



Republika e Kosovës  
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



Agjencia e Kosovës për Akreditim  
Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju  
Kosovo Accreditation Agency

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**UNIVERSUM COLLEGE**

**BA FASHION DESIGN**

**RE ACCREDITATION**

**REPORT OF THE EXTERNAL EXPERT TEAM**

5 May 2025



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 CONTEXT

The re accreditation of this BA Fashion Design programme, newly introduced in 2022 and approved for an initial period of three years, was conducted by a team of three external experts (ET). One participating in a site visit to the College's Ferizaj campus and two others via audio and visual Microsoft Zoom links coincident with the site visit.

### 1.2 SITE VISIT SCHEDULE

Programme Accreditation Procedure at Universum College - Ferizaj	
Programmes:	<b>Fashion Design, Professional BA 180 ECTS</b>
Site visit:	<b>02 April 2025</b>
Expert Team:	Prof. Dr. Alan Brickwood Prof. Dr. Costas Mantzalos Mr. Juraj Bogat
Coordinators of the KAA:	Fjolle Ajeti, Senior Officer at KAA Shkelzen Gerxhaliu, Director of Department at KAA

### Site Visit Programme

Time	Meeting	Participants
<b>09:00 – 9:45</b>	Meeting with the management of the faculty where the programme is integrated	Armend Berisha, Campus coordinator Isabel Salvat, Dean Elisa Hajrullahu, Coordinator of Student Services
<b>09:45 – 10:20</b>	Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff	Uran Rraci Nazim Haliti Florent Bacaliu



<b>10:25 – 11:30</b>	Meeting with the program holders of the study programme	Firnesa Lohaj  Mirjeta Hoxha
<b>11:35 – 12.35</b>	Lunch break	
<b>12:40 – 13:20</b>	Visiting facilities	Armend Berisha
<b>13:20 – 14:00</b>	Meeting with teaching staff	Rinë Kuçi Besart Avdyli Vlora Hajdini Erona Jakaj Nesrin Jahaj Gentiana Berisha (Online) Bleona Hoxha Hekuran Sylja
<b>14:00 – 14:40</b>	Meeting with students	Njomza Bajraktari Suela Murati Beqir Shefkiu Sonila Qosa Leonik Shabani Gresa Bela Arbnora Bytyqi Fleta Krenzi
<b>14:40 – 15:20</b>	Meeting with graduates	Eduarda Arapi Suela Lohaj Shkodran Hasani Lendrita Hasnaji
<b>15:20 – 16:00</b>	Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders	Blondin Karaxha (Prishtina Fashion Night) Balton Derguti (Drejtoria per Zhvillimit Ekonomik, Komuna Ferizaj)



		Naim Gashi (Head of Employment Office Ferizajt) Marigona Sekiraqa (UNI BB) Elona Shkodra (Down Sindrom Kosova) Cliresa Hasani (Klan Kosova) Freskim Tahiri - Dizajner Mode Avdullah Ymeri - IAPP "Zenel Hajdini", Ferizaj Ali Bislimi - IAPP "Jonuz Zejnullahu", Viti Gentiana Grainca - M&M Fashion Albiona Sopi - COUTURE Project Vlora Neziri - Vlora&Kaltrina
<b>16:00</b> <b>16:10</b>	– Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts	
<b>16:10</b> <b>16:20</b>	– Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and program	

### 1.3 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE INSTITUTION AND PROGRAMME UNDER EVALUATION

Universum College was established in 2005 in Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, and Ferizaj, the second largest and one of the most economically developed cities in the country. It received its most recent institutional re-accreditation in February 2022 and is in the top five largest institutions of higher education in Kosovo.

It describes itself as being a student-centred and a learning institution with a mission and goal to support its students to become good citizens, successful broad-minded leaders and to be able to thrive in an environment of continuous improvement, innovation and Industry 4.0 globalisation. Students that can also support the development of Kosovo and the region via a diverse range of knowledge and skills.



