

ASSESSMENT REPORT

**Nursing - Advanced Nursing Practice (ANP)
(M. Sc.)
at Kolegji Heimerer - Heimerer College,
Prishtina, Kosovo**

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Contents

1.	Kolegji-Heimerer – Heimerer College Prishtina	4
2.	The accreditation procedure	4
3.	Programme assessment	7
3.1	Programme profile	7
3.2	Curriculum	13
3.3	Student assessment	21
3.4	Organisation of the study programme	26
3.5	Resources	31
3.6	Quality assurance	34
4.	Final Assessment	39
5.	Accreditation recommendation of the expert panel to the evalag Accreditation Commission	40
6.	Accreditation decision of the evalag Accreditation Commission	40
	Annex: Assessment schedule	42

1. Kolegji-Heimerer – Heimerer College Prishtina

Heimerer College (HC) is a private university in Prishtina, the capital of Kosovo, which has its roots in the Institute for Southeast Europe Advancement of Health and Nursing Science, and the German Education Institution Heimerer GmbH. The latter has over 40 years of experience in the field of education.

The college was founded in 2010 with the aim to improve quality of healthcare education, and it offers study programmes at Bachelor's and Master's level. Currently 1,438 students are studying at the college, of which 1,307 are undergraduates. Language of instruction is Albanian, some lectures are held in English, too.

The following Bachelor study programmes are offered:

- Nursing (B. Sc.)
- Professional Education in Health (B. Sc.)
- Therapeutic Health Sciences (B. Sc.) with two different profiles:
 - Speech Therapy and
 - Occupational Therapy
- Health Sciences for Diagnostic Profiles: Laboratory Technician Profile (B. Sc.)

The duration of each Bachelor study programme is three years (six semesters) with a minimum of 180 ECTS.

The college also offers two Master programmes:

- Management of Health Institutions and Services (M. Sc.) and
- Psychology of Assessment and Intervention (M. A.)

These programmes are designed for a study duration of two years (four semesters) with a total of 120 ECTS.

Heimerer College intends to further expand its range of studies: The existing Bachelor's programme "Therapeutic Health Sciences (B. Sc.)" is offered since 2012. The programme is to be supplemented by a further profile "Physiotherapy" in winter semester 2021/22.

The college also intends to offer new Master's programmes, both "Medical Laboratory Sciences (MLS) (M. Sc.)" and "Nursing – Advanced Nursing Practice (ANP) (M. Sc.)" first in winter semester 2021/22.

2. The accreditation procedure

The accreditation process was conducted as a cluster accreditation with all three programmes being assessed together by one expert panel. The assessment took into account that neither the new Bachelor's profile "Physiotherapy" nor the new Master's programmes have been offered so far and therefore a concept assessment had to be performed. The assessment procedure took place as an informed peer review on the basis of the self-evaluation report provided by Heimerer College, a site visit conducted

online¹ by an international expert panel, an assessment report by the expert panel for each programme, and the accreditation decision made by the **evalag** Accreditation Commission.

The procedure applies the eligibility for purpose approach which assesses to what extent a programme complies with the **evalag** criteria for programme accreditation.² These are formulated in coherence with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).³

These criteria mainly focus on the profile of the programme and its curriculum. Furthermore, the criteria cover all aspects of the implementation of a study programme, its quality assurance and its resources. With regard to the criteria of programme profile and curriculum, **evalag** also assesses if the programme meets academic standards that are accepted in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).⁴

The following six criteria are applied:

- Programme profile
- Curriculum
- Student assessment
- Organisation of the study programme
- Resources
- Quality assurance

The experts express the extent of compliance of the criteria with the following assessments: “passed”, “passed subject to conditions”, “suspension of the accreditation procedure” or “failed”. Depending on the degree to which a programme meets the criteria, the programme will be accredited, accredited with conditions or not accredited.

The proceedings can be suspended until a new application if the programme does not fulfil relevant criteria, but it is likely that the institution will be able to remedy the shortcomings within 18 months after the assessment.

¹ Due to the consequences of the corona pandemic, an on-site visit was not possible. An agreement was reached with Heimerer College to hold a full-day video conference which was also considered sufficient by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA). ZOOM was used as technical platform for this purpose, since there is a contract between **evalag** and ZOOM for commissioned data processing in order to ensure that the conferences are carried out in conformity with European data protection law. The discussions during the video conferences were not recorded. The length of the web conferences did not differ from the conversations that would have taken place in an on-site inspection. Instead of a personal inspection of the premises, the group of experts was provided with various video and image material to enable them to inspect the campus, the premises and the equipment.

² https://www.evalag.de/fileadmin/dateien/pdf/akk_international/standards_kriterien/prog_acc_process_criteria_171201.pdf (accessed February 10, 2021)

³ https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf (accessed February 10, 2021)

⁴ The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is a group of 48 countries that cooperate to achieve comparable and compatible higher education systems throughout Europe. Member countries of the EHEA follow the directives of the so-called Bologna Process to achieve these goals.

