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PUBLIC UNIVERSITY “KADRI ZEKA” GJILAN

INSTITUTIONAL

FINAL REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

March 6, 2024

Gjilan – Brno – Bucharest – Malmo



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

The evaluation procedure was conducted according to the plan. The University Kadri Zeka (UKZ) submitted self-evaluation report prior to the site visit, and the expert team (ET) had enough time to study all the documentation and discuss the findings. The site visit was organized very well, and the expert team had a chance to meet representatives of all the relevant groups within the UKZ and beyond. After the visit, the UKZ submitted some additionally requested documents which made it possible for the expert team to get the picture more complete. The ET submitted the draft report timely and the UKZ responded to it within the pre-agreed timeframe. Consequently, the ET finalized the report and sent it to the KAA.

Date of site visit:

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Expert Team (ET) members:

- *Prof. Milan Pol, Masaryk University, Czech Republic*
- *Prof. Magdalena Iordache-Platis, University of Bucharest, Romania*
- *Lali Giordidze, University of Malmo, Sweden (student expert)*

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- *Naim Gashi, KAA Director*
- *Leona Kovaçi, KAA Officer*

Sources of information for the Report:

- *Self-evaluation Report and other documentation of University “Kadri Zeka” Gjilan provided to the ET prior and after the visit*
- *Interviews*
- *Observations – visit of the facilities*

Criteria used for institutional and program evaluations

- *KAA Accreditation Manual*

1.2. Site visit schedule

Site Visit Programme

| Time | Meeting | Participants |
|-------------|----------------|---------------------|
|-------------|----------------|---------------------|



| | | |
|----------------------|--|--|
| 09:30 – 10:40 | Meeting with the management of the institution (<i>no slide presentation is allowed, the meeting is intended as a free discussion</i>) | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Prof. Asoc.Dr.Artan Dërmaku- Rector2. Ilir Gjinolli – Vice chairman of the Steering Council3. Prof. Asoc. Dr. Naim Mustafa-Vice Rector for Budget, Finance and Infrastructure4. Prof. Ass. Dr. Voglushe Kurteshi- Vice Rector for academic development and quality5. Prof.Dr. Sadik Haxhiu-Vice Rector for Teaching and Student Affairs6. Prof. Asoc. Dr. Dukagjin Leka- Vice Rector for International Relations and Projects7. Prof.Ass. Dr. Arbona Xhemajli-Vice Rector for Scientific Research8. Dr.Sc. Vaxhid Sadriu - General Secretary |
| 10:40 – 11:40 | Meeting with: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Quality assurance representatives2. Administrative services | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Fitore Malaj, Director of Quality and Assurance office2. Vjosa Baftiu, Officer of Accreditation3. Arlinda Selmani – Career development and Alumni Officer4. Arjeta Rexhepi – Scientific Research5. Minire Rexhepi Head of communication with the public office6. Betim Berisha - Senior Officer for International Relations7. Valon Syla- Head of IT Office:8. Xhevat Bekteshi - Internship coordinator9. Kushtrim Demi -Secretary of the academic unit10. Arlinda Qazimi – Academic Affairs Officer |
| 11:40 – 11:50 | <i>Short break</i> | |
| 11:50 – 12:50 | Meeting with Deans of Faculties | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Prof.Asoc.Dr. Merxhan Avdyli Dean of Faculty of Education2. Prof.Asoc.Dr. Xhevat Sopi Dean of Faculty of Economics3. Prof.Ass. Dr. Fatmire Krasniqi Dean of Faculty of Law,4. Prof.Asoc.Dr. Lindita Nebiu Hyseni Dean of Faculty of Computer Science5. Prof.Dr. Xhevdet Thaqi Dean of Applied Mathematics |
| 12:50 – 13:50 | <i>Lunch break</i> (provided at the evaluation site) | |
| 13:50 – 14:40 | Meeting with teaching staff | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Prof.Asoc.Dr. Gëzim Tosuni2. Prof.Asoc.Dr. Arben Mustafa.3. Prof.Ass.Dr. Arben Sahiti,4. Prof.Ass.Dr.Aferdita Ibrahimimi,5. Prof.Ass.Dr.Selim Daku, |



| | | |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| | | <ol style="list-style-type: none">6. Prof.Asoc.Dr.Ekrem Alimi,7. Prof.Asoc.Dr.Shpresa Qamili,8. Prof.Ass.Dr. Mensur Neziri,9. Liza Rexhepi |
| 14:40 – 15:25 | Meeting with students | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Erlete Baliqi,2. Arta Hetemi,3. Lirak Haziri,4. Ajshe Bislimi,5. Lorika Hotlani,6. Eldë Berisha7. Betina Rexhepi8. Arnisa Aliu9. Hava Dërmaku |
| 15:25 – 15:35 | <i>Short break</i> | |
| 15:35 – 16:20 | Meeting with graduates | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Eljesa Rashiti,2. Dafina Ahmeti,3. Dion Islami,4. Donat Dalipi,5. Blend Kurti6. Besart Rexhepi7. Alena Shabani8. Donika Hyseni9. Qendresa Cuci |
| 16:20 – 17:05 | Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Alban Hyseni – Mayor of Gjilan Municipality,2. Kadri Rahimaj – Mayor of Kamenice Municipality,3. Arsim Vranovci – Chairman of BKI,4. Albana Demiri – Director of DKA,5. Vjollca Gjinolli Çavolli – STIK,6. Delvina Vranovci - Representativ of the a company/Global Consulting & Development Associates |
| 17:05 – 17:40 | Visiting Facilities | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Rector2. Deans |
| 17:40 – 17:50 | Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts | |
| 17:50 – 18:00 | Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and program | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Rector2. Vice - Rectors |



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1.3. A brief overview of the institution under evaluation

University “Kadri Zeka” Gjilan (UKZ) was established in 2013. But the roots of higher education go back to 1958 when the Centre for Teacher Training was established (teacher training school). On 10 December 2020, the Assembly of Kosovo approved The Statute of UKZ, by which document the UKZ gained administrative independence. Now, the UKZ has five faculties (Applied Sciences, Computer Science, Economics, Education, Law) and offers a range of bachelor’s and master’s degree programs.

From 2020 to 2023, a total of 2,264 students have been enrolled in the UKZ, now there are 1,556 students. Students come mainly from Eastern Kosovo, the Presheva Valley (Serbia), Kumanova region (North Macedonia) and other areas of Kosovo.

2. INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

2.1. Public mission and institutional objectives

The mission statement of the UKZ is formulated as follows: “A temple of knowledge that cultivates learning and knowledge development, encourages critical thinking and the spirit of entrepreneurship for new research, which helps social and technological development, prepares responsible and professionally capable young people to be part of a virtual and global society, part of an open labor market and, at the same time, a model for other members of society.” (SER, p. 33) This can be said that such a formulation refers in one or another way to all three main pillars of the university, i.e. teaching/learning, research, and public reach (so-called the third role). At the same time, it needs to be mentioned – similarly as in the evaluation report of 2021 – that some expressions, such as “temple of knowledge”, “knowledge”, “new research” are not well explained and do not help clarity of the mission. This probably leads to problems in understanding the mission statement by various stakeholders, as also confirmed by the very UKZ in its SER where it is stated as one of the weaknesses “Difficulty in understanding the mission by some external stakeholders” (SER, p. 40).

Encouragement of critical thinking, entrepreneurial spirit, virtual society, globalism, and open labour markets are the key words that are explicitly emphasized by the UKZ when dealing with

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specific objectives of the UKZ. Equality, creativity, integrity, stability, excellence, connection are then the values which the UKZ promotes.

The UKZ revised its mission statement in 2020 and additions were made to the strategic plan of the institution (2023-2028). The process of revision seemed to be of a consultative nature, internal as well as external stakeholders seemed to be involved.

Apart from other actions, the UKZ described the process of drafting the UKZ's strategic plan (2023-2028) within which various opportunities for the members of the academic community of the UKZ to recognize the mission statement of the institution were created for the members of the academic community of the UKZ. The mission statement is also made available at the webpages of the UKZ and at its various information brochures.

The mission statement can be seen broken down into strategic objectives of the UKZ, as formulated in the institution's strategic plan for the period 2023-2028. These strategic objectives are as follows: (1) Providing study programs in relation to market demands and social development; (2) Development of scientific activity to improve the quality of studies and innovation; (3) Internationalization as an element of internal development; (4) Creating infrastructural conditions for quality learning; (5) Development of effective management practices. The strategic objectives are further elaborated in each case into specific objectives and indicators. The set of strategic objectives is clearly projecting the first two pillars of the institution (teaching/learning and research), the third pillar (the third role) is not explicitly dealt with, though. The focus on the third role-relevant activities is partly seen in some specific objectives, where for instance ensuring the connection of the study programs with the labour market is emphasized. Also, some research activities linked to the development of the society, expertise and other professional services provided to the society can be seen in line with this. But in general, the focus on the third role is not so well evident.