The College currently offers 18 Bachelor level and 3 Master programmes. Specifically:

#### **Bachelor Programmes**

Business and Management	Professional BA in Dental Technician
Computer Science	Professional BA in Dental Hygiene
Professional BA in Cybersecurity	Cosmetology
Fashion Design	Nutrition and Fitness
Graphic Design	English Language
Interior Design	English versus German
Nursing	Law
Professional BA in Physiotherapy	Political Science
Laboratory Biomedicine	Professional BA in Digital Journalism

#### **Masters Programmes**

Management
Data Science
Governance and National Security

Starting in March 2023, the College entered into a strategic partnership with Arizona State University (ASU) which is, itself part of the Cintana Alliance Network of Universities in the USA.

Of particular significance to this re accreditation is how this programme is described in the Self Evaluation Report (SER) as aligning with, and already contributing directly to, Kosovo's success in achieving prominence in the luxury fashion industry.

## **2. PROGRAMME EVALUATION**

### **2.1 MISSION, OBJECTIVES AND ADMINISTRATION**

#### **Standard 1.1**

This three-year (6 semester) BA Fashion Design programme shares a common mission and set of strategic objectives, that are entirely consistent and in line with those of the



College, the economic development of Kosovo and, more broadly, the needs of society. This was made clear in the SER, in conversations with the leadership, management and teaching staff and enthusiastically endorsed in meetings the External Team (ET) were pleased to have with a broad range of stakeholders.

Those stakeholders, represented leaders of small to large businesses that have already established 'own brand' successes and reputations in design for the luxury sectors of the industry and others in supply chains, journalism and local government. All spoke enthusiastically about their experience of this programme and its development. This included collaboration over the provision of work experience for students via studio and factory visits, internships and access to specialised industry standard facilities not otherwise available within the College. Their support was impressive.

### **Standard 1.2**

The SER is thorough and makes clear that the programme is subject to policies and procedures on academic integrity and freedom that prevent all types of unethical behaviour. Staff and students are made fully aware of relevant documents that are also made publicly available. This was firmly stressed by both staff and students during the visit.

### **Standard 1.3**

Relevant information is collected, analysed and used to ensure the effective management of the study programme. This information is also made available publicly via the College's website.

The ET were informed that the 2025 intake had received, to date, over 122 applications with 25 offers made against the programme's current entry limit of 30. This is clearly a very good indicator of demand and a situation that bodes well for quality and standards. Whilst it is still 'early days', with the first cohort finishing this summer, cohort analyses of applications against enrolments, progression/attrition and success together with profiles can be very powerful tools in ensuring continuous improvement. The systems in place are sound and well used.



#### **Standard 1.4**

It is evident that the delivery of the programme is supported by appropriate and sufficient administrative support staff both centrally and at local level, to achieve its goals.

#### **Standard 1.5**

The initial accreditation of this programme in 2022 concluded the then proposed programme to be fully compliant with the KAA Accreditation Manual applicable at the time. The recommendations comprised a standard approval of 3 years and an intake limited to 30. No other formal recommendations were made. Despite this, the SER given to the ET on this occasion listed 10 points drawn from the earlier report that had been treated as 'recommendations' against which action had been taken and by whom, were listed.

**ET Recommendations:** None

## **2.2 QUALITY MANAGEMENT**

### **Standard 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3.**

Universum College is an established and mature institution with quality assurance standards and principles established since its inception over the past 20 years according to the Bologna Process and regulations laid down by KAA. The latter drawing heavily upon participation and advice from teams of advisers and experts from across the world. This to ensure a comparability of standards internationally and the promulgation of up-to-date thinking and 'best practice'.

At institutional level there is a comprehensive, thorough and robust system of common requirements for the design of new programmes, modification of existing ones and for the processes of monitoring, review and formal evaluation. This is cascaded down to Faculty level.