As a first step of the procedure and in preparation for the site visit, Heimerer College provided a self-evaluation report considering guidelines provided by **evalag**. At the same time **evalag** formed an expert panel consisting of five experts including one student expert:

Academic experts:

- Prof. Dr. med. Dr. h. c. Wolfgang Patsch (Austria), Professor emeritus at Paracelsus Private Medical University of Salzburg
- Prof. Dr. Andrea Pflingsten (Germany), Professor for Physiotherapy, Head of Study programme “Physiotherapy” and member of the examination boards of Bachelor's programmes “Physiotherapy”, “Speech Therapy”, “Nursing” and Master's programme “Advanced Nursing Practice”, OTH – Regensburg Technical University
- Prof. Dr. Marieke Schuurmans (Netherlands), Appointed Professor in Nursing Science and Educational director of Professionals in Health care at the UMC Utrecht/ University Utrecht

Expert from professional practice:

- Christoph Biele, M.Sc. (Germany), Biele Krankengymnastik & Massage, Herne

Student expert:

- Beatriz Atienza Carbonell (Spain), Quality Assurance Officer at Valencian International University, PHD student (medicine/ psychiatry) at University of Valencia, Member of the QA pool of European Students' Union (ESU)

All experts declared to be free of any conflict of interest.

The online meetings (annex) took place on February 3, 2021. The expert panel met the leadership of Heimerer College, academic and administrative staff, several international cooperation partners of the college, employers, students and alumni from current study programmes. A five-minute recording provided by Heimerer College gave an impression of the local conditions.

After the online meetings the expert panel produced the assessment report which was submitted to the university for correction of potential factual errors on March 2, 2021.

On March 18, 2021, Heimerer College submitted a statement on the report together with a revision plan. At its meeting on March 22, 2021, the **evalag** Accreditation Commission decided to postpone the decision on accreditation in order to give the college the opportunity to revise the study programme concept and resubmit it for a second review. On 7 June 2021, Heimerer College submitted the new concept, which was reviewed again by the expert panel.

The current report summarizes all the findings and assessments made during the process from the very beginning; all the changes made by the College in the meantime and the new documents have been taken into account.

From **evalag**'s side, Georg Seppmann coordinated and carried out the project. Ana Gvritishvili, Head of Quality Assurance Office at European University Tbilisi (Georgia), took part in the proceedings as a guest.⁵

The experts thank the organisers of the online meetings for the opportunity for additional questions and the open discussion during the online meetings.

The present assessment report is structured along the six assessment criteria which form the basis for the decision of the **evalag** international programme accreditation. After a short description of the criterion, each chapter starts with a presentation of the current status regarding the criterion which is based on the information from the self-assessment report of the university as well as the information acquired during the online meetings and shortly afterwards. On this basis, the expert panel assesses the criterion. Finally, the experts provide their recommendations for further improvement.

3. Programme assessment

3.1 Programme profile

The profile and objectives of a study programme is an essential criterion for the assessment. The experts have to evaluate whether the objectives of the programme are in line with the profile and the strategic goals of the institution. Further, they assess if the intended learning outcomes of the programme are well defined, publicly accessible and whether they correspond to the type and level of qualification provided by the programme. They also consider whether the intended learning outcomes are based on academic or professional requirements (standards), public needs and the demands of the labour market, and if they contribute to the employability of the graduates. The experts have to evaluate the programme's relation to research (procurement of scientific methods in theory and practice, research-based teaching). The experts assess whether the profile and objectives of the programme comply with internationally accepted standards. The experts consider the international dimension of the programme and verify whether the qualification of the academic staff is adequate in terms of the profile and the objectives of the programme.

Current status

Programme profile and objectives

The study programme "Nursing – Advanced Nursing Practice" is planned as a two-year full-time programme. Successful graduates receive a Master's degree. Table 3 shows some statistical information on the programme:

⁵ As part of the cooperation policy of CEENQA network and with the consent of Heimerer College, **evalag** invited Ms. Gvritishvili as a guest observer.

Name of study programme	Nursing – Advanced Nursing Practice (M. Sc.)
Founding year	2021 (planned)
Final degree	Master (M. Sc.)
Duration of study	2 years or 4 semesters
Credits (ECTS or other system)	120 ECTS credits
Planned number of students (first term)	50
Full-time academic staff in the programme	10
Part-time academic staff in the programme	2

Tab. 1: Data on “Nursing – Advanced Nursing Practice (M. Sc.)”⁶

Heimerer College already offers a Bachelor’s programme in nursing. Therefore, it seemed only logical for the university to develop a follow-up Master’s programme as well. This coincides with the college’s mission to prepare and implement advanced study programmes in health care and to extend its students’ study options as well to act as an initiator of professional development. As it is mentioned in the self-report, “strengthening human capacities in the field of medicine and nursing is necessary to improve the quality of care and medical treatment. WHO (2019) research in Kosovo concludes that ‘through a more holistic and patient-centred approach, appropriately trained nurses can be efficient in individual risk stratification, health education and behavioural change communication for patients with noncommunicable diseases’ (WHO, 2019).”⁷

Two focal points are covered in the new programme: On the one hand, clinical nursing specialists are trained to work in clinics, and on the other hand, nursing practitioners are trained to work in ambulatory care. New applicants need a Bachelor’s degree in general nursing and extensive experience in specialised areas with a minimum of one year. Both are prerequisites for admission to the new Master’s programme.

