, KAA

1.2. Site visit schedule

Time	Meeting	Participants
09:30 – 10:20	Meeting with the management of the faculty where the programme is integrated	1. Zirije Hasani (ac. Dean) 2. Naim Baftiu (ac. Vice-dean) 3. Arbnore Shehu (FCS Secretary)
10.20 – 11.05	Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff	1. Nora Rada (University QA Office) 2. Arbnore Shehu (FCS Secretary) 3. Teuta Thaqi (University QA Office) 4. Blertha Ferati (Head of the Student Affairs Division)



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		<p>5. Zemira Brasilla Dakaj (Office of Academic Affairs)</p> <p>6. Kushtrim Rakaqi (Head of the Scientific Research Sector)</p> <p>7. Xhevat Kallaba (University Information Technology Office)</p> <p>8. Hekuran Kabashi (University Library)</p> <p>9. Teuta Krasniqi Gashi (Student Services Officer - Faculty of Computer Science)</p> <p>10. Samir Skenderi (Translator)</p>
11:10 – 12:10	Meeting with the heads of the study programme Computer Sciences and Communication Technologies, MSc (room 1) Dr. Miklos Hoffmann Issabek Muratov, Student Expert	Esma Canhasi Ajka Aljiji Ercan Canhasi (translator)
11:10 – 12:10	Meeting with the heads of the study programme Software Design, Bachelor Professional (room 2) Dr. Peeter Normak	Arta Misini Arbër Beshiri Betim Maloku
12:10 – 13:10	Lunch break	
13:10 – 13:40	Visiting Facilities	Ziriye Hasani Endrit Fetahi
13:40 – 14:25	Meeting with teaching staff	1. Samedin Krrabaj 2. Ercan Canhasi 3. Arsim Susuri 4. Malush Mjaku 5. Endrit Fetahi 6. Marigona Krasniqi
14:30 – 15:20	Meeting with students and graduates of the program	1. Valon Ibrahim 2. Diellza Muqaj 3. Xhafer Muja

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		4. Ramadan Sezallari 5. Gatinë Himaj 6. Arjeta Shehu 7. Asdren Pervizaj 8. Shaip Zekolli 9. Edona Shehu 10. Rezart Kallaba
15:25 – 16:10	Meeting with external stakeholders	1. Enis Qafleshi 2. Visar Haxhifazliu 3. Lamir Shkurti 4. Luan Sopi 5. Besfort Guri 6. Lulzim Guhelli
16:10 – 16:15	Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts	
16:15 – 16:20	Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and program	Zirije Hasani (ac. Dean) Naim Baftiu (ac. Vice-dean) Arbnore Shehu (FCS Secretary)

Sources of information for the Report:

- Self Evaluation Report (SER)
- Syllabi of the courses
- CVs of the academic staff
- Documents obtained through the web links in the SER (including *Statute of the University "Ukshin Hoti" Prizren*, Code of Ethics, and several others)
- Other documents of the University of Prizren (UPZ) submitted upon request
- KAA Accreditation Manual
- Administrative Instruction for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Kosova
- Official website of UPZ.



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Criteria used for program evaluation:

- Standards and performance indicators for external quality assurance (Reaccreditation of bachelor and masters study programs) set in the Accreditation Manual
- National Qualifications Framework

1.3. A brief overview of the institution and program under evaluation

The University of Prizren (UPZ) was established in 2009 as a public university through reorganization of the Faculty of Education of the University of Prishtina. UPZ started officially in 2010 and has currently six faculties: 1) Faculty of Education, 2) Faculty of Economics, 3) Faculty of Law, 4) Faculty of Computer Science, 5) Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences, 6) Faculty of Philology.

The Faculty of Computer Science (FCS) was established in 2010. FCS offers study programs also in Turkish and Bosnian languages.

According to the SER, the mission of the Faculty of Computer Science is to *conduct high-level international scientific research aimed at societal and industrial development, as well as to educate distinguished students who will be leaders of future generations.*

However, the mission of the Faculty of Computer Science has a different formulation on the Faculty's website:

To provide students with a solid background in basic programming theory and concepts as well as Software and Engineering Systems, Database and Information Systems as well as Web Applications, Network Design, Security, Distributed Systems, Telecommunications and Mechatronics.