Consequently, same way can be viewed the level of consistency of medium- and long-term objectives with the mission statement and its support.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Make sure the elements of the mission such as „temple of knowledge“, „knowledge“, „new research“ are clarified and well explained, or even replaced by more clear formulations.*



2.2. Strategic planning, governance and administration

The institution has “Strategic Plan of UKZ for 2023-2028”. This document was developed in a consultation with the academic community of the institution and beyond, namely senior management of the university, academic staff, administration, students, alumni, various interest groups, and others. The key role seemed to be played by working groups, workshops for a broader public, the public hearing and some other measures. Also, international experts were involved, since the very process was supported by the HERAS+ project (Higher Education, Research and Applied Science Plus, funded by Austrian Development Cooperation) in which the UKZ participated. At the end of this process, the strategic plan was published on the website, printed in physical copies, and distributed to the shareholders.

Besides to the main strategy, the Office for International Cooperation has also drafted the Strategy for International Cooperation and Project Management (for the period 2020-2025) which is a product of another international project (QUADIC – Quality Development of International Cooperation and Project Management) in which the UKZ participated as one of the nine partners from Kosovo. This document can be seen as correlating with the main strategy of the UKZ. The UKZ has also drafted Strategic Research Plan (2023) with some significant errors (see the text related to standard 7).

The UKZ is working with the concept of action plans in which strategic objectives are specified and more concretely elaborated. The objectives are also linked to the financial planning (financial costs) in annual and long-term planning policies and procedures at the UKZ.

There is the evidence that the strategic plan of the UKZ comes out of the analysis focused on external and internal dynamics and factors that are relevant for the institution. It is also built on identification of strong and weak points of the institution’s performance. This can therefore be said that the UKZ’s strategic plan takes a realistic account of aspects of the internal and external environment affecting the development of the institution. The issue related to the focus on the third mission has been already mentioned in the section related to standard 1. Consequently, it is also projected in more specific plans and measures derived from the strategic plan.



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The UKZ has issued the Regulation by which the Commission for Supervision of Implementation of the Strategic Plan of UKZ was established. The Commission includes representatives of various positions (mainly top management at the UKZ, but it also involves student representation). The Commission is reporting to the top management on a regular basis.

The UKZ has a decision-making system and internal operating regulations in conformity with current legal provisions. The main bodies of the institution are as follows: Steering Council (main governing body), Rector, Senate, General Secretary, Student Parliament, and on the level of faculties Faculty Councils and Deans.

As for election criteria and processes of the decision makers and other elected positions, they seem to be clearly formulated, transparent and published in institutional regulations. This relates to all main positions/bodies at the UKZ.

It seems to be evident in the UKZ's arrangements that responsibilities of the decision-making bodies are defined in such a way that the respective roles and responsibilities for overall policy and accountability, the senior administration of management, and the academic decision-making structures are clearly differentiated and followed in practice. It was documented by description of responsibilities of Steering Council, Rector, General Secretary, Senate, Student Parliament, and also on the level of faculties in case of Deans and Faculty Councils.

Student representatives are members of decisional, executive and consultative bodies at the UKZ. In concrete, they are members of the Senate (two student representatives), of various working groups dealing with long-term policies, design and evaluation of the study programs. Students are also members of Faculty Councils, Study committees, Ethics Commission. Student organizations organize regular elections every two years. Election procedures seem to be democratic and transparent, without the influence of academic or administration staff of the UKZ. The election procedures are regulated by Regulations for student elections, No. 02/678, dt. 24.03.2021.

The UKZ has a well-developed structure of administration services. On the central level, they include offices focused on academic development and quality, budget and finance, international cooperation and project management, information technology, public relations, academic affairs, procurement, student services, human resources, internal audit, and logistics. The administration staff seems to be effective in terms of organization, staffing levels and

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qualifications, and it seems to function rigorously. The administration staff has relevant staff development opportunities to update their knowledge and skills, as it was proven during the interviews.

The responsibilities of administrative staff are clearly defined in position descriptions, and they match the qualifications of the individual. External as well as internal regulations are taken into account in this context.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Make sure the strategic documents and activities of the UKZ more explicitly focus also on the so-called third role of the institution.*

2.3. Financial planning and management

The UKZ demonstrates it has sufficient financial resources defined in The Mid-Term Expenditure Framework for the years 2024-2026 to adequately reach its mission as well as objectives set out in the strategic plan (2023-2028). The financial resources for the period of one year for the UKZ have been incorporated in the Law on Budget Appropriations for the year 2024. The budget is broken into several main categories, which include wages and salaries, goods and services, municipal expenses, subsidies, and capital investments. For the year 2024, the overall budget amounts 2,034,656 EUR, for the two following years a slight increase is expected (2025: 2,114,598 EUR; 2026: 2,169,761 EUR).

Since the UKZ has been involved in a number of development projects, there were/are some finances available for these activities, too.

This can be said the UKZ has a realistic annual budget and a three-year budget, as well as financial policies which address its financial sustainability. The budget of the UKZ is spent



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based on the budget planning frameworks where the preliminary budget hearings is used. Consequently, the UKZ claims it has no fluctuations or avoidance of planning-expenditure. The same applies in cases of spending donations or budgets from different projects. The UKZ also realizes its own revenues, but they initially go to Ministry of Education, Sciences, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) and are returned as a grant. The grant is determined by MESTI regardless of the level of income that UKZ realizes. For the years 2024, 2025 and 2026 the grant is expected to remain the same: 115,000 EUR/a year.

Budgeting in the UKZ is a part of the Law on budget allocation, which is approved by the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo. The UKZ is also a subject to the legal framework and by-laws for budget supervision and management. Internally, within the UKZ, the central administration functions are led by the chief administrative officer (General Secretary) who performs and coordinates all financial activities within the institution. The UKZ has the Office for Budget and Finances, which is led by the chief financial officer (Director of the Office) who carries out and coordinates all financial activities within the institution and beyond. Rector and the chief administrative officer jointly propose the budget for approval by the Steering Council, draw up the cash flow plan, supervise the execution of the budget and prepare periodic and annual reports for the Steering Council, propose the review of the budget and its harmonization based on the requirements of the management, academic units and administration, ensure that the planned budget expenditures are made in accordance with the budget rules and procedures. The responsibilities of the Budget and Finances Office are clearly determined, the staffing of the office seems to be sufficient. This can be therefore concluded that the oversight and management of the institutions budgeting and accounting functions are carried out by a specialized office responsible to a senior administrator.

Also, there is a throughout monitoring of expenditure and commitments against budgets with reports prepared at last once per year at the UKZ. The process of financial supervision is carried out according to the cash flow plan drafted by the Office for Budget and Finance in cooperation with the management and representatives of academic units. The planning and execution of financial resources are also subject to the process of periodic and annual audits by the internal auditors (operating within MEST), the external auditor (National Audit Office of Kosovo – NAO). All financial execution activities are registered in the Kosovo Financial Management Information System (KFMIS). According to the responsibilities arising from the UKZ Statute, the rector is obliged to draft, through the Office for Budget and Finance, periodic quarterly and annual reports of expenses and resources, specifying and commenting on the extent to which the objectives and activities reflected in the work plans for administration and academic units

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were implemented. Through the reports presented by the rector, the Steering Council supervises the execution and compliance of expenditures. Periodic and annual reports are approved by Steering Council. According to the Law on Public Finance Management and Accountability, the UKZ must submit to the Minister an annual report for the previous fiscal year. And this is done by the UKZ on a regular basis.

The UKZ uses the accounting system known as the Kosovo Financial Management Information System (KFMIS). Free balance – Treasury System, Budget Development and Management System, Public Investment Program, and some other elements are also involved.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *None*

2.4. Academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability

The UKZ has Code of Ethics (approved on September 2016 by the Regulation on the Code of Ethics in UKZ). This Code of Ethics is defending values of academic freedom, institutional autonomy and ethical integrity. In concrete, in the UKZ's Code of Ethics, principles of integrity and dignity of university staff, autonomy at university, efficiency, fair competition, academic freedom, professionalism, respect to laws and regulations, prohibition of discrimination and harassment are emphasized. Following this, on December 2023 the UKZ drafted the Regulation of Code of Ethics and Integrity in Research.