As stated in the self-report, later graduates should be qualified to:

- Work as an advanced nurse practitioner in the area of acute care/ chronic care/ ambulatory care, taking into account the statutory requirements of the Health and Nursing Act in the currently applicable version
- Bring in and represent the necessary nursing matters in a multi-professional team
- Determine the patient’s need for care individually using assessment instruments

⁶ Source: self-report by Heimerer College

⁷ Cf. self-report p. 95

- Classify special nursing situations, also taking into account medical necessities, systematically plan and implement the necessary medical-nursing interventions
- Initiate and evaluate further suitable nursing measures in comparison with the literature
- Control the care of the patient from a nursing point of view
- Participate in research projects
- Ensure the transfer of research results into practice
- Take a responsible position in the field of patient care
- Start a doctoral programme

Learning outcomes

The learning outcomes of the programme have been defined along international published concepts, namely from the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and considering the “Introduction to Advanced Nursing Practice”⁸ by Madrean Schober.

The following outcomes are formulated:

- A wide knowledge of the theories, methods and models of advanced nursing practice in general and in health care regarding of clinical and ambulatory settings
- To know ethical frameworks in health care settings including to describe that advanced nursing practice is an effective method in profession fields and subject
- Describe and choose guidance and education strategies adopted to the needs of patients and system relevant guidance strategies for health institutions
- Describe consequences of patient education
- Developing advanced nursing strategies and implementation of methods; advice nurses in clinical or ambulatory settings in advanced nursing practice facilities
- Using and transfer advanced comprehensive assessment, diagnostic, treatment planning, implementation and evaluation skills, are in the position to adjust flexibly to the wide and often unpredictable variety of professional contexts
- Utilize and transfer their knowledge in health care facilities in consideration of legislative, professional and ethical framework and employment conditions, including special strategies and methods, such as evidence-based nursing, evidence-based practice, case-and-care management methods, process controlling in health care

⁸ M. Schober: Introduction to Advanced Nursing Practice: An International Focus. Heidelberg: Springer 2016

- Planning, carrying out and evaluating a significant project of research, investigation, or development in health care facilities, regarding to actual themes, problems or needs or efficiency and develop changes of performance in case of needs.
- Analyse advanced nursing practice issues, concepts, methods, moral values in nursing process, including to grapple critically and sensitized with issues in advanced nursing practice in health services and health institutions
- Work and manage on complex professional and ethics questions and issues in health care and dispose professional decisions
- Make their decision based on professional ethics standards, defend their argumentation and decisions
- Take over responsibilities in health care institutions to manage health care situations and to lead nursing teams to implement advanced nursing practice

Relation to academic and professional requirements and public needs

The programme was designed in close consideration with local stakeholders from the health sector. According to the self-report and the interview sessions at the college there is a need for qualified personnel in the sense of the new programme at

- hospitals
- family health centres
- emergency health centres
- rehabilitation centres
- mental health centre
- special rehabilitation centres
- consultancies in health care

Besides, the self-report mentions the “brain drain” of nurses from Kosovo to Western European countries, caused by physical and psychological stress and general working conditions in health care settings which is creating a deficit in health sector staffing all over Europe. A relative lack of skilled workers in nursing professions e.g. in Germany creates a pull factor for this brain drain. Heimerer College has recognized this deficit in nursing staffing in Kosovo, and aims through the new Master’s programme to ensure that the next generation of new nurses, which will work in Kosovo, has the skills and competences to address the quickly changing needs of society, making the nursing profession more attractive to the Kosovo youth.

Relation between study and research

The study programme is characterized as the application of an expanded range of practical, theoretical, and research-based competencies to phenomena experienced by patients within a specialised clinical area of the larger discipline of nursing, thus

explicitly aligned with Hamric's model of advanced practical nursing.⁹ Ratio between academic and professional modules is 30:70 which means an important part of the curriculum will be based on practical learning. During these phases of practice students work in practical profession fields regarding to clinical or ambulatory systems and conduct own short research projects in this field.

International dimension

Heimerer College has used its network of foreign partner universities when preparing the new programme. There have been broad discussions with the partners regarding the possibilities, chances, and challenges of the implementation of a new Master programme "Nursing – Advanced Nursing Practice". Several existing programmes were reviewed and discussed in this process. The self-report makes explicit links to study programmes in Lithuania (Lithuanian University of Health Sciences (LSMU), Kaunas), United Kingdom (University of Bradford) and Austria (IMC University of Applied Sciences in Krems). Exchange possibilities of staff and students will be provided. Heimerer College has recently signed memorandums of understanding (MoU), namely with Bern University of Applied Sciences (BUAS), Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg (MLU), Medical Faculty, Institute of Health and Nursing Sciences, University Clinical Center of Halle (UKH) and Bochum University of Applied Sciences for Health who are committed to support the development and implementation of the new programme. Furthermore, the college obtained the consent of international experts from partner institutions that will have a close monitoring and regular evaluation of Master level students to ensure the acquisition of the necessary competencies for independent work and delivery of advanced care for individuals.