The Strategic Plan of FCS for years 2024-2027 is based on seven (7) strategic objectives:

1) ensuring quality in teaching and learning; 2) advancing research work; 3) contributing to the community; 4) internationalization and networking; 5) developing infrastructure and recruitment; 6) opening new unique study programs; 7) financial sustainability.



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FCS offers study programs at bachelor's and master's level, and plans to open a doctoral study program. There are about 500 students enrolled at FCS, of which about 40% are females. The students mainly come from the Prizren region (Prizren, Suhareka, Rahovec, Malisheva, and Dragash), the city of Gjakova, and from the northern part of Albania. FCS employs ten full-time academic staff.

According to the SER, the mission of the study program Computer Science and Communication Technology (MSc) is to promote the study of Computer Science based on the Bologna process, European programs, and their experience. These programs ensure that our students will be specialists in computer science. The Computer Science and Communication Technology (MSc) program has been developed in response to the dynamic needs of society. Continuous engagement with industry stakeholders, employers, and professionals in the field allows us to identify and incorporate the latest trends, technologies, and requirements within the curriculum. Our program is designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to address current and future challenges in the rapidly evolving field of computer science.

This mission, as already noted in the preceding accreditation report, is a bit generic, can be valid for any study programme of the Faculty. It is not well specified what this specific programme can provide in addition to the general aims of the Faculty.

The study program relies on the Computer Science and Communication Technology (MSc) programme that was originally accredited in 2014 for 3 years, and since then it is continuously reaccredited for various periods. Since the last accreditation, several improvements have been made, which were well acknowledged by the Expert Team.

The studies last 2 years (4 semesters) consisting of 120 ECTS. The winter semester starts on October 1st and ends on January 15th, while the summer semester starts on February 15th and ends on May 31st. Exams are organised in three regular sessions: January 20 - February 15, June 6 - June 30, and September 7 - September 30. The list of courses was inconsistently given in two different parts of the SER.

The study program has the following objectives:



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1. "Acquisition of Sustainable Knowledge in Computer Sciences and Telecommunications" To enable students to acquire stable theoretical and practical knowledge for the field of computer science and telecommunications
2. "Development of Analytical Skills for Research and Innovation in the Computer Field" Students develop analytical skills to conduct research and encourage innovative ideas
3. "Creating Skills for Software Project Development" Students to be able and agile to create software projects
4. "Adaptability and Flexibility in Developing Skills to Respond to Changes in Technology" Students to be able to develop adaptability and flexibility of approach and the ability to initiate and respond positively and appropriately to changes
5. "Preparation for a Career in Computer Science and Contribution to Society" Prepare students for careers in computer science or computer science-related fields and develop their skills to contribute to society
6. "Enhancing Lifelong Learning Skills and Personal Development" To enhance the student's lifelong learning skills, communication skills and personal development
7. "Problem Solving Skills in Programming and Telecommunications" Students should be able to approach the solution of problems they may face in the field of programming and telecommunications
8. "Development of Social and Intercultural Competences in the Field of Technology" In the scope of this program, students will benefit from social and intercultural competences.

These objectives are fully in line with the expectations of such a Master's programme.

The study program has a good number of expected learning outcomes, and they are all clearly defined and correspond to the study programme and to this level of studies. By completing this study program, students will gain competencies, listed below, that will enable them to:

- Development of critical, analytical and synthetic thinking,
- The skills to transmit knowledge in terms of teaching competencies,
- Skills in research methods in the field of computer science,
- Competence in terms of managing processes related to research, industry, education and other fields,



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- Professional written communication skills in the fields of computer science and communication technologies, both in Albanian and English,
- Skills to search for sources of knowledge and critically evaluate information,
- Compliance with safety, functional, economic and environmental principles,
- Teamwork skills within the professional environment,
- Development of responsibility and professional ethics,
- Detailed understanding of computer science and the ability to apply the knowledge gained in technical fields and in other relevant professional fields (economics, organizational sciences, etc.),
- Graduates in the second cycle of the study program have the competence to handle independently the demanding developmental, engineering and organizational tasks, as well as the moderate research tasks they require in their fields of study,
- Competencies in computer science that provide opportunities for further studies in third-cycle doctoral programs. Knowledge and practical skills of computer hardware, software, information technology and communication technology necessary for successful professional work in computer and information science,
- Graduates in the 2nd cycle of the study program have the competence to handle independently elaborate engineering, development, and organizational tasks, also moderately demanding tasks in their fields of study, and
- Competencies in computer and information science providing access to further study in 3rd cycle doctoral programs.