This can also be said the UKZ's Code of Ethics requires that all stakeholders act consistently with high standards of ethical conduct and avoidance of plagiarism in research, teaching, performance evaluation, and in the conduct of administrative duties, thus avoiding the conflict of interest. As concerns the measures against plagiarism, the UKZ used for some time Plagiarismcheck.org to which the access was granted through the ResearchCult Erasmus CBHE project. The project is completed now and the UKZ showed the evidence it has chosen to start using Turnitin. The offer of the company made to the UKZ was provided to the expert team. The expert team needs to state that in the time of evaluation the UKZ was in the process

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of implementation of new antiplagiarism software Besides to it, Google Classroom antiplagiarism system was used by the staff, too, in this context.

As concerns ways the Code of Ethics is enforced, there are several processes and mechanisms, such as awareness raising and education of students/staff, Ethics Commission, reporting procedures, setting of sanctions, transparent communication, periodic reviews. There are clear procedures regarding the establishment of the violations at the UKZ. They begin with the submission of the report for violation of the Code of Ethics. Also, there are bodies established to deal with ethical/disciplinary issues at the UKZ. They are as follows: Ethics Council (elected by the Senate), Disciplinary Committee (elected by the academic unit's Council), ad hoc disciplinary committee (appointed by the rector or the dean).

The above-mentioned bodies were established as a designated structure responsible for the analysis and resolution of any potential breaches in the Code of Ethics at the UKZ.

From the UKZ regulations and rules it seems to be evident that the university is applying the Code of Ethics and its associated processes and mechanisms on all activities that relate to management, administration, teaching and learning.

The internal regulations, procedures, self-evaluation reports and decision of governing bodies seem to be made publicly available at the UKZ. The university website is one of the platforms for this purpose.

The same can be said about the UKZ's practice of publishing information regarding the academic staff, research and other academic activities, programs, student numbers teaching and learning procedures, incl. assessment, employment information, and more. Again, the university's website is one of the sources in this context.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Make sure antiplagiarism software is implemented into a daily routine of the UKZ and students and academic staff members are well acquainted with its use.*



2.5. Quality management

The Quality Assurance System at the UKZ encompasses a comprehensive approach, integrating internal and external mechanisms to continually enhance quality across institutional processes. Key pillars include documentation on quality assurance policy, designated bodies, and assessment instruments aligning with the university's mission. The UKZ demonstrates commendable commitment to capacity-building for quality, evident in the appointment of specialized roles like the Vice-Rector for Academic Development and Quality. The structured approach to quality assessment is illustrated by the Annual Quality Assurance Calendar, which also underscores a proactive approach towards improvement. Suggestion for further improvement could be further streamlining of reporting mechanisms and fostering a culture of continuous improvement, which could be done, e.g. by streamlining of reporting and making it easier to monitor and track of progress in real time.

Overall, the UKZ demonstrates a comprehensive approach to quality assurance management, supported by a robust infrastructure and strategic vision. The Office for Academic Development and Quality (OAQD), established since 2018, serves as the main point for coordinating various quality-related activities. Staffed with key personnel including a Director, Accreditation Officer, and Career Development and Alumni Officer, this office oversees crucial tasks such as coordinating accreditation processes, conducting internal evaluations, and facilitating regular meetings with the Supervisory Council for Quality and Evaluation. The panel of peer reviewers assumes that functions and subsequently, the workload of the Office of Academic Development and Quality appears substantial, especially considering its involvement in supporting quality measurement processes, institutional and program accreditation, and coordination with various academic and administrative bodies within the university. The presence of part-time staff further highlights potential limitations in capacity to effectively manage such responsibilities. This situation may pose challenges in maintaining high standards across all functions and can lead to difficulty in providing adequate support to academic units, and potential strain on staff resources. To address these concerns, the university may need to consider strategies such as reallocating resources, hiring additional personnel, or restructuring responsibilities to ensure that the workload is manageable, and that the office can fulfill its mandate effectively without compromising quality or staff well-being.

Leadership and management of quality assurance processes at top level is supported by Supervisory Council for Quality and Evaluation (which also serves as a trust committee). It comprises 10 members, including the Vice-Rector for Academic Development and Quality as the permanent chair. Five vice deans represent academic units, ensuring diverse perspectives. Additionally, the council includes student representatives and 2 members having no voting rights. These are the Director of the Office for Academic Development and Quality, an

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Academic Affairs Official, who have no voting rights. As individuals in these positions should hold significant expertise and thorough understanding of issues at hand relevant to the committee's objectives, their inclusion in voting can be beneficial. And it remains important to ensure that their input is given due consideration and that the role of Director of the Office for Academic Development and Quality and of Academic Affairs Official within the structure of the Supervisory Council for Quality is clearly defined, to maximize their impact while maintaining transparency and fairness. Another observation that the panel of external reviewers made was related to reliance on international projects for capacity building for quality. It is true that international projects can provide valuable resources, expertise, and networking opportunities, but relying too heavily on external sources may pose risks in terms of sustainability of the capacity-building. One of the considerations for improvement in this regard could be building internal expertise in quality assurance - this could involve establishing collaborative research projects with international partners, hosting knowledge-sharing events, or providing opportunities for staff to participate in training programs and conferences on quality management matters.

Quality assurance covers major academic processes within the institution. However, there's a notable absence of information regarding the assessment of the university's third mission activities (such as community engagement, knowledge transfer, and societal impact) and the quality of professional practice (such as internships, placements, and practical training). To ensure a comprehensive quality assurance system, the UKZ should consider incorporating mechanisms to assess the quality of these activities. This could involve developing specific evaluation criteria, establishing processes for gathering feedback from stakeholders (such as community partners, employers, and alumni), and implementing regular reviews or assessments of third mission activities and professional practice experiences. By including these components in its quality assurance framework, the UKZ can ensure that it effectively evaluates and enhances the quality of all aspects of its operations and activities.

The institution conducts regular evaluations of academic staff and of courses to ensure quality enhancement. Student evaluations occur twice per academic year, after the winter and summer semesters. Individual teachers are provided feedback and findings are distributed to Deans, Vice-Deans, and quality coordinators. The panel of reviewers noted that these are majorly staff and students whose views are majorly considered for quality enhancement processes, which may carry risk of limited perspectives. Students and staff view may not always provide a comprehensive view of institutional needs and priorities and overemphasizing their input may overlook broader strategic objectives and stakeholder perspectives. Further, while students and staff can provide valuable insights, they may not always have the expertise or knowledge to identify systemic issues or propose effective solutions. To mitigate this risk, the institution can consider adopting a balanced approach to decision-making that incorporates input from multiple stakeholders, including students, staff, alumni, employers, and external experts.

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Additionally, it is needed to establish clear criteria and processes for evaluating feedback and prioritize actions that align with strategic objectives.

The UKZ demonstrates commitment to self-assessment and continuous improvement of its quality assurance arrangements, but there are areas that could benefit from further attention and enhancement. Firstly, considering external review mechanisms, such as independent audits, would provide valuable insights and identify blind spots not apparent in self-assessment processes alone. Additionally, evaluating effectiveness of quality assurance arrangements can be done in alignment with the mission of the university. For the clear objectives for core values of the mission statement need to be defined. Some of the core values outlined in the mission statement of the institution are critical thinking, entrepreneurship for societal and technological development, so it is imperative to establish clear objectives reflecting the mission's core values. Examples of such objectives could include enhancing student engagement in interdisciplinary learning experiences to promote holistic knowledge development, fostering a culture of innovation and problem-solving through experiential learning opportunities, and strengthening partnerships with industry and community stakeholders to facilitate real-world application of academic concepts. And quality assurance arrangements need to be reviewed to see if they are relevant for assessing achievement of strategic objectives. Assessment of effectiveness of Quality assurance arrangements could also encompass looking at whether Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) (related to various facets such as student satisfaction, academic performance, research productivity, community engagement, and alumni success) directly correlating with the university mission emphasize sufficiently on preparing responsible and capable individuals for a global society and open labor market. By collecting and analyzing data from diverse sources, including student surveys, academic achievement metrics, and employer feedback, the institution can gauge the extent to which quality assurance mechanisms are fostering the desired qualities outlined in the mission statement. Addressing these areas would further strengthen the UKZ's quality assurance framework and ensure continuous enhancement of standards and effectiveness. Further, reporting should also involve outcomes of evaluation of quality assurance arrangements. Establishing a centralized online portal or platform where all reporting documents and information can be submitted and accessed by relevant stakeholders; this could facilitate streamlining of reporting and make easier monitoring and tracking of progress.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. It is suggested to consider strategies such as reallocating resources, hiring additional personnel, or restructuring responsibilities to ensure that the workload of Academic*