Staff qualification (see also criterion 5)

Heimerer College submitted a list of the designated staff, together with their CVs. The college has contracted specialized nursing staff from primary, secondary, and tertiary level institutions of the health system in Kosovo. Staff engaged for mentoring the clinical part will be trained by international experts before the beginning of the academic year at partner universities and clinics in Germany and Switzerland. In addition to online training, mentors and students will have the opportunity to carry out part of their internships in German and Swiss clinics. All nursing teachers are employed in health institutions, meaning they have clinical experience and have an academic background (scientific degree Master or PhD cand.).

The college still sees a challenge in the implementation of the new Master's programme, especially in the fact that evidence-based practice is to be taught at Master's level. In this respect, preparations have already been made for continuous improvement of staff competences. A need analysis was carried out with the help of staff from the college's international partners. A model for staff training will be developed. Academic staff will get all considered necessary training in teaching methods, didactic consideration, method of e-learning and new teaching methods.

⁹ Tracy, M.F., O'Grady, E.T.: Hamric and Hanson's Advanced Practice Nursing: An Integrative Approach. St. Louis: Elsevier 2019

The clinical practice will be supervised by the help of the college's partner institutions mentioned before.

Assessment

Programme profile and objectives

During the interview sessions the experts experienced Heimerer College presenting itself as a higher educational institution with high ambition to offer health sciences studies of professional relevance and international quality standards. Against the background of many years of successful implementation of the Bachelor's programme in nursing, the implementation of a corresponding Master's programme is only logical. The self-report elaborates in great detail the necessity and the international discussion on master studies in this subject.

Heimerer College would further expand and sharpen its profile with the new Master's programme.

The programme builds on the existing Bachelor's programme and, following the online meetings in February 2021, it has become more clearly differentiated. The described qualification level corresponds to the Master's level.

Learning outcomes

As far as can be seen from the translated documents, the learning outcomes of the programmes are clearly defined. Students' learning success is regularly assessed by using a variety of assessment methods. The intended learning outcomes described in each module description are by and large concise, clear and aligned with content. A clear distinction between Bachelor's qualification and Master's qualification is convincingly made.

Relation to academic and professional requirements and public needs

There is an obviously strong connection between the programme's intentions and Kosovo public needs. Heimerer College's portfolio addresses public needs and necessities.

The experts appreciate the innovative character of the whole institution in a rather difficult social and public environment in Kosovo. Obviously, the college has a good partner environment and is appreciated by the regional health institutions. Students from Heimerer College are gladly accepted for internships.

International dimension

The experts appreciate the international partner network of Heimerer College. Representatives of the partners took part in some of the online sessions, and they painted a very positive picture of the cooperation with the college. The implementation of all programmes is going along with continuous exchange with international partners as well as with the German parent institution. The experts appreciate the progress the college

has made in the months after the online visit, namely the partners' involvement in staff supervision and further qualification.

Staff qualification (see also criterion 5)

In the view of the expert panel, the qualification of the teaching staff at Heimerer College is adequate. The college has made great efforts to prepare and train staff accordingly. Nevertheless, this process is not yet complete. Since it is more an agenda at this very moment it is now up to the college to actually implement it.

The experts recognise that there are explicit criteria for staff recruitment and that the recruitment process itself seems to be well developed.

The relation between full-time and half-time staff seems by and large appropriate. The experts note from the interview sessions that teaching is performed by committed and motivated lecturers. Most of them have international working and teaching experience which is appreciated by the expert panel. Obviously, a variety of teaching methods is used. The experts highlight how enthusiastic and dedicated academic and administrative staff presented themselves in the interview sessions. The experts appreciate that the university offers different opportunities to teaching staff for improving their teaching methods.

While in February 2021 the experts had the impression (judging by the written documents) that the intended staff would have too few practice skills for a Master's programme, this impression could be eliminated by documents later provided. Nevertheless, the college should keep a continuous eye on the qualifications and especially the clinical credibility of all academics involved. Advanced practice skills must be guaranteed, meaning that staff must be able to role model for the students on the clinical master level.

Areas for improvement

The interview partners at Heimerer College themselves stated during the online visit that studies are never finished and therefore need to be regularly reviewed for their appropriateness (content, methods, teaching staff). This process seems to be working quite well at Heimerer College, but should be further developed in the sense of a permanently learning institution.

Condition

Heimerer College must implement a training programme for mentors in clinical practice to ensure academic quality of practical learning.

3.2 Curriculum

The second criterion concerns the curriculum as well as the teaching and learning methods. The expert panel evaluates, whether the curriculum of the programme is

adequately structured to achieve the intended learning outcomes and whether the curriculum provides the necessary knowledge and methodological expertise of the relevant discipline(s). The experts also evaluate the organisation of the learning process, especially if there are appropriate student-centred teaching and learning methods, if students are encouraged to take an active role in creating the learning process and whether the diversity of students and their needs is taken into account.