However, it is not clearly explained how and especially through which courses these competencies will be gained. It is highly recommended to create a table where each learning outcome is assigned to one or more courses to make the relationship clear for all participants: where professors should provide and where students could gain these competencies.

Remark 1. The structure of the SER was only partly consonant to the expected structure. For example, Quality management should consist of nine standards (2.1 – 2.9) while the SER contains information only about 2.1 – 2.4. Consequently, the experts had to put much effort



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in finding appropriate evidences in the website of the university, requesting additional documents and wasting time on discussing formal regulations during interviews.

Remark 2. The content of the SER was not always substantive. Just a few examples from the first section (*Mission, objectives and administration*):

- Standard 1.2 is about **academic and professional advice** that was used in defining the intended learning outcomes. It was in fact not described in the SER.
- Standard 1.3 is about **didactic and research concept** the study program is based on. Again, neither didactic nor research concept was presented.
- Standard 1.4 is about **formal policies, guidelines and regulations**. None was mentioned in the corresponding subsection of the SER.

Remark 3. The overall quality of the SER is low. It consists of several inconsistent parts, sometimes with clear copy-paste mistakes from other reports. For example, the entry requirements come from a Bachelor programme. In other parts it is insufficiently specific, for example in terms of the number of enrolled students (this part contains data only about the Faculty, and not about the study programme). These issues made the evaluation rather challenging.

2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

2.1. Mission, objectives and administration

- 1.1. Since computer science and communication technology both belong to the core competencies of the Faculty of Computer Science, the study program is in full compliance with the mission of the Faculty.
- 1.2. The intended learning outcomes are consistent with the National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. During their development, the several similar programmes in top universities have been taken into account, beside the "Private Sector Partnerships for Higher Education Strengthening - USAID" project recommendations. Relevant university regulations like Code of Ethics and the Anti-Plagiarism System were also considered. The study program was also discussed at the Industrial Board meeting. That said, the

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learning outcomes are not assigned to courses, therefore it is not entirely well specified how and where in the curriculum these competencies will be gained.

- 1.3. The SER does not describe any overarching didactic and research concept. Teaching and learning methods are described in the syllabi in the most formal way, using almost identical wordings (for example, “The course is a combination of lectures, discussions, numerical and laboratory exercises, while the assignments are presented by the laboratory course teacher”). However, the interviewed academic staff explained that they use a practical approach and peer training for sharing experience.
- 1.4. The main document stating the structure and administration is the detailed (74 pages, 239 articles) *Statute of the University “Ukshin Hoti” Prizren*, which is publicly available. However, this document is not machine readable and therefore its contents are not searchable. All major policies, guidelines and regulations are in English and are freely available on the UPZ website: *Statute of the University, Quality Assurance Regulation, Regulation for Scientific Research, Student Handbook, Code of Ethics, Regulation on Mobility of Students, Annual budget reports, Strategic Plan of FCS for 2024-2027, Accreditation Decisions at the FCS*, etc.
- 1.5. The principles of ethical conduct of students are presented in the *Code of Ethics for Students of University “Ukshin Hoti” Prizren*. This detailed document (10 pages) has separate sections dedicated to the principles and standards of student behavior, students’ obligations and rights, unethical behaviors and violations of students. A separate document – *Code of Ethics for the Personnel of University “Ukshin Hoti” Prizren* – is for staff. The Statute of the UPZ states that students are obliged to respect the regulations of the ethic code (Article 144) and that the academic staff are obliged to respect “the ethic codex” (Article 181). The Ethics Council and a separate Ethics Commission for Scientific Research of UPZ are formed.
- 1.6. SER did not provide sufficient information about the processes of reviewing the policies, regulations, terms of reference and statements of responsibility relating to the management and delivery of the study program. This has partly been covered by the interview phase, but a more thorough and transparent description of these processes is of great importance. The majority of documents published on the university’s website are from 2022 or 2023.