- Development and Quality Office is manageable, and that the office can fulfill its mandate effectively without compromising quality or staff well-being;*
2. *Considering expertise and understanding of issues at hand relevant to the Supervisory Council for Quality and Evaluation objectives that Director of the Office for Academic Development and Quality, and Academic Affairs Official should possess, their inclusion in voting in the Council can be beneficial. It is important to ensure that their input is given due consideration and that the role of Director of the Office for Academic Development and Quality and of Academic Affairs Official within the structure of the Supervisory Council for Quality is clearly defined, to maximize their impact while maintaining transparency and fairness;*
 3. *To avoid risks to sustainability of capacity-building in quality caused by overreliance on international projects, start building internal expertise in quality enhancement possibly by establishing collaborative projects with international partners, hosting knowledge-sharing events on quality enhancement, or providing opportunities for staff to participate in training programs and conferences on quality management matters;*
 4. *Evaluate the effectiveness of quality assurance arrangements to ensure alignment with the university's mission by clearly defining quality objectives that reflect the core values of the mission statement. Assessing the effectiveness of these arrangements could involve examining whether Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) related to student satisfaction, academic performance, research productivity, community engagement, and alumni success adequately emphasize the preparation of responsible and capable individuals for a global society and open labor market, as envisioned by the institution's mission statement. This evaluation process will enable the university to ensure that quality assurance efforts are directly contributing to fulfilling its overarching mission and strategic objectives, and that internal quality standards and their effectiveness is continually enhanced;*
 5. *Consider establishing a centralized online portal or platform where all reporting documents as well as outcomes of quality assurance will be accessed by relevant stakeholders, to streamline process of tracking, monitoring and reporting related to quality.*

2.6. Learning and teaching

The Public University “Kadri Zeka”, Gjilan (UKZ) has several policies and procedures applicable to all academic programs; they are managed according to the Bologna system, based on transferable ECTS credits and comparable to the programmes in the European Higher Education Area. Several regulations detail the programme-related process, for example the *Regulation on basic studies – Bachelor* for the Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Education and Faculty of Law, as well as the *Regulation for Master Studies* and the *Regulation for Master*

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Studies in the Faculty of Education (Appendices 7, 8, 10, 11, 12). Special regulations have been approved that define in detail the progress and implementation of study programmes from the initial idea to implementation after receiving accreditation; in the Regulation on Quality Assurance and Evaluation at “Kadri Zeka” Public University Gjilan is stipulated that regarding the monitoring process, at least these areas are covered: self-assessment at the level of study programmes; development and approval of new study programmes; ongoing review of study programmes. In this process, the Council for Quality and Evaluation Supervision advises the Senate and the Councils of the academic units for the approval of the self-evaluation reports for the re / accreditation of the Study Programmes, while Office for Science, Academic Development and Quality provides support to the Ad Hoc Committees in the process of evaluating changes and additions to existing study programmes as well as in periodic internal evaluation procedures (Appendix 1.4 of SER, SER, p. 89).

At the UKZ, there is an effective system for ensuring that all programmes meet high standards of learning and teaching through initial approvals, regular changes, and monitoring of performance; according to the Statute of the university, study programmes can be realized through direct process (physical participation of professors and students), online process (distance learning-teaching) and part-time studies. Study programmes contains, as a rule the following elements: title of the study; type of study; the academic title that a student gains/obtains; enrolling criteria; objectives and results; curriculum details; value in points according to ECTS (courses, diploma thesis); conditions for individual studies. In addition, the obligatory contents of the curriculum are determined by regulations issued by the Senate (Appendix 1, article 83, 86). In designing a programme, the institution pays a lot of attention to planning an adequate curriculum with ECTS, showing the learning outcomes and workload related to work, learning activities and evaluation procedures/criteria. The use of ECTS at the UKZ requires an institutional credit framework based on institutional regulations as well as a deep understanding of the credit system by each member of the academic staff. The discussion with the deans of the faculties during the site visit revealed that planning and design of the study programmes is done because of the work and commitment of the teams of professors and other internal and external stakeholders (Appendix 1.4 of SER, SER, p. 90).

The UKZ applies clear mechanism to monitor quality indicators, identify and investigate differences in quality between programmes, and acts to ensure that all programmes meet required performance standards. Therefore, in the process of fulfilling the required performance standards, the UKZ through control mechanisms, monitors, records and compares on an annually basis the following data: the ratio of applicants to the number of students accepted for each study programme; the academic performance of students which will generate an Annual Work Plan of each academic unit submitted to the Office for Science, Academic Development and Quality. For example, s for the academic unit of the Faculty of Law-Bachelor Programme, in the last three years, the academic performance of students turned out to be above



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grade 7 (seven), while in the Master's Programme in Law-Penal it was above grade 8 (eight); the dropout rate; the transfer of students from one university to another; the graduation of students – the trend of graduation of students is followed carefully year after year and by all academic units; the teaching process - tracking and monitoring of teaching is also done in terms of verifying the professor's workload in terms of the number of students in study hours; the theory-practice report- at the university level, the follow-up and monitoring of a connection or relationship between theory and practice being carried out continuously (SER, p. 94, Additional documents 4, 5).

Study programmes at the UKZ are based on correlations between learning outcomes. They are presented in the form of a series of documents which include general and specific objectives of the programme; the curriculum, with the subjects' weight expressed in ECTS credits and disciplines distributed over the study period. More clearly, at the UKZ, bachelor studies are organized in 6 semesters respectively in 8 semesters (for example at the Faculty of Education and Faculty of Law). A semester consists of 15 weeks, with a load for the student of 30 ECTS/semester, so the credit system (ECTS) is applied in all bachelor's level study programmes. Master studies are organized in 2 and 4 semesters; a semester consists of 15 weeks, with a load for the student of 30 ECTS/semester, so the credit system (ECTS) is applied in all master's level study programmes. All courses (subject) are described in syllabi in details – ECTS credits, teacher's name, goals, expected learning outcomes, student workload, teaching methodology, assessment methods, literature, plan of lesson and allocation of themes per weeks, academic policies, and rules of etiquette. An example of [syllabus](#) is provided to the ET from the Faculty of Computer Science (SER pp. 95, 96)

Student learning outcomes of each programme are consistent with the National Qualifications Framework and with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. Furthermore, the learning outcomes are defined for each programme through the content of the programme subjects, the subjects themselves also having defined learning outcomes that are clearly detailed in each syllabus. As a practice, even for each teaching unit, teachers define learning outcomes that are in function of fulfilling the objectives of the subject and together with other subjects to achieve the objectives of the learning outcomes of the entire programme; this was confirmed during the visit by the deans of the faculties and the teachers.

The grading system is provided to the ET in SER. The statute of the UKZ, the regulations of bachelor's and master's studies in the UKZ, determine the mechanism of the students' evaluation. The student's success in the exam is described with grades from 5 (five) to 10 (ten). The results of the exams are published on the UKZ website, of the relevant academic unit. Students must achieve a minimum grade of 6 for passing, which means they must achieve a minimum of 50% of the marks for the relevant subjects. There are effective processes in place

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to ensure the fitness and effectiveness of the assessment methods for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. (Appendix 1 to SER, SER, pp. 97-98).

Teaching staff at the UKZ are appropriately qualified and experienced for their area of teaching responsibilities; they use teaching strategies suitable for the different kinds of learning outcomes and participate in activities to improve their teaching effectiveness. The discussion with teachers during the site visit showed to the ET that the staff is aware of their duties and committed to achieving performance in teaching and learning. The institution has in place a [regulation for the selection of the academic staff](#) and an effective Manual for Planning and Evaluation of the Academic Staff Performance. Moreover, the academic staff of the UKZ is constantly trained for the teaching process. Some of the members of the academic staff have been trained in international institutions, such as training within Erasmus+ projects (REBUS at ESSEN University in Germany, QUADIC, QATEC, STEAMedu. UKZ has a cooperation agreement for the training of academic staff with the Centre of Excellence of the University of Pristina. (Appendix 3 to SER, SER, p. 100).

At the beginning of each semester, the faculty council approves the Syllabus of the updated courses, at the UKZ. The syllabi are approved for each subject and for each study programme and then, published on the website, in e-learning, UMS and distributed to students at the beginning of the semester; students' evaluation is done throughout the semester. In the course syllabuses, the use of contemporary teaching methodology is emphasized, such as: interactivity, encouraging critical thinking, providing conditions for learning in the library, using IT, working in groups, working in projects, student clubs, creative work, etc. Moreover, lectures and student exercises are oriented to group work; the dialog with students confirmed the interactivity with the teachers during class and their efforts to motivate them to learn. For all hours completed, student attendance lists are completed. Teachers also submit the report on the implementation of the lessons to the Dean's Office of the Faculty (Appendix 23 to SER, SER, pp. 100-101).