Current status

Programme structure

The study programme “Nursing – Advanced Nursing Practice (ANP)” is a two-year full-time programme with 120 ECTS credits. Credit points are a quantitative measure for the overall workload of a student. The overall student workload consists of the time for attending lectures as well as the time for preparing and taking exams, thesis writing, seminars and semester assignments. An effort of 30 hours is taken as a basis to earn one credit point. One study year’s effort equals 1,800 hours of work.

The total credits per semester and the respective workload can be summarised as follows:

- 1 academic year has 60 ECTS
- 1 academic year has 30 teaching weeks in auditorium and 4 to 6 weeks of final exams
- 1 semester has 15 teaching weeks of lecture and 2 to 3 weeks of final exams
- 1 ECTS = 30 hours of student work
- 1 lesson hour = 90 minutes

The Master's programme has a nursing science, nursing practice and research-oriented profile. The fields of study are divided in interprofessional, research and specific (allocated to main emphasis) modules.

The curriculum comprises four semesters. The second and the third semester contain obligatory and elective courses: In the second semester, 25 (of 30) credits have to be obtained in obligatory course, in the third semester 10 (of 30) credits are connected with obligatory courses.

In total, 70 % of curriculum is planned as practical based, 15 % will be mentored by the academic staff and 15 % are thought as self-learning hours. The ratio between theoretical and practical part differs when it comes to the single modules (=in dependence of the content). For the internship parts, guidelines have been developed to optimize the intensive exchange between the university and the practical facilities and thus improve the quality of teaching and the transfer from theory to practice.

All lectures and modules are offered either in Albanian language or in English Language. For professors who are engaged but do not have primary Albanian language, there are assistant translators who translate the lectures and the material. The same applies to international professors who come to the college for short-term stay.

The curriculum is structured as follows (type= obligatory vs. elective):

YEAR 1: 60 ECTS							
SEMESTER 1: 30 ECTS			Hours				
Nr.	Type	Module	Lecture/ seminar	Clinical exercise	Clinical practice	Self- study	Credits
1	O	Advance nursing practice	30	15	15	90	5
2	O	Interprofessional communication	30	30		90	5
3	O	Advanced research methods for healthcare professionals	30	30		90	5
4	O	Applied statistics	30	30		90	5
5	O	Philosophy of science for health professions	45	15		90	5
6	O	Clinical assessment and evaluation	25	20	15	90	5
SEMESTER 2: 30 ECTS			Hours				
Nr.	Type	Module	Lectures	Exercise	Practice	Self- Study	Credits
7	O	Applied ethics	30	30		90	5
8	O	Leadership-project and change-management	30	30		90	5
9	O	Physiology and pathophysiology	30	30		90	5
10	O	Research planning & report writing	15	45		90	5
11	O	Pharmacology	15		45	90	5
12	E	<i>Elective</i>	15	15	30	90	5

YEAR 2: 60 ECTS							
SEMESTER 3: 30 ECTS			Hours				
Nr.	Type	Module	Lecture/ seminar	Clinical exercise	Clinical practice	Self- study	Credits
13	O	Health policies in national and social context	30	30		90	5
14	E	<i>Elective specifics</i>	15	15	30	90	5
15	O	Evidence-based interventions	30	10	20	90	5

16	O	Clinical quality improvement and safety	30		30	60	5
17	E	Elective	15		30	45	3
18	E	Elective	20		40	60	4
19	E	Elective	15		30	45	3
SEMESTER 4: 30 ECTS			Hours				
Nr.	Type	Module	Lectures	Exercise	Practice	Self-Study	Credits
20	O	Internship	20		210	70	10
21	O	Master thesis	15			585	20

Electives							
Interprofessional electives			Hours				
Nr.	Type	Module	Lecture/ seminar	Clinical exercise	Clinical practice	Self- study	Credits
1	E	Human diversity and social issues	30	30		90	5
2	E	Digital health literacy	30	30		90	5
3	E	Intrapersonal work	15	30		45	3
4	E	Transition management	15		30	45	3
6	E	Policy, organization, and financing of healthcare	15		30	45	3
Professional specific electives			Hours				
Nr.	Type	Module	Lecture/ seminar	Clinical exercise	Clinical practice	Self- study	Credits
1	E	Clinical pathways: "clinical nurse specialist (CNS)" or "nurse practitioner (NP)"	20	40		60	4
2	E	Advanced physical assessment	20	40		60	4
3	E	Health promotion and disease prevention NP	20	40		60	4
4	E	New technologies in clinical settings	15	30		45	3
5	E	Nursing relationship: nurse, client and family	20	40		60	4

6	E	Basic care for adults Level 1 NP or CNS	15	30		45	3
7	E	Basic care for adults Level 2 NP or CNS	15	30		45	3
8	E	Advanced clinical practi- cum	15	30		45	3
9	E	Holistic approaches to prescribing	20	40		60	4
10	E	Prescribing practice con- text	20	40		60	4
11	E	Decision making, nursing and advanced nurse practice	20	40		60	4
12	E	Leadership, quality im- provement and govern- ance for advanced prac- tice	15	30		45	3
13	E	Advanced health assess- ment	15	30		40	3