Compliance level: substantially compliant.



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ET recommendations:

1. *Formulate an explicit overarching didactic and research concept of the study programme.*
2. *Assign each learning outcome to one or more courses to make a clear correspondence between the competencies gained and the courses provided.*

2.2. Quality management

- 2.1. The SER provides a comprehensive overview of the quality system at the university and Faculty level. The main bodies at the Faculty level are: Dean, Faculty Council, Quality Assurance Committee, Quality Assurance Officer. The quality system has several instruments, including, for example, the *Feasibility Plan*, in the development of which the majority of academic staff teaching in the study program took part.
- 2.2. The main quality processes take place at the university level, and the main document (*Quality Assurance Regulation*) defines the policies, mechanisms, standards, instruments and procedures for quality assurance and evaluation of work at the university. The University has adopted a Quality Assurance Cycle consisting of six stages: from the initiation of the evaluation cycle to the implementation of monitoring outcomes. Evaluation is carried out at the Faculty level and at the level of study programs.
- 2.3. Quality issues belong to the scope of the *Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement*. Practical quality assurance activities are coordinated by the *Quality Assurance Office*. Processes are unified at the university level. The evaluations cover nine areas: 1) teaching and learning, 2) research, 3) student assessment, 4) employers assessment, 5) services for students, 6) management of the academic unit, 7) study programs, 8) academic staff and external collaborators, 9) textbooks, library, and information sources. The procedure for developing and approving a study programme is defined in the *Guide for the Review of Study Programs at the University "Ukshin Hoti" Prizren*. Annual evaluation reports are published on the University website, which is in line with the expectations.
- 2.4. Regular evaluations are well carried out at the end of each semester. Questionnaires are considered as the main tools for quality assurance. Students and graduates assess

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separate courses, but they have limited possibility to evaluate the entire study programme. Faculty members are evaluated against 5 criteria, but, as it was reported in the interview phase, the exact scoring system and expectations, for example in terms of contribution to the University and to the society, are not fully clear to the staff.

- 2.5. The SER did not provide clear information about the efforts to fulfill the standards 2.5-2.9. However, the fact that the number of applications to the study programmes of the Faculty has monotonically decreased, and that the proportion of admitted students was extremely high, leads to the conclusion that the quality assurance processes do not ensure continuing improvement of performance. Moreover, during the interview phase it was turned out that the low quality of the SER can be explained by the fact that no one was assigned personal responsibility for the overall quality of the SER, and persons from the QA Office of the University have been insufficiently involved in the preparation of the SER. Also, a permanent program committee or council is not formed, which would include representatives of all major stakeholders (professors, students, graduates, employers, professional unions etc).
- 2.6. The following questionnaires have been implemented: 1) Questionnaire for teacher and assistant evaluation, 2) Questionnaire for inter-collegial evaluation, 3) Questionnaire for inter-collegial evaluation, 4) Questionnaire for inter-collegial evaluation, 5) Questionnaire for inter-collegial evaluation, 6) Questionnaire for inter-collegial evaluation, 7) Employers questionnaire (Industrial Advisory Boards), 8) Drop-out monitoring questionnaire, 9) Teacher self-evaluation questionnaire, 10) Teacher/assistant professional development plan, 11) Student tracking, 12) Form for intercollegiate observation in the lecture, 13) General evaluation (programmes, administrative services, faculty, library, infrastructure, management bodies), 14) Evaluation report on contribution to the University and contribution to society, 15) Evaluation report for scientific publications and conference attendance, 16) Evaluation report by the Dean. Summary reports of assessment are on the university website freely available, which is in line with the expectations.
- 2.7. The university's Quality Assurance Cycle consists of 7 stages, including Data collection, Data analysis, Report generation, Drafting of recommendations and Implementation of recommendations. The evaluation results are processed by the Quality Assurance Office; reports with recommendations are submitted to the Central Quality Assurance Committee for implementation. During the interviews, students, graduates and



employers expressed several ideas for improving the study program, but it has been declared that they receive insufficient feedback from the Quality Assurance Cycle after fulfilling the questionnaires. This indicates that the Faculty actually lacks an effective feedback mechanism in the quality assurance system.