Teaching quality and the effectiveness of programmes is evaluated through student assessments and graduate and employer surveys with evidence from these sources used as a basis for plans for improvement. The [Report on the Evaluation of the Academic Staff](#) and the Subjects by the Students of the "Kadri Zeka" University, for the Winter Semester of the Year 2022/2023 shows that students highly value the preparation of teachers for subject 4,48, the objectives and purpose are clarified in the syllabus of subject 4,44 and the students highly appreciate the content of the curriculum, which is in accordance with contemporary literature, 4.42. The Employer Evaluation Report of Graduates from The University "Kadri Zeka was provided to the ET as an additional document; this shows evidence on the quality of the graduates when entering the labour market. One question, for example refers to graduates and their skills: What subjects or skills, skills and competencies do you recommend being added to the study programme so that graduates are better prepared to successfully perform work tasks?

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Therefore, in the report of June 2023, the survey revealed that many employers demand that practical work during studies should increase as much as possible (Additional document 7, SER, p. 101).

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Include in the reports on different evaluations, such as the [Report on the Evaluation of the Academic Staff](#) and the Subjects by the Students and the Employer Evaluation Report of Graduates the evolution of the variables, not just the value of the current survey, to understand the dynamics of the indicators, for example the dynamics of the students opinion on teachers' performance (has it increased or decreased during time?); probably, for a duration of 3-5 years evaluation would be most relevant., like a diagram for multiple years.*

2.7. Research

The Strategic plan of the university for the period of 2023-2028 has a strategic objective dedicated to the “Development of the scientific activity to improve the quality of studies and innovation”. The SER explains that funds for research haven't been received by the UKZ and the management decided to find internal mechanisms to develop scientific research in correlation to the development of studies. ET appreciates the declarative interest of the university and considers that the relation research-study programmes is useful under the condition that research results be integrated into teaching and curricular development. However, research development should advance according to the trend in the field of studies, and after that, the programme development should occur. In addition, in 2023 in December, the UKZ has adopted a Strategic Research Plan which is a document with some important errors – the content sets target for 2020-2022 which shows that this is an old document. ET cannot consider that this is a proper document helpful and consistent with the nature and mission of the institution and the economic and cultural development needs of the region, nor publicly available (Appendices 2 and 6 of SER).

The university has organized several research events, such as [conferences](#). The research development plan should include clearly specified indicators and benchmarks for performance targets for the period of the next years, correlated to the potential research budgeted. Research projects should be considered different from institutional or capacity building projects, or mobility projects. In other words, not all projects can be associated with research projects. To

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explain the research related indicators and benchmarks, the UKZ included in SER descriptions and explanations on academic staff advancement and provided a table with projects such Erasmus and capacity building projects. These cannot be research projects, but institutional development projects. ET appreciates the effort of the UKZ to develop and should make a difference between research and development projects (SER, pp. 107-108).

The institution has included in the Strategic plan a comment on the strategy budget, but without quantitative data; this is just principle-based description, including the sources for financial resources, for example revenue, partnerships and donations, resource efficiency. The UKZ has simulated in SER a research budget for continuing to support the academic staff to publish research articles and ET appreciates the institutional effort being relevant the increase in the amount allocated which almost doubled between 2021-2023 (Appendix 2 of SER, SER, p. 111).

At the UKZ, the [Regulation](#) for Research-Scientific Activity was adopted in 2022 (the document, unfortunately is in Albanian); ET could observe that it includes criteria for the academic staff, on how the Scientific Council could choose the best researcher of the year, among other aspects. At the UKZ, the research budget covers faculty research projects, participation in international scientific conferences, publication of scientific papers in international scientific journals, researcher of the year, expenses for co-financing - participation in research projects, regional and international. Under this limited approach, ET considers that sufficient financial, logistic, and human resources are available for achieving the proposed research objectives; the institution should develop the fundamental or applied research in the future (SER, p. 112).

Research is validated through scientific research publications. The academic staff of the UKZ publishes scientific papers in international journals with an impact factor, indexed on the platforms designated by MEST Administrative Instruction 1/2017 for Publications and Scientific Publications in Journals with Impact Factors and in national and regional magazines, participates in international, national, and regional scientific conferences, publishes scientific monographs and university books (Appendix 2 of SER, SER, p. 116). The Senate approved The Regulation on the Selection Procedures regarding the Appointment, Reappointment and Advancement of Academic Personnel at the Public University "Kadri Zeka" Gjilan which has defined the conditions that a staff claiming to be promoted must fulfil. Also, the UKZ has created internal mechanisms to validate scientific research work, for example the review committee, which has to evaluate the candidate for scientific achievements; the Review Committee writes, completes the Evaluation Report with the concrete proposal for the selection related to the appointment, reappointment and advancement of the academic staff at the UKZ; the Council of the Faculty evaluates the report of the Review Committee; the Faculty Council votes on the Review Committee's report; the Study Committee of the UKZ evaluates in detail

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the scientific research work of the candidate; the Senate decides on academic matters and finally validates the scientific research work of the academic staff, which is in the process of advancement (Appendices 19, 20 of SER, SER, pp. 116-117).

During the site visit, the teachers explained to the ET that each academic staff member must produce at least an average of one scientific/applied research publication outcome/product per year for the past three years. This obligation is generated from the formally adopted documents on staff advancement. In other words, expectations for teaching staff involvement in research/scholarly activities is specified, and performance in relation to these expectations is considered in the individual performance review system and in promotion criteria (Appendices 19, 20 of SER).

Teaching staff at the UKZ is encouraged to include in their teaching information about their research and scholarly activities that are relevant to courses they teach, together with other significant research developments in the field; the syllabus on one hand contains topics that are also subjects for teachers in research articles, and on the other hand, the content of some teaching chapters and some references relate to these articles. The discussion with the teachers and students confirmed this preoccupation (SER, p. 121).

Furthermore, academic and research staff publish under the name of the institution in Kosovo they are affiliated to as full-time staff; the academic staff is encouraged to promote UKZ on all its accounts on social networks, such as: "Facebook", "twitter", "academia.edu", "Instagram", "LinkedIn" and on other networks social by introducing/identifying him as his/her primary employer. (SER, p. 122). For example, professor Sadik Haxhiu from the Faculty of Law published in 2023 under the name of the university the article with the title "[The development of constitutionalism in Albania \(1912-1938\)](#)".

At the UKZ, policies are established for ownership of intellectual property and clear procedures set out for commercialization of ideas developed by staff and students. The UKZ provided to the ET the Manual for Intellectual Property in the Albanian language, as an additional document which defines Intellectual Property referring to: patents, industrial designs, trademarks, copyright and related rights, geographical indicators, new plant varieties, types of integrated circuits, and protection from unfair competition (Additional document 6). In addition, other intellectual property rights and obligations are stipulated in the Regulation for the work of the UKZ Publishing Council (the authors sign the statement of the originality of the work and other responsibilities); Regulation for the Code of Ethics at the UKZ (the authority for the UKZ members is precisely defined, as well as the way they can use the University's logo in public appearances; Regulation for scientific research activity at the UKZ (the rights and obligations of the competent bodies of the Public University. Kadri Zeka" Gjilan of the participants of the research-scientific activity and the publication of the research-scientific results; Regulation

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on the drafting of the thesis of the bachelor's degree (Appendices 20, 26, 27 of SER, SER p. 122-123).

At the UKZ, there are the following regulations through which the preservation of ethical principles in research is ensured: Regulation for the Code of Ethics at the UKZ where, clear description is provided for the principle of academic freedom in scientific and professional research work (Article 9), the use of people in scientific and professional research work (Article 15), the fabrication and falsification of results (Article 16), plagiarism (Article 17) and public presentation (Article 26); Regulation for scientific research activity at the UKZ. Therefore, ET notices that at the institution there are clear policies, procedures, and relevant structural units to ensure the safeguarding of ethical principles in research (Appendix 15 of SER, Additional document 15, SER, p. 133).

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Create and approve a research development plan that is consistent with the nature and mission of the institution and the economic and cultural development needs of the region which could be later, after effective research results, the support for the development of the learning and teaching processes;*
- 2. Set clear and measurable research objectives with clearly specified indicators and benchmarks for performance targets for the next years;*
- 3. Identify resources (could be even donors or sponsors) to support research objectives (not only academic staff publications);*
- 4. Create an effective training for the entire academic staff to have a common understanding of what research projects mean, as not all projects are research projects;*
- 5. Adopt a research budget in a formal way and include allocations also for equipment and facilities for research infrastructure;*
- 6. Include in every formal document a code and date, making clear if that is the first edition of the document or not, first revision or not and when was it adopted and entered into force (for example the Manual for Intellectual Property in the Albanian language).*

2.8. Staff, employment processes and professional development

Articles 164-177 in the Statute of the university stipulates rules for academic and non-academic staff. It includes simple aspects such as abbreviation of academic titles, and complex elements, for example conditions for employment, responsibilities and qualifications for different academic positions, criteria for work admission. According to the [Code of ethics](#) which is



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publicly available, university members of the UKZ are expected to fulfil their rights and obligations in a professional and ethical manner with regards to the teaching process, in accordance with the code of ethics.