Tab. 2: Curriculum structure

Each course is described in detail in the programme handbook structured as follows:

- year/ semester
- module name
- type (obligatory vs. elective)
- ECTS
- lecturer name
- course description
- objective learning outcomes
- learning and teaching methods
- assessments methods
- teaching tools/ IT
- ratio between theoretical and practical part of the study in the module: lecture, seminar/ clinical exercise/ clinical practice/ self-study
- workload
- literature

Mechanisms for providing knowledge and application of scientific methods

In the self-report, Heimerer College recalls more than 7 years of building up and developing the teaching skills of its staff, in particular with a focus on digital methods to support face-to-face teaching and the self-study phases of the students. As example the method of inverted classrooms is named. Furthermore, regular discussions are held regarding the evaluation and development of the existing methods as well as the implementation of new methods. Namely listed for the Master's programme are the following:

- **Lecture-based learning:** An interactive discussion environment will be provided to explain theoretical issues of health sciences, management, legal, economic and organizational contexts. The classroom situation will also provide a supportive environment where students will be expected to receive feedback and learn from the experiences and knowledge of other students and tutors.
- **Problem-based learning:** Students will work in small groups to examine service user centred scenarios or case studies. The idea is that students work cooperatively as a team in order to achieve both subject based learning outcomes and transferable teamwork skills. This emphasizes self-directed learning supported by study guides where understanding is reinforced through its application in problem-oriented, task-based and work-related experience
- **Simulation-based learning:** Role-play with other students, as practitioners from public services or volunteer service users, is common practice within professional education. Simulation provides a relatively safe context in which students can practice skills and receive feedback in a way that would not be possible with real service users. More elaborate role-play exercises can also be used where students take on their professional roles engaging in a simulated case conference or a court session (for example).
- **Think-pair-share:** A task to develop, get through or repeat learning material, which has been set. The students solve this individually in a limited time, then compare and discuss the solution in a given time in partner work. The results will be discussed or presented in the plenary session. The partner work can alternatively lead to a group of four. This method allows initiating e.g. decision-making processes, critical thinking, problem-solved processes.
- **Practice-based learning:** The programme will provide opportunities for students to take responsibility for working in a healthcare setting as members of a team with supervision from mentors. During the field placement at the fourth semester students will learn about management patterns of healthcare settings and be trained in using theory and concepts to both understand and critically reflect over the on-going practice. Tasks to observe and reflect over will be given by the teachers, and the students will give the teacher or manager the learning outcome as small written reports.
- **Research-based learning:** Nursing students are expected to apply knowledge from lectures and laboratories to clinical and ambulatory settings and to facilitate knowledge to patient-orientated care settings. In this context simulation-based education with experiential-learning activities is intended.

- Case studies: The use of case studies improves the transfer of knowledge to practical settings. By using case study method; it is ensured that the problems encountered in real life on a certain subject are examined and resolved in the classroom environment in the frame of cause-and-effect relations. Thus, students are provided with the knowledge, skills and attitude related to the subject considered.
- Reflective learning: Encouraging students and teams to reflect/ meta think on their activities and processes of working together, with a focus on service user care, can develop an understanding of one's own role and values and those of other professions.
- Blended Learning: It can be broadly defined as any combination of different methods which makes use of new technologies. In the new programme, a rotation model will be implemented, where teaching will be carried out by the traditional method of lectures on the subjects of interest, as well as online seminars and other online forms of learning. This will particularly aid in aiding students in the capacity of autonomous and reflective thinking. The self-report mentions the following examples:
 - Lectures explaining the features of various study designs
 - Online individual exercises
 - Online and offline group-based exercises

Continuous staff training and development are further intended.

Organisation of students' learning experience

The programme syllabus consists of all descriptions of the modules. The modules are described competence oriented.

The following is an example of a module description¹⁰:

Module 13: Health Policies in national and social context
ECTS Credits: 5
Professor: ██████████
Course description: The content in this module will include: attributes of health systems and health policy; policy development, dissemination and implementation; evaluation of health policy; governance and political accountability; politics of health policy; National and European comparison policy created under devolved powers; prudent health; co-producing health and well-being; influence of global policy on national policy; professional, media and public influences on policy development.
Objective Learning Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically analyze the way in which global and political factor influence different approaches to national health policy. • Evaluate the ways in which health and social care policy is communicated to populations and how the media shapes public perceptions. • Critically examine the impact and effectiveness of policy in securing health and well-being within the UK and Wales. • Assess the defining attributes of health systems and health policy to understand the way in which such policy contributes to health and well-being.
Learning and Teaching Methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lectures / Seminars, • Think pair share • Problem-based learning