- 2.8. The main relevant documents (*Quality Assurance Regulation and Guidelines for the evaluation of academic staff, course evaluation, and the use of evaluation results at the "Ukshin Hoti" University Prizren*) specify evaluation periods for different types of evaluations.
- 2.9. Current versions of quality assurance documents stem from years 2020-2022.

Compliance level: substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Appoint **one** academic staff member of the Faculty as the responsible head/curator of the study program, who has full responsibility for the quality of the study program.
2. Determine the authority and responsibilities of the curator explicitly in the University regulations.
3. Form a permanent council of the study program, which includes representatives of employers, partners, students, graduates and key academic staff, including other heads of the study program. The task of the council will be to develop recommendations for further improvements of the study program based on surveys of all stakeholders, international development trends of the academic area and the needs of society.
4. Define more clearly and specifically the exact scoring system and expectations towards the academic staff for each criterion of their evaluation (table 2.1.3.1 in the SER)
5. Define a feedback mechanism that gives sufficient feedback to all stakeholders, especially to students about what happened to the information collected from them through the survey and what actions the management took in relation to the potential criticisms observed there.



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2.3. Academic staff

- 3.1. UPZ as a public university follows strictly all regulations concerning employment.
- 3.2. UPZ as a public university follows strictly all regulations concerning the occupation of teaching positions.
- 3.3. According to the standard, academic staff cannot not cover, within an academic year, more than two teaching positions (one full-time, one part-time). The university has set an even stronger requirement: Article 166 of the *Statute* states that “Staff members with full-time contracts shall not hold any other part-time or full-time employment contracts inside or outside the University”.
- 3.4. Only 2/3 of the academic staff are full-time teachers and it looks like the leave of one single person can even yield problems in terms of the coverage of the courses. It is positive, that the University has an academic staff professional development plan (for those who are already employees), but this fact also needs a careful HR plan to assure the continuous high quality of the education.
- 3.5. There are 10 full-time and 5 part-time teachers (altogether 12.5 full-time equivalent) on the study program. All full time teachers have at least a PhD degree, which is positive. It is positive that a part-time lecturer is involved directly from the industrial sector. The student/teacher ratio is outstanding for a Master’s study program.
- 3.6. The university has established a special unit – Center for Teaching Excellence – to support the academic staff in their professional development. This is very positive. The center has bi-annual development plan. Nevertheless, during the interview phase the staff claimed that even more support from the university in their professional development would be desirable, including larger research budget for small scale projects (potentially with students) and more opportunities for sabbaticals.
- 3.7. Engagement in the academic community and community service belong to the criteria for assessment of the academic staff. Number of hours of consultation between professors and students is set as one of the indicators in the *Development Plan* of the Faculty. On the other hand, the obligations in work contracts of academic staff are formulated in extremely general terms, and are identical for assistants and associate professors. For example, according to the work contract, an academic staff does not

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have any obligation to conduct research or contribute to the providing community services.

- 3.8. Assessment of academic staff is conducted twice a year, at the end of each semester, by students, by colleagues and by the Dean. For the total performance evaluation, also scientific publications, participation on conferences and contribution to the university and society are also taken into account. Academic staff prepare an annual Work Plan and a self-evaluation report, which is positive. However, no regular development discussions are conducted with the immediate superior.
- 3.9. The FCS Strategy has a subsection *Quality assurance in teaching and learning*. The main goal is to increase the number of students graduating in 2 years. Implementation of various teaching techniques and improvement of physical study environment are among the mechanisms mentioned.
- 3.10. The age distribution of the academic staff is very beneficial, with several young and deeply engaged colleagues – this is very positive.

Compliance level: substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Introduce mandatory annual individual development discussions of the academic and non-academic staff by their superiors, based on the annual staff self-evaluation reports. The main purpose of development discussions will be to identify problems that are hindering the employee's professional growth and plan measures to solve them.*
2. *Develop and implement employment contract forms for academic employees, which would stipulate the detailed rights and obligations of both the university and the employee.*
3. *Allocate significantly higher budget resources to the professional development of academic staff, especially in terms of funding small scale research projects, where they can involve students and fellow staff members without the pressure of gaining external sources.*



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2.4. Educational process content

4.1. The scope of the study program is well focused and covers core topics of Computer Science and Communication Technology. The study program is of great importance in this region and the graduates are widely needed. However, the general conception of the study program is twofold, and these two concepts – the training future professional teachers and training top quality computer scientists, are difficult to reconcile. During the interview phase a potential solution arose: elective courses could have been grouped according to the two significantly different directions.