In addition to this, UKZ has a Regulation on Selection of the Academic Staff in “Kadri Zeka” University in Gjilan which states that for the evaluation of the candidates, a review committee is appointed; the Review Committee is appointed by the Faculty or Senate no later than 30 days from the date of the announcement of the competition. The Dean within 8 days formally notifies the members of the Review Committee on its establishment and composition. ET acknowledges from the discussion with the deans and the teaching staff that the recruitment processes ensure equitable treatment of all applicants.

Furthermore, candidates for employment are provided with full position descriptions and conditions of employment. The UKZ has an assessment mechanism with points allocated for candidates; qualifications are clearly described. For example, for a full-time professor, qualifications include to have a degree of the doctor of science and the title of the associate professor (equivalent to it at the Faculty of Arts); to show high level and academic competence and scientific experience for the subject that is proven by a significant number of monographs, textbooks, publications in international scientific or artistic journals with at least 5 major works published in international scientific or artistic journals; to have an active participation in national and international conferences; to be well known for artistic works or to have had public presentations and contributed when it is the case of the Faculty of Arts; in particular should have contributed to the development of culture and art; to prove a long-term experience in basic and applied research projects; to have high educational and pedagogical skills through reasonable practice; to prove academic tutorship skills; to provide authorship of master and doctoral theses (Appendices 1 and 19 of SER). The recruitment of administrative staff is done in accordance with the Labor Law and the Law on Public Officials, while the description of duties and responsibilities is done according to the Regulation for organization and systematization of the UKZ workplaces; this was confirmed during the site visit at the discussion with the administrative staff. It is important to mention that at the end of the selection process, each worker has described in the contract the rights and obligations arising from the work relationship depending on the position they hold, the contract, which is made in compliance with the Labor Law and in cooperation with the Ministry of Education (SER, p. 128).

Besides the manual for the academic staff, at the UKZ, the Dean of the Academic Unit and the other academic staff of the faculty, introduces the new professors to the students in the first week of teaching; the new staff is instructed to read the basic documents and normative acts of the UKZ and to have a knowledge of the rights and obligations. The young teachers confirmed

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this process at the site visit. In addition, it is practice. When more experienced professors work with young assistants to support them in the integration process within the university.

The UKZ has implemented a change in the student-professor ratio in the last three years, due to the recruitment of new academic staff as well as the promotion of some PhD assistants to the title of Assistant Professor. Therefore, in the academic year 2022/23 the UKZ employed 45 full-time academic staff in academic staff positions and this the number of active students is 1556. The ratio of students per full-time staff member is still not satisfactory (1/34), but when the engaged staff is added to this number of academic staff, which is 25, then the overall student-teacher ratio is favourable and becomes closer to the EU average of 1/22. The professor at the UKZ has 6 teaching hours per week, with the possibility of taking another 4 hours in the form of additional engagement. Therefore, the ET can recognize that the level of provision of teaching staff (the ratio of students per full time staff member) has a potential to improve for the programmes offered.

All staff employed in the UKZ (academic and administrative) hold the relevant qualifications so that they can effectively manage educational, scientific, research, and administrative processes. For example, professor Shefket Shiqiptar at the Faculty Economics graduated from a Faculty of Economics and Agribusiness. All teachers must have the scientific degree Sc.D. to hold lectures. These examples can continue to all fields and academic units.

The academic staff is obliged to do academic, research and scientific work every year, to renew the employment contract and to be promoted to academic titles. Criteria and processes for performance evaluation are clearly specified and made known in advance to all staff not only during the orientation activities and through collegial support, but through publicly available documents. In addition, the administrative staff is also qualified for the jobs and responsibilities they carry based on the job vacancy. In each calendar year they are evaluated by managers as well as by students, so they are forced to perform as successfully as possible to maintain the workplace. All staff are given appropriate and fair opportunities for personal and career development (Appendices 1, 19 of SER, SER, p. 133).

Academic staff evaluation at the UKZ is done through several tools: 1. Questionnaire for evaluation of administrative services by students in the UKZ; Student Evaluation Questionnaire for the UKZ Professors; Student Evaluation Questionnaire for the UKZ assistants; Questionnaire for self-assessment of the academic staff; Questionnaire for evaluation by the Dean for the teacher; Questionnaire for evaluation of the Secretary – Administrative Officers; Questionnaire for students before graduation. These tools are described in the Regulation on quality assurance evaluation. Several questionnaires and reports were submitted to the ET as additional documents. For example in the Report on the Evaluation of the Academic Staff and the Subjects by the Students of the "Kadri Zeka" University, for the Summer Semester of the Year 2022/2023 of it was concluded that within the semester evaluation for professors and assistants

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of Kadri Zeka University, for the summer semester we see a higher evaluation rate than the winter semester evaluation, this is also shown by the overall average of 4.60 for professors and 4.53 for assistants; several recommendations were formulated, such as: to increase the participation of teachers in trainings inside and outside the University in order to strengthen the methods and contemporary forms of teaching based on the development of critical thinking among students; teachers must respect the evaluation criteria by systematically evaluating students during the semester; to be fair in evaluating the student's work; to evaluate the teacher's performance by the management through the personal file of each one; the deans should continue to fully coordinate the teaching programme plan with the new curricula; to find forms of motivation for teachers who have shown good performance during the evaluation (Appendix 4, Additional documents 11, SER, p. 132).

If some teacher's performance is lower than the average twice in two years, the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs invites them to an evaluation interview and improvement measures are proposed, respectively additional training to improve teaching. In the case when a teacher does not fulfil this agreement or his/her performance does not improve, the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs initiates his/her meeting with the Rector. According to the Code of Ethics, the possible measures after meetings are as follows: written remarks from the Dean of the respective academic unit; in case of disregard of the remark, submission of the measure shall be done to the EC; depending on the type of remark suspension of wages will be initiated; other measures in accordance with the regulation on disciplinary measures and procedures against academic staff and the CE (Appendices 4, 15, Additional documents 11, SER, p. 134).

In 2020, the UKZ has signed an [agreement](#) with the Centre for Excellence in Teaching which enables the development of the UKZ academic staff, by participating in trainings in all respective fields, offering a new approach and a considerable number of training programmes, especially the training on teaching methodology, which has provided new access in the teaching process at the UKZ. The last course announced on the university webpage was done in 2017 as a course for developing a [mini-grant](#). However, the institution does not have a clear plan for all staff professional development, with a structured approach in identifying their need needs, and there is no clear evidence of allocating appropriate resources for its implementation.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Update the Code of Ethics (the publicly available document is adopted in 2016) and create a mechanism to review all the formal documents with legislation and institutional changes;*
2. *Create a statistical summary of the Evaluation of staff and make this publicly available;*
3. *Develop a peer evaluation of staff (collegial evaluation);*

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4. *Create a need analysis on staff development, for both academic and administrative staff to set up an effective plan and allocate resources for this.*

2.9. Student administration and support services

Based on the self-evaluation report, the admission criteria appear to be outlined in detail, including the process for determining the number of new students, eligibility requirements, and procedures for appeals. However, the clarity and appropriateness of the criteria was hindered for the panel of reviewers, as the regulation itself on admission of students was provided in Albanian and in scanned format, that did not make it possible to make automatic translation of the text on admissions from Albanian in English. The institution needs to consider providing admission information instead of pdf format in multiple formats, such as HTML web pages, to ensure accessibility, searchability, and compatibility across different devices and user preferences. Additionally, providing dynamic content that can be easily updated and accessed online can enhance the user experience and streamline the dissemination of information. Similarly, improvements are needed in the organization and accessibility of scholarship and financial aid information for students. Presently, the lack of a dedicated section on scholarships and financial aid within the university's resources makes it challenging for students to easily find relevant opportunities.

The university's orientation program aims to provide new students with a thorough understanding of its services, policies, and their rights and responsibilities. This includes a reception organized by university management to introduce the institution's vision, mission, achievements, and development policies. Academic units further acquaint students with faculty, study programs, facilities, and rules. Students receive official ID cards and e-mails for electronic services, facilitating access to lectures, exercises, exam preparation, library use, laboratories, and more. To improve this process, leveraging online technologies could be beneficial. Virtual orientation sessions could be offered, providing accessibility to all students, with live presentations and Q&A sessions conducted via video conferencing platforms. Additionally, creating an online portal or website dedicated to orientation materials, including videos, FAQs, and guides, would ensure accessibility and allow students to revisit information as needed. Virtual campus tours showcasing facilities and resources could also be provided, along with digital ID cards accessible through mobile apps or student portals.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation offers various [scholarship schemes](#) for students of public universities in the Republic of Kosovo, but it is crucial for the university to establish its own financial aid programs to supplement these offerings. The institution should prioritize the establishment of its own financial aid initiatives tailored to students who may not qualify for external scholarships based solely on merit. This could e.g.