This includes a clear articulation of what programmes are setting out to achieve; the selection and recruitment of suitable students; the content and balance of the teaching and learning experience; effective outcomes; and fair assessment for the purposes of





monitoring, feedback to students, for progression and award and for when things go wrong. These systems also include the collation of information on the workload of students and staff; student, staff and employer feedback and the destination of graduates.

Faculty members are regularly trained and updated on best practices, ensuring that instruction remains relevant and of the highest quality.

There is a Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) comprising dedicated staff in charge of quality control and who described their principal functions to be that of cultivating and maintaining a 'quality culture'. This, in addition to their day-to-day collection, collation and feedback of findings from a wide variety of sources. Sources that include, for example, major support by an Industry Advisory Board that meets to provide an industry perspective as to whether programmes are in line with the National Qualifications Framework and needs of the market which, along with input from stakeholders more generally, represent a powerful positive influence on continuous development, progression and improvement of the programme.

#### **Standard 2.4**

All relevant information about the study programme is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and made publicly available via the institution's website as evidenced in all documents received by the ET.

The ET found the processes in place highly satisfactory – seemingly covering all eventualities in a sensitive and flexible manner.

**ET Recommendations:** None

## **2.3 ACADEMIC STAFF**

### **Standard 3.1 and 3.3**



All teaching staff are recruited in line with national legislation and internal regulations based on objective and transparent procedures. Those same principles also apply to processes of staff advancement and promotion.

### **Standard 3.2 and 3.5**

The full-time teaching staff team is strong. It comprises people that are highly qualified, competent, youthful, motivated and experienced to deliver the curriculum effectively. The overall position on staffing is stable and secure. All staff confirmed their commitment to student-centred learning with strong tutorial support.

This highly satisfactory situation also applies to external associates.

The SER provides listings of 25 full-time and 2 part-time teaching staff dedicated to the programme by qualification, title, tenure and by the amount of time they are allocated to spend on teaching, assessments and on providing academic counselling to students. All were on long-term employment contracts. This represents a very high coverage of the curriculum by full-time staff. The overall College student/staff ratio was advised to be 17: 1 – although simple calculations suggest this might currently be very much more generous in practice.

All staff are aware of what is expected of them including participation in external collaborative and exchange opportunities.

### **Standard 3.4**

The SER also provides a comprehensive and large list of Capacity Building Projects within the ERASMUS+ framework, and from ASU, in which the College participates. These have particular emphases upon assisting academic staff that need to ‘catch up’ with new initiatives being taken by the College, with professional updating in their particular specialist field and teaching methods. Many of which could be directly useful or readily adaptable to staff teaching on this programme.

Academic staff involved in delivering the study programme are provided with institutional support for their professional development. This includes access to



training, workshops, research opportunities, and other resources aimed at enhancing their teaching skills, academic knowledge, and overall career growth. By fostering continuous professional development, the institution ensures that faculty members remain up-to-date with the latest educational trends and best practices, ultimately benefiting the quality of education provided to students.

All staff are subjected to regular evaluation of their performance. Student satisfaction surveys are conducted at the end of each semester and another, shorter one, mid-term. Both are completed by students anonymously.

Management expressed having difficulty at times, and needing to 'headhunt', in the recruitment of experienced staff due to competition from other higher education institutions.

**ET Recommendations:** None

## **2.4 EDUCATION PROCESS CONTENT**

### **Standards 4.1 to 4.8**

The study programme's learning outcomes are well articulated to include a set of newly developed rubrics entirely in-line with published objectives at institutional, host academic unit and programme levels and are publicly available. These complying with the National Qualification and European Qualifications Frameworks and being both coherent and enabling for students to achieve the stated programme objectives.

The balance of student study at a ratio for practice and theory at 60:40, respectively, and with an emphasis upon student-centred learning, is consistent and common with comparable practice-based design programmes elsewhere.