Moreover, there are a number of aspects that were inconsistently or not fully discussed in the SER or that came up during the interviews:

- 4.1.1. The curriculum is inconsistently provided in two different parts of the SER.
- 4.1.2. A large part of this session is not about the actual study program, but (supposedly) about an earlier Bachelor program. This is a crucial mistake.
- 4.1.3. The entire study program seems to be focused primarily on developing knowledge rather than skills – topics discussed on lectures and exercises are often identical. This means that the exercises are limited to the topics discussed in lecture.
- 4.1.4. Although the expected learning outcomes cover also necessary soft skills, their development is not sufficiently reflected in the syllabi. As it was clear from the interview phase, students also require more practical knowledge and soft skills, mainly through more lab works.
- 4.1.5. Some courses, such as “Advanced Mathematics” or “Discrete Mathematics” have topics and description typically correspond to Bachelor level. The level of these courses should be increased to Master level. Parallel to these issues, the difference in the knowledge level of students coming from various Bachelor studies must be addressed in the first semester, even by announcing more catch-up elective courses.

4.2. The study program complies with the *National Qualifications Framework* and the *Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*. A thorough



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correspondence between the learning outcomes of the entire study program and the learning outcomes of the courses is carried out.

- 4.3. The general principle of using a top-down approach to course content is appropriate (meaning that studies begin with general courses, followed by more specific courses).
- 4.4. The syllabi contain all the necessary components and are also presented in electronic form. However, the description of the courses is not unified. For example, some of them having only 2-3 outcomes, while others having significantly more outcomes. This should be unified from each aspect of the description. Although Literature has been updated in the last 3 years (since the last accreditation process), a continuous update is a must – for example, in the Advanced Artificial Intelligence course, a hot topic in Computer Science, the most recent reference is 6 years old, which is probably outdated.
- 4.5. The language in which the study program will be offered is Albanian.
- 4.6. Student centricity was named one of the main principles of the university. Students positively assessed the teaching staff and teaching methodology. This allows us to conclude that the student-teacher relationship is a partnership.
- 4.7. Although the syllabi have a separate section *Teaching methods*, the description of teaching methods is identical – and quite schematic – in almost all syllabi. The corresponding section of the SER focuses on assessment and says nothing about teaching strategies. The previous section of the SER states that certain principles are followed in teaching, without providing any evidences or concrete descriptions.
- 4.8. Grades are formed on the basis of a certain point system, according to which the result of each activity is evaluated with points and at the end of the semester the points are added. The syllabi describe the distribution of assessment components, which seems to be adequate. Students did not complain about the assessment mechanisms.
- 4.9. The graduation rate of the students is quite low. Two main reasons for this were identified, partly out of the responsibility of the university: 1) high student employment rate and 2) high emigration rate.
- 4.10. No case of inadequate or inconsistent assessment was reported.
- 4.11. The study program does not contain a mandatory traditional internship, where students are fully involved in the real work processes of the industrial sector.



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Compliance level: substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Revise the study program taking into account the following recommendations:*
 - 1.1. *Create two (not necessarily disjoint) groups of recommended elective courses according to the two different goals of students (teaching professional vs computer scientist)*
 - 1.2. *Provide a possibility of gaining lacking knowledge of students at the first semester through elective catch-up courses.*
2. *Revise the syllabi to provide a unified framework and description for each course.*
3. *Harmonize the learning outcomes of the courses with the learning outcomes of the study program.*

2.5. Students

- 5.1. The admission criteria for students are inconsistently given in the SER (page 8 vs page 65), but during the interview phase this mistake was clarified, and it is well regulated according to the clauses set in the *Statute of the University "Ukshin Hoti" Prizren*, and in accordance to the legal regulations established by MEST and KAA. The university publishes detailed descriptions of admission: requirements for candidates, methods of selection, deadlines, schedule of entrance exams, etc.
- 5.2. To enroll in this program, applicants must have completed a relevant Bachelor degree (well specified and regulated) and successfully pass the admission exam. Degrees of students from other countries will be recognized by the specific regulation.
- 5.3. One student cohort consists of a maximum of 60 students per lecture, while for laboratory work and exercises there are usually up to 15 students.
- 5.4. The communication of the student evaluation results is made no later than 7 days from the date of the exam, according to the official schedule. Students get support and feedback throughout the semester.