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include need-based scholarships, emergency funds etc. to assist students facing financial hardship. Additionally, the university should enhance communication and awareness efforts to ensure that students are informed about these financial aid opportunities and can easily access relevant information and application processes. By taking these steps, the institution can ensure support for students with financial need and foster a more inclusive learning environment.

The University Management System provides student population statistics, informing Deans for quality assurance. Oversight of student services falls under the Director of OADQ and Head of IT. The Faculty Council utilizes population data to enhance student conditions. Additionally, other offices, such as the IT Office, contribute to monitoring student populations.

The student handbook covers exam organization, evaluation criteria, registration conditions, study duration, graduation procedures, alumni, and more, ensuring compliance with UKZ policies. It's available online and in print, distributed during admissions.

The appeals procedure involves students submitting a written appeal to the Dean of the academic unit within two working days of the announcement of grades. Upon receipt, the Dean establishes a Review Commission comprising three impartial members, excluding the professor whose grade is contested. The automatic exclusion of the professor whose grade is being appealed may not sufficiently guarantee unbiased review, and the use of a standard model form for setting up review commissions raises concerns about individual case consideration. Therefore, it is recommended establish specific criteria for the composition of review commissions. This should include provisions for the inclusion of diverse perspectives and impartiality in the review process, ensuring fair consideration of each appeal. Additionally, the university should provide training for members of review commissions to enhance their understanding of their roles and responsibilities, as well as principles of fairness and objectivity.

The university states that the advancement of student-oriented services is part of the strategic development plan for 2023-2028. It includes financing participation in international competitions and activities for at least 10 students annually, although the criteria for these are not outlined, and it is unclear how much budget is allocated for this purpose. Additionally, the plan entails the establishment of a psychological service, as recommended by a panel of external reviewers in 2021. According to the SER, a psychological counseling service is available to students, yet crucial information regarding this service is absent from both the university website and the student handbook. This lack of accessibility of information on this service raises concerns about how students are informed about the availability and utilization of psychological counseling resources. To address this issue, it is imperative for the university to ensure transparent and readily accessible information regarding the psychological counseling service. This could include prominently featuring details about the service on the

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university website, incorporating comprehensive information in the student handbook, and actively promoting awareness through various communication channels such as emails, social media, and campus announcements.

The university is partnering with the Gjilan Municipal Directorate of Health and is allocating space for a doctor on campus during specified times each working day. This initiative provides convenient access to medical care; however, the effectiveness of this approach also depends on factors such as the range of services offered, and the awareness and utilization of these healthcare facilities by students and staff. Regular evaluation and feedback mechanisms can help assess the impact and address any areas for improvement in this healthcare provision model.

The institution prioritizes a supportive approach to extracurricular activities, ensuring students have opportunities beyond academic learning. This includes flexible time arrangements and organized initiatives to promote participation in events, clubs, and volunteer projects, enhancing personal and professional development for future challenges. To foster robust student engagement in extracurricular activities and events, the institution has implemented various financial support mechanisms. These include offering low prices for specific activities, providing scholarships, and extending financial assistance for trips and special events. Additionally, the Student Parliament receives annual financial backing for extracurricular initiatives, while the Steering Council of the institution allocates funds specifically for these activities each academic year.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. The institution needs to consider providing admission information in multiple formats, such as HTML web pages, to ensure accessibility, searchability, and compatibility across different devices and user preferences. Additionally, providing dynamic content that can be easily updated and accessed online can enhance the user experience and streamline the dissemination of information.*
- 2. Create a dedicated section on the university's website specifically tailored to scholarships and financial aid. This section should be easily searchable and accessible from the main navigation menu and/or along with the information on admission for future students.*
- 3. To improve the orientation programme leveraging online technologies could be beneficial. Virtual orientation sessions could be offered, providing accessibility to all students, with live presentations and Q&A sessions conducted via video conferencing*



platforms. Additionally, creating an online portal or website dedicated to orientation materials, including videos, FAQs, and guides, would ensure accessibility and allow students to revisit information as needed. Virtual campus tours showcasing facilities and resources could also be provided, along with digital ID cards accessible through mobile apps or student portals.

- 4. The institution should prioritize the establishment of its own financial aid initiatives tailored to students who may not qualify for external scholarships based solely on merit. This could e.g. include need-based scholarships, emergency funds etc. to assist students facing financial hardship.*
- 5. It is recommended to establish specific criteria for the composition of review commissions for students' appeals. This should include provisions for the inclusion of diverse perspectives and impartiality in the review process, ensuring fair consideration of each appeal. Additionally, the university should provide training for members of review commissions to enhance their understanding of their roles and responsibilities, as well as principles of fairness and objectivity.*
- 6. It is recommended to ensure transparent and readily accessible information regarding the psychological counselling service. This could include prominently featuring details about the service on the university website, incorporating comprehensive information in the student handbook, and actively promoting awareness through various communication channels such as emails, social media, and campus announcements.*

2.10. Learning resources and facilities

The UKZ management pays a lot of attention to the acquisition of books and other educational tools. The library has increased the literature specific to the programmes considering external sources, such as Erasmus + projects. UKZ has adopted a regulation (Regulations for the work of the Publishing Council) according to which each author is obliged to submit 10 copies to the University library which facilitates students (Appendix 27 of SER, SER, p. 150). At UKZ in Gjilan, learning and research activities take place in appropriate spaces and with good study conditions for students and staff. The ET visited the facilities in the main building and could see that the university has an area which meets the needs of study programmes. Adequate financial resources are provided for acquisitions, cataloguing, equipment, and for services and system development. Books, journals, and other materials are available to students, but teachers would like more reading / studying resources to be available; during the site visit, they mentioned the idea of having bought more literature in Albanian for staff and students (SER,



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p. 151). In addition, students can also use the literature available in the "Fan S. Noli" City Library in Gjilan; an agreement has been signed with the Network of Electronic Libraries of Kosovo. For this issue, experiences have been exchanged for easier access to other electronic libraries abroad.

Students and academic staff can access resources and research databases which are relevant to their interest and filed of study programmes as well as those that are managed by the university in different partnerships, such as with the Association of Electronic Libraries of Kosovo. On the date of the visit, paid electronic databases were not available to staff or students, but the institution started to explore the possibilities of affording or getting more access. Until 2019, the ministry paid for the UKZ the access to EBSCO databases. Therefore, more effort needs to be made to extend access to databases for research and journal materials relevant to the institution's programmes.

The institution has provided MS365 to be used on a license base till 2026 through the support of the Government of Kosovo/Ministry of Economy through the KODE project, for all academic, administrative staff and students. Furthermore, the UKZ staff can also access various software, and other open-source software, for example Quickbooks and SPSS programmes; the University Management System –UMS is the platform through which all study-related processes are automated and optimized, starting from the enrolment application to the student graduation process and most student activity takes place through the system. Most relevant modules are Online Application, Registration, ID Cards, Administration, Online Grading, Diplomas, Statistics, Notifications, Complaints, Payments, etc. The UKZ uses the E-learning platform (Moodle), through which professors upload the necessary materials for lectures, exercises, submission of assignments and research projects. The UKZ is testing the ukz-platforma.net platform which includes facilities in creating the schedules of the academic units including student groups for certain subjects, lesson management etc. The institution uses the GSuite for Education platform to improve the learning and collaboration experience between students, academic staff and administrative staff. Therefore, the ET considers that adequate facilities are provided to host learning resources in a way that makes them readily accessible (*SER, pages 151-153*).

Library at the UKZ is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. during the weekdays; the reading room in the library is accessible and usable from Monday to Saturday from 8 am to 8 pm. Also, after the renovation of the library and the reading room, a space for advanced research has been added, which has available all the necessary infrastructure for scientific and advanced research work for staff and students. The room can be used with prior permission, every day of the week from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. The UKZ has implemented a camera security system which stores video recordings for a certain period (up to 15 days) (*SER, p. 153*).

The UKZ as institution provides an adequate, clean, attractive, and well-maintained physical environment of both buildings and grounds. The UKZ is planning to develop and on the date of

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the visit, the institution is in the negotiation process with the government of Kosovo for the construction of the new campus. The UKZ has an agreement with the Municipality for the use of the Sports Hall adjacent to the UKZ and for the Great Sports Hall.

The university also has green spaces which represent a favourable environment for rest and recreation for student and staff breaks. The university building also has part of the security stairs for emergency exits. In addition, firefighting emergency equipment, fire extinguishers, protective grounding test and lightning rods are also located at certain points inside the building. The UKZ pays special attention to the health care of students and staff and has entered into a partnership agreement with the Gjilan Municipal Directorate of Health and the UKZ (Additional documents 12, SER, p. 154). A clear description of the current situation of the UKZ has been provided in SER.