The ET was impressed by the clarity and ambition of the programme objectives. They are unequivocally designed to produce fashion designers able to survive and prosper in what is a huge international, broad, dynamic and highly competitive industry. This raises high expectations of graduates having a good understanding of that industry, including



at least an ‘awareness’ of some of the dynamics that have been and will continue to impact upon it. This provoked a short discussion between the ET and teaching team, not dissimilar to that held at the 2022 event, about continuing changes brought about in the fashion industry by, for example, obesity, gender fluidity, mass customisation, plagiarism, ethics, on-line trading and especially legacies of ‘cheap labour’ and waste. The fashion industry allegedly being the third worst industry for waste in the world! The conclusion, as before, resting with a thorough understanding of the need to maintain a vibrant and vital curriculum, not necessarily via the addition or subtraction of core learning material at this point.

English language features in all parts of the curriculum and is taught in semesters 1 to 4 as an elective. There are additional English language courses for teaching staff arising from the relationship with ASU.

The Semester 6 dissertation towards the close of year 3 confirmed expectations of a culminating comprehensive test of a student’s ability to draw together all that they had learnt and be able to present this in a professional manner.

**ET Recommendations:** None

## **2.5 STUDENTS**

The SER provides comprehensive information on institution-wide arrangements for student admission, participation in decision-making, rights of representation, feedback, what students can expect, what is expected from them and support for them when difficulties arise. These arrangements are very thorough and have been developed from experience, drawn widely upon best practice from elsewhere and subjected to continuous improvement – a characteristic of effective QA systems. In all circumstances they are delegated, mirrored and adapted to suit local circumstances and needs within prescribed limits. With that in mind, the ET considers that all standards in this section are fully met. Specifically:

### **Standard 5.1**



Admission processes are transparent, fair, and equal for all candidates, and without any discrimination towards any group of people. All documentation required by the law and by institutional policies is properly verified by the institution.

#### **Standard 5.2**

Student progress is carefully monitored and analysed since the timely completion of the studies is in the best interest of both the student and the College. Students who face difficulties can approach teachers for additional consultation, even outside of dedicated office hours.

#### **Standard 5.3**

Students are informed and encouraged to participate in international exchange mobility programmes, but there were only few cases of it occurring. However, the Faculty has some strong international relations with universities and institutions with lots of possibilities for exchange.

#### **Standard 5.4**

The Faculty, the Department and the professors all seem to treat their students with the utmost respect. All of the student rights are met, there are no reports of any major incidents in any regard, students are treated with flexibility regarding their jobs and other obligations. There are set mechanisms for students appeals and students are fully aware of them.

**ET Recommendations:** None

## **2.6 RESEARCH**

### **Standard 6.1**

Whilst Universum College describes itself as a teaching institution predominantly, it has nevertheless given research a high priority to ensure its knowledge base, its teaching staff and the material they deliver is professionally up-to-date and vital to students and the communities it serves. It is all consistent and in alignment with the College's mission and research led strategic goals.



#### **Standards 6.2 to 6,4**

Research engagement is a condition of teaching staff employment. It is expected to permeate the curriculum of all student programmes. There is formal encouragement for collaboration with external knowledge bases and practice and the College takes advantage of opportunities offered by a variety of EU and ASU schemes.

Staff are committed despite a continuing and discouraging emphasis upon language in the SER that fails to recognise 'equivalence' between traditional 'research' and 'practice' more appropriate to fields such as fashion design. Despite assurances to the contrary the SER lists, for example, mandatory requirements and criteria for the promotion of academic staff focused upon traditional methods such as minima of publications per annum!

This programme, and creative arts endeavours in the College more generally, could benefit from a more tailored approach that encourages creative practice as an alternative to scientific research and to which staff and students can delve into niche areas such as sustainable design practices, digital fashion technologies or the intersection of fashion and cultural identity. By incorporating more specialised research topics and fostering a creative environment, the programme would not only better support the unique needs of teaching staff and students but also inspire original contributions to the ever-evolving fashion industry itself.