¹⁰ Source: Syllabus of "Nursing – Advanced Nursing Practice (ANP)", p. 18

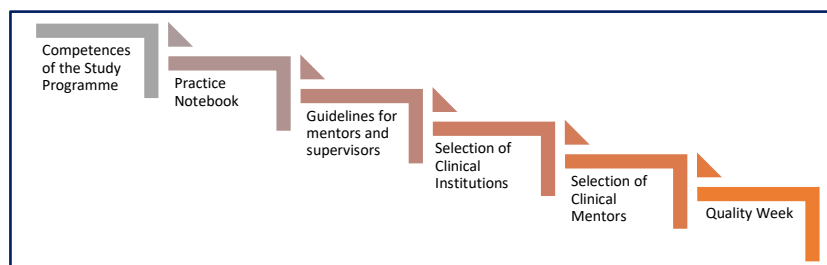
Assessment Methods:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz (10 %) • Seminar (10 %) • Projects (10 %) • Exam (70%) 				
Teaching tools/IT:				
LCD Projector, Power Point, Word document				
Ratio between theoretical and practical part of the study in the module:				
Lecture/Seminar	Clinical Exercise	Clinical Practice	Self-Study	Workload
30	30		90	150
Literature:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>McCoyd, J., Kerson, T. (2016): Social Work in Health Settings: Practice in Context, Routledge; 4. Edition</i> 2. <i>Leyland, A., Groenewegen, P. (2020): Multilevel Modelling for Public Health and Health Services Research: Health in Context, Springer; 1. Edition</i> 3. <i>Dodds, S. (2016): Social contexts and health: a GCPH synthesis, gcph.co.uk</i> 				

Tab. 3: Module description (example)

Heimerer College has developed a system which covers the whole process of clinical/laboratory work, starting with defining the competencies of the study programme and developing the practice notebook based on those competences. This follows with the development of guidelines for mentors and supervisors which define qualifications of mentors and supervisors, roles, principles and responsibilities. Furthermore, the process continues with the selection of adequate partner institutions which are licenced, continuing with selection of adequate clinical mentors by publishing an open advertisement from those institutions.

There are also regular workshops and training with clinical mentors in order to ensure the quality in this process.

Table 4 illustrates the clinical practice process:



Tab. 4: The clinical practice process

At the end of each year, a quality week is organised to evaluate the achievement of competencies. Each academic field has its own programme coordinator that helps students explore different clinical practice opportunities. The office of clinical practice at Heimerer College makes it possible for the students to connect with other institutions and together with all leaders of institutions the capacities to support the practice learning process of students for each study programme.

Assessment

Programme structure

The curriculum is well structured with all modules described in detail. The level of detail differs slightly between the modules, a consequent distinction between knowledge and competences is not always made. Teaching and learning methods are by and large specified.

While the documents were not yet sufficiently differentiated at the time of the inspection, the college has in the meantime redefined the contents once again, also in clear differentiation from the existing Bachelor's programme.

In its present form, the programme appears coherent and feasible to the experts.

Mechanisms for providing knowledge and application of scientific methods

Heimerer College has broad experience with both appropriate and innovative teaching methods. Students the experts have been talking to reported a good learning atmosphere together with a general policy of openness which makes it easy to solve difficulties and problems fast and sustainable. The experts got the impression that teachers see themselves to be more of learning supporters than instructors.

Organisation of students' learning experience

The teaching methods described seem appropriate in general. Due to the variety of forms of teaching, the diversity of students and their needs seems to be taken into account. Without a real on-site inspection, from a distance only and on the pure basis of documents and interviews, the expert panel does not see itself in a position to really assess the practical learning components. The practical guidance is well described and has been elaborated during the months between the online-visit and the meeting of the **evalag** Accreditation Commission.

Areas for improvement

The types of examinations do not always match the competences to be tested in every respect. This should be checked again after the first experiences from real operation.

Recommendations or conditions

None.

3.3 Student assessment

The third criterion focuses on the organisation of student assessments. The expert panel evaluates how the assessment of intended learning outcomes is organised and whether the amount and requirements of assessments are adequate. They also decide whether the requirements of the thesis reflect the level of the degree.

Overall, it is assessed whether the assessment criteria are transparent and used in a consistent way. It is also evaluated if the staff undertaking assessments is adequately qualified. Last but not least, it should be verified if examination regulations exist and if they provide clear and fair regulations for student absence, illness and other mitigating conditions.

Current status

Organization of assessment of intended learning outcomes

Heimerer College has implemented procedures for ensuring the fulfilment of teaching and learning standards and learning outcomes. All processes are formally described and regulated in the following documents:

- Regulation for Teachers
- Regulation of Studies
- Guideline for Academic Staff

The teaching process, the exercises and all practices are monitored and monthly reported. Teaching methodology, assessment instruments and methodology as well as the literature and other didactic resources are regularly reviewed, whether they are adequate to the intended learning outcomes and compatible with the level of degree.

Students will be graded through a mix of examinations and class work as described in each module's syllabus. Typical forms of examinations are: assignments, projects, written tests, case studies, written exams, opinion papers, team projects, online discussions, peer assessments, individual reports, oral presentations, quizzes, individual research projects, weekly reaction paper, an internship report etc. Class participation can also be taken into account.