Quality assurance processes used include feedback from principal users about the adequacy and quality of facilities, and mechanisms for considering and responding to their views. Some examples: in the questionnaire for students, a question is about the classroom environment (if it encourages the expression of thoughts/ideas during the lecture). Since February 2023, UKZ has supplied and assembled lifts with standards in accordance with the Regulation of the Ministry of Trade of Kosovo, on safety of lifts in use (Additional documents 11, SER, p. 162).

Complete inventories are maintained of equipment owned or controlled by the institution including equipment assigned to individual staff. Space utilization is also monitored and when appropriate facilities reallocated in response to changing requirements. At the UKZ, inventory is managed, monitored, and distributed according to approved requirements. There is an Asset Officer and a Warehouse Officer taking care of the inventory; the e-asset system is used for the management of the inventory. Furthermore, the asset registration system (E-asset) is a system that is used in all institutions of the Republic of Kosovo, for registration and management of government assets.

The Office of Information Technology at the UKZ has an essential role in providing technical support to all university staff. The office offers a wide range of services, including physical and online ones, through which students and staff have convenient access to technology and other related resources. During the site visit, the discussion with the teachers and students showed that both groups are aware of the devices they can use and how to make the most effective these opportunities.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:



1. *Increase the investment in looks for the library in both Albanian and English;*
2. *Extend / renew the access to online databases, research and journal materials relevant to the institution programmes.*

2.11. Institutional cooperation

The institution has developed strategy to enhance internationalization, involving diverse stakeholders in its creation. However, the university is not yet measuring impact of internationalization activities. Measuring the impact and benefits of international projects and partnerships is crucial for guiding institutional decisions and resource allocation in this area. By systematically evaluating the outcomes and effectiveness of these initiatives, the institution can make informed decisions about which projects to prioritize, allocate resources more effectively, and identify areas for improvement. This data-driven approach can help the university to ensure that it aligns resources with strategic objectives and enhances its overall internationalization efforts. Additionally, it can enable the institution to demonstrate accountability to stakeholders and justify its expenditure on international initiatives.

The Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Projects serves as the overseer of all matters pertaining to collaboration and projects at the institution. As mandated by the university Statute Articles 33-37, the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Projects plays a great role in driving initiatives forward. Their responsibilities encompass advancing institutional cooperation and overseeing the execution of local and international projects, whether UKZ acts as a lead or partner. Under the leadership of the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation, project teams have been established across all Academic Units, with academic staff members appointed as coordinators for international cooperation and projects.

The institution has signed cooperation agreements with 51 universities from different countries and has become a member of 29 international institutions and organizations, working in the sector of higher education. The institution cooperates with 64 organizations, where students undergo practical training. Further within Erasmus+ projects the university partners with 139 universities.

Since its establishment in 2013, UKZ has actively participated in international projects. To date, UKZ has been involved in a total of 30 local and international projects. Presently, the UKZ is engaged in 9 Erasmus+ projects focused on capacity building (Erasmus+ CBHE), with one project even assuming the role of leader/coordinator.

The UKZ prioritizes the mobility of academic, administrative, and student personnel. Encouraged by the UKZ's strategy, mobility serves as a tool for enhancing the capacities of



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staff and students, fostering their development through exposure to diverse experiences offered by European universities and beyond. Additionally, the Educational and Research Office (ERO) emphasizes the augmentation of staff and student mobility as a key objective. This mobility encompasses a range of activities such as study visits, trainings, workshops, seminars, conferences, and summer schools, among others.

It is commendable that the UKZ places significant emphasis on student involvement in projects, regularly issuing calls for student participation. In addition to enhancing their skills, students receive financial compensation for their contributions to project work.

The UKZ's strategy underscores the significance of international cooperation, facilitating participation in international collaborations and projects, while also integrating community contributions into performance assessments. The UKZ statute mandates the evaluation of academic staff engagement in international cooperation and community contributions. Article 170 outlines the evaluation of long-term involvement in fundamental and applied research projects as a criterion for academic advancement. Similarly, the Regulation on Selection Procedures stipulates criteria such as extensive experience in fundamental research and applied projects for promotion to the professorial level.

The UKZ strategy for internationalization provides opportunities for staff engagement in international projects. This includes enhancing their skills in project proposal writing, research, and collaboration in academic events and forums with global partners. The overarching goal is to foster the UKZ's international collaborations, increase participation in national and international projects, and strengthen membership in international higher education organizations. Furthermore, the strategy aims to facilitate mobility for academic, administrative staff, and students. The institution also emphasizes financial support for research activities to encourage staff participation in international events, fostering potential institutional collaborations. The Regulation on Scientific Research Activity at the UKZ further delineates the mechanisms for cooperation with international institutions and organizations, providing a solid framework for enhancing staff and institutional development in international projects and activities.

Throughout key processes at the UKZ, the institution actively engages stakeholders. In the formulation and revision of the development strategy, stakeholders from various sectors including public institutions, businesses, NGOs, media, and programs within Kosovo, are invited to contribute. Local employers and professionals participate in developing study programs, alongside alumni offering recommendations. Events such as anniversaries and graduation ceremonies involve representatives from public institutions, employers, NGOs, and media. The Industrial Advisory Board (IAB) plays an important role in enhancing the



alignment of study programs with industry needs, fostering strategic success for the UKZ and its faculties.

The UKZ maintains regular communication with its alumni, offering support and various opportunities for their advancement. Alumni are actively involved in drafting new study programs and reviewing existing ones at the university. To facilitate this engagement, the UKZ has established an Alumni register and other relevant documents. The Career and Alumni Officer keeps alumni informed about opportunities for further studies abroad, job openings, competitions, and internships within Kosovo. Alumni are invited to attend significant events such as the University anniversary and graduation day, where successful alumni from each faculty share their post-graduation achievements, serving as inspirational examples.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Implement a comprehensive evaluation framework for institutional engagement and societal impact. This framework should encompass (and be not limited to) the following components: (1) a structured approach to measure the impact and effectiveness of institutional collaboration and internationalization projects. This includes defining key performance indicators (KPIs) aligned with strategic objectives, such as partnership longevity, student exchange rates, joint research outputs, and funding generated through collaborations. (2) assessment mechanisms for third mission activities including community engagement, knowledge transfer, and societal impact. For this it may be needed to establish clear metrics to gauge the extent of involvement in community initiatives, effectiveness of knowledge dissemination efforts, and tangible societal benefits derived from university activities. It could work well to employ participatory evaluation methods for these involving stakeholders from academia, industry, government, and local communities to ensure a holistic assessment approach.*
- 2. For encouraging advancement and initiation of partnerships by academic staff, it is recommended to include community service too in criteria of promotion of academic staff (along with publications in international journals and participation in international conferences).*
- 3. It is recommended to implement robust evaluation methods, to provide tangible evidence of the community impact of the institution and ensure accountability and transparency in the efforts of the institution to foster positive change.*
- 4. Provide orientation training for newly appointed members and engage them in in-depth discussions about contents of programmes to ensure that they can effectively fulfil their*



roles and responsibilities within the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Boards. Addressing these will be crucial in ensuring that boards can adequately advise on program updates and contribute to the university's ongoing efforts to enhance academic offerings and relevance.

OVERALL EVALUATION AND JUDGEMENT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

As shown above, the compliance levels per general areas are as follows:

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Standard 1: | Substantially compliant |
| Standard 2: | Substantially compliant |
| Standard 3: | Fully compliant |
| Standard 4: | Fully compliant |
| Standard 5: | Fully compliant |
| Standard 6: | Fully compliant |
| Standard 7: | Substantially compliant |
| Standard 8: | Substantially compliant |
| Standard 9: | Substantially compliant |
| Standard 10: | Fully compliant |
| Standard 11: | Fully compliant |

Overall compliance: Fully compliant

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that University “Kadri Zeka” Gjilan is **fully compliant** with the standards included in the KAA Accreditation Manual and, therefore, **recommends accrediting it for the period of five years.**



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Expert Team

Chair

| | | |
|-------------|------------------|--------|
| (Signature) | <u>Milan Pol</u> | (Date) |
| | (Print Name) | |

| | | |
|---|----------------------------------|--------|
| <u><i>Magdalena Iordache-Platis</i></u> | <u>Magdalena Iordache-Platis</u> | (Date) |
| (Signature) | (Print Name) | |

| | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|--------|
| <u><i>Lali Giorgidze</i></u> | <u>Lali Giorgidze</u> | (Date) |
| (Signature) | (Print Name) | |

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| <u> </u> | | (Date) |
| (Signature) | (Print Name) | |