It would be desirable if the institution forms a formal policy regarding creative practise as an equivalent to academic research. In academia, creative practice is essential as it encourages innovation and allows for exploration beyond the boundaries of traditional research. Unlike conventional research, which often focuses on analysis and theory, creative practice emphasises hands-on experimentation, artistic expression, and the generation of new ideas through direct engagement with materials and processes. This approach fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and personal expression, allowing for the development of unique insights that may not emerge through traditional research methods, ultimately contributing to a richer and more diverse body of knowledge



Fully compliant

**ET Recommendations:** It would be desirable if the institution forms a formal policy regarding creative practise as an equivalent to academic research.

## **2.7 INFRASTRUCTURE AND LEARNING RESOURCES**

### **Standard 7.1**

Assessing the adequacy of access to facilities on a programme seeking an increase from an initial student intake of 30 to 100 is not straightforward. This is especially so with a practice-based programme requiring regular and repeated student access to workshops and equipment for skills tuition and projects involving ‘making’ through to similarly specialised desk-based learning.

The SER was clear on how this had been planned and provided a very detailed listing of how existing space at Ferizaj could accommodate such an increase each year. Space dedicated to practical design, innovation, creative making activities and in other specially equipped space for screen-based digital two-dimensional design work. Other very thorough information listed the actual rooms, scheduling and time slots that would be used to support the numbers of students and different activities they would be engaged in.

The SER also contained information on how a new building programme scheduled for completion during 2025/26 would be providing a range of additional dedicated facilities for this programme.

Altogether, the ET was entirely satisfied that the College had provided assurances that adequate premises and equipment would be provided for the delivery of this programme and related research.

### **Standard 7.2**



Taking into account the ready interchangeability and availability of material at the College's two sites and common student access to personal and College terminals, the ET is entirely satisfied that students would have adequate access to books, periodicals and other on-line material in support of their studies on this programme.

### Standard 7.3

The ET is equally satisfied that the programme is appropriately funded to deliver its educational activities and research.

**ET RECOMMENDATION:** Existing annual quality assurance monitoring specifically includes additional information on how infrastructure and resources continue to support the programme in ways that do not limit its current balance of practical studies at around 60% vis-à-vis theory at 40%.

## 3 FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXTERNAL EXPERT

1. MISSION, OBJECTIVES AND ADMINISTRATION	Fully Compliant
2. QUALITY MANAGEMENT	Fully Compliant
3. ACADEMIC STAFF (Mandatory)	Fully Compliant
4. EDUCATION PROCESS CONTENT	Fully Compliant
5 STUDENTS	Fully Compliant
6 RESEARCH	Fully Compliant
7. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES (Mandatory)	Fully Compliant
<b>Overall Compliance</b>	Fully Compliant

The External Expert Team is grateful to the College management and teaching team, students and to employers for their open and dynamic contributions to the event, and wishes them well for the future.

The proposed Re-Accreditation of this three-year BA Professional Fashion Design Programme is timely and well deserved, having already established itself as a highly respected contributor to Kosovo's success in achieving prominence in the luxury fashion





industry. This is not uncommon and there are many parallels where it has happened, in other developing countries in this, and other creative fields, in recent years.

Over the past three years it has built up a strong community of committed and experienced staff; the ability to recruit highly motivated students and some excellent working and respected relationships with industry. It will need a continued commitment across these fronts, and in particular, develop its intellectual assets to a high level by appropriate research and practice and by exposure and association with the best.

It could become a centre of excellence.

**In conclusion, the External Expert Team considers the BA Professional Fashion Design programme to be Fully Compliant with the Standards included in the current KAA Accreditation Manual.**

**The External Expert Team therefore recommends the study programme be accredited for 5 (five) years and with a maximum new annual intake of 75 students.**

#### **Expert Team**

Professor Alan Brickwood

5 May 2025

Professor Costas Mantzalos



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5 May 2025

Mr Juraj Bogat

5 May 2025