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- 5.5. The final results achieved throughout the entire process of studies are certified in a transcript of the records.
- 5.6. The exam in the same subject can be repeated up to 4 times (the 4th to a commission). Students with valid reasons are given the opportunity to retake the test.
- 5.7. At the end of each semester, the Faculty prepares a semester report in which, among others, the percentage of student success rate is reported.
- 5.8. The university has implemented an anti-plagiarism system. Procedures related to academic misconduct, including plagiarism and other forms of copying, are outlined in the *Code of Ethics*. The highest administrative bodies that must ensure compliance with the regulations are: the Ethics Council, the Ethics Council in Scientific Research and the Disciplinary Commission.
- 5.9. All rights and obligations of students in learning, attendance of lectures, evaluation, etc. are determined in the *Statute of the University* and in the *Student Handbook*. These documents are freely available on the Internet. However, the *Statute* is not in a computer readable format, making searching inconvenient and time-consuming. Periodically, the meetings regarding the rights and obligations are provided to students.
- 5.10. Students' international mobility is carried out in accordance with the *Student Mobility Regulations at the University "Ukshin Hoti" Prizren*. Another document – *Regulation of the Transfer of Studies at "Ukshin Hoti" University in Prizren* – describes the criteria and procedures for changing departments, changing the study program and taking courses from other departments of the University. Students' transfer from another university to UPZ is explained on the university website. Taking courses from other institutions is also possible, some students have used this opportunity. The recognition of the study outcome from the mobility and support from the academic side is well established.
- 5.11. Academic staff are required to be available to students for a few hours on a regular schedule. Additional consultation hours with academic staff may be arranged. Consultations can be organized in individual or group form.

Compliance level: fully compliant.

ET recommendations:

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1. *Convert and publish the Statute of UPZ in machine-readable form.*

2.6. Research

- 6.1. The main document, which stipulates the principles of organizing work and scientific research activities, the rights and obligations of competent bodies of the University and participants in scientific research, participation in scientific congresses and conferences, workshops, seminars and symposia, as part of the University 's scientific research is the *Regulation for Scientific Research*. The development of scientific research is one of the strategic priorities of the Faculty. Objectives and potential areas of research are described in the *Strategic Plan 2024-2027* of the Faculty of Computer Science.
- 6.2. Expectations for teaching staff involvement in research and scholarly activities are specified in the *Statute of the University* and in the *Quality Assurance Regulation*. Performance in relation to these expectations is considered in the self-assessment report. Scientific publications and participation in conferences account for 30% of the evaluation of the academic staff. Although research requirements for teachers in professional study programs are relatively low, expectations of companies towards academic staff, on the other hand, are relatively high. Representatives of employers who met with the experts expressed the wish that university teachers would be more interested in the problems of companies and contribute to solving them. The Career Office has been described as the meeting point of the university with industry. However, the office is understaffed and lacks the capacity to facilitate extensive and trustworthy university-industry collaborations.
- 6.3. What is considered under research is determined indirectly, through the indicators for measuring the key performance indicator “Development of Scientific Research”. According to the *Strategic Plan*, “Big Data and Data Analysis” and “Cyber Security and Internet of Things” are identified as the main areas of research. The establishment of research groups in these areas is a strategic priority in the Action Plan. Note that this was one of the recommendations already in the 2019 accreditation report. Another relatively underdeveloped area of activity is cooperation with companies.
- 6.4. Research of the academic staff is in general conducted on the topics of the study program, with some minor deviations.



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- 6.5. The research of a vast majority of academic staff is internationally visible (for example, in *Google Scholar*). All full-time academic staff are registered in Google Scholar and have research publications.
- 6.6. Research is basically validated by scientific publications and participation on scientific conferences.
- 6.7. According to Google Scholar, the vast majority of teaching staff has produced in average at least one scientific publication per year.
- 6.8. Full-time academic staff within the Faculty publish papers on behalf of the UPZ.
- 6.9. The experts were explained that since teachers offer courses in their areas of competence, specific questions that belong to the scope of their research areas are also discussed.
- 6.10. Aspects of Intellectual property form a paragraph in the *Code of Ethics*. However, the university has not established procedures for commercializing ideas developed by staff and students.
- 6.11. Increasing student participation in research-scientific work is declared as one of the strategic objectives of the university. The number of publications co-authored by academic staff/students is one of the KPIs of FKZ. It is also planned that students will be involved in cooperation projects with local industry.

Compliance level: substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Decide on the research priorities inside the two main areas of research (“Big Data and Data Analysis” and “Cyber Security and Internet of Things”) and form research groups accordingly. Doing this, agree the work division with other institutions in Kosovo (for example, with AAB College in cyber security) and take into account the recommendations of international professional organizations (for example, Gartner).*
2. *Develop and implement a strategy for cooperation with the industrial sector.*

2.7. Infrastructure and resources

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- 7.1. The faculty has developed a thorough *Feasibility Plan*, that contains study program profile and macro-environment analysis, maps employment opportunities of the graduates, presents a positioning analysis (SWOT analysis) of the study program, and other important aspects. Moreover, the Faculty has many years of experience of running a similar study program. At the same time, relatively little attention has been paid to creating an environment that supports students' extracurricular academic activities.
- 7.2. The abovementioned *Feasibility Plan* has a section *Cost and benefits of the study program* which calculates both expected income and costs (including variable cost). However, the fact that the Faculty does not have its own full budget (part of the expenses are covered centrally by the university) allows only approximately to calculate the income and expenses of the study program.
- 7.3. As a public institution of higher education, the financial sustainability of the University is guaranteed by the Mid-Term Expenditure Framework for the next three years. The University is the owner of the space it uses. According to the SER, the Faculty of CS has 9 classrooms including the Amphitheatre, divided into 2 floors with an area of about 1762 m². The Amphitheatre has 280 seats, the other classrooms up to 80 seats.
- 7.4. Considering the number of students, the number and size of the lecture halls, classrooms and laboratories is adequate. However, there is an area where students expressed a wish that it could be better – more and better equipped labs. The situation is likely to improve in the coming years, as there is an agreement that the Innovation and Training Park will additionally provide a building for the needs of the FCS.
- 7.5. Students have free access to a sufficient amount of study materials, most of which are written in Romanian and partly also written by the teaching staff of the Faculty. Although some of the textbooks are older than 10 years, it does not really matter as there is plenty of suitable study material available online. Moreover, the University, as a member of *Association of Electronic Libraries of Kosovo*, also has access to online databases.
- 7.6. The Facility possesses electrical stairs, elevators, emergency exits as well as the entire infrastructure which is needed for students with special needs.

Compliance level: substantially compliant



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ET recommendations:

1. *Strengthen efforts for setting up specialized labs for conducting exercises and individual work of students.*
2. *Furnish more space for students to learn and socialize outside of classrooms.*

3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

The Self-assessment Report submitted is of very low quality with several inconsistencies, missing parts and copy-paste mistakes. This needs urgent intervention in the quality assessment system of the Faculty, but most probably at University level.

Several recommendations made by experts in the last round of accreditation have been taken into account, and the study program is well improved. However, there is still some room for improvement: the curriculum of the study program must be adjusted according to the needs of the students, and the systemic, unified approach must be strengthened in various areas.

The following proposal is based on the assumption that, along with the launch of the curriculum, the resources allocated to the Faculty will increase – the number of academic staff, funds to support scientific research, as well as to upgrade existing and create new laboratories.

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the Master's study program Computer Science and Communication Technology offered by the University "Ukshin Hoti" Prizren is **substantially compliant** with the standards included in the KAA Accreditation manual and, therefore, recommends *to accredit* the study program for a duration of 3 years with a number of 45 students (equals 3 lab groups) to be enrolled in the program.

Expert Team

Chair

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	Peeter Normak	22.04.2024
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

Members

	Miklos Hoffmann	22.04.2024
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	Issabek Muratov	22.4.2024
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