Adequacy of the amount and requirements of assessments with regard to the intended learning outcomes

All study programmes at Heimerer College have been developed against the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education Area (EQFHEA).

The college takes all efforts to make the assessment in line with the expected results of each course to ensure the provision of quality teaching that leads to the predefined competences. There are filter mechanisms established, such as an ongoing monitoring of its implementation and ongoing evaluations of knowledge, skills and competencies. Besides ongoing evaluations of academic staff, Heimerer College undertakes an extra evaluation from other two bodies within the college, the Vice-Rector for Teaching and Quality Assurance Office. At the end of the academic year, those offices together with Dean's office organize the "quality week", where students from all study programmes and all years of study are subject to an overall evaluation. The evaluation data clearly shows the achieved progress as well as problems that would require solution, by exposing students to different tasks: individual interviews, questionnaires testing students' professional skills and other tasks, like writing a substantial essay, are the methods used to test students' professional knowledge, skills and competences acquired

from the institution. To evaluate students' technical and social skills, two methods are used: solving of different professional problems and role play. Findings from these activities are used for further advancement of didactic methodology and teaching/learning processes in general.

Correspondence of the requirements of the thesis to the level of the degree

At Bachelor's degree, the thesis usually counts 15 credits that is half of a semester's credits. The remaining 15 credits mostly are final practice and one or two modules that mostly are related to thesis. The criteria for the subject of the thesis are that it has to address a core topic as well as a research question of value.

The Master thesis counts 30 credits; the last (usually fourth) semester is reserved just for working on the thesis. The topic is in direct connection to a student's personal focus (e.g. geriatrics, health management etc.). Heimerer College supports students in choosing a topic that would improve their later work opportunities.

Transparency and consistency of assessment criteria

Applicants and new students are informed through open-doors days and the orientation week. All new students are provided with an usb-stick which contains all study related regulations, syllabuses, and detailed information about the processes in the institution as well as about the assessment (methods and criteria): Each syllabus contains the assessment criteria. The methodology of the assessment is presented to students before starting the semester, during the first lecture. For the transparency, the syllabuses are placed in Heimerer College's MOODLE platform and is electronically accessible during the whole academic year.

Moreover, the first page of each exam always describes the criteria to avoid all misunderstanding with students. Students are evaluated with the following grades which are unified and used in a consistent way:

- (A) - (EXCELLENT, from 91 to 100 points)
- (B) - (VERY WELL, with some mistakes, from 81 to 90 points)
- (C) - (WELL, with some mistakes from 71 to 80 points)
- (D) - (SATISFACTORY, with significant errors from 61 to 70 points)
- (E) - (ENOUGH, minimum fulfilment of criteria, from 51 to 60 points)
- (F, FX) - (failure to fulfil the minimum criteria, under 51 points)

Throughout the academic year ongoing assessment is organized. There are six exam deadlines organized by the Heimerer College:

- Term of January
- Term of June
- Term of April
- Term of September
- Term after the module

- Term with commission Students' success on the exam or other assessment of knowledge.

Adequacy of the qualifications of the staff undertaking assessments

Different assessment mechanisms and instruments of student achievement are dedicated to the measurement of different levels of knowledge, according to Bloom's taxonomy. On annual basis the college organizes workshops and trainings with international, external, and internal evaluation experts to support the teachers of Heimerer College. In particular in 2020 there were three trainings organized with teachers whereby two of them covered the topic of the assessment methodologies. The assessment instruments are reflected in each of teacher's syllabus before they begin their course. Likewise, assessment techniques depend on the modalities of subjects and disciplines, but the core methodology is based on Bloom taxonomy, as well as how and in what form the teacher finds it as the most appropriate assessment methodology.

The academic staff is supported in the process of the preparation of exams: each exam has to be submitted to the Dean's Office at least 10 days prior to the exam for approval, and consultation is done with the Vice-Rector on Teaching and Learning and the Quality Assurance Office.

Availability of examination regulations

Heimerer College has a Regulation of Studies which defines the evaluation mechanisms, modalities and other characteristics in relation to assessment and exams, Article 9, article 10, article 11 Article 12, Article 13 Article 14 and Article 15. Whenever the need arises to make changes based on certain situations, specific guidelines are prepared which are approved in advance by the Academic Council. For instance, this year, in the period of Pandemic, the Heimerer College has organized exams in the institution but electronically through MOODLE under the prevention measures for Covid-19. For the situation, the Vice-Rector for Teaching and Learning has developed specific guidelines on how to adapt to the new online assessment methodology and all academic staff were trained in advance.

The Regulation of Studies, in particular Article 15 "Complaints for Evaluation", also clearly sets out the steps and procedures to be followed in case of dissatisfaction and non-consistency with the assessment of students. Furthermore, the academic staff is obliged by regulations to hold consultations with students before and after the exams, where any constrain and dilemma regarding the exam is addressed.

Availability of clear and objective regulations for student absence, illness and other mitigating circumstances

According to the self-report Heimerer College ensures that the rights and obligations of students are regulated by the Study Regulation, which is public to students on the college intranet, the SIMS and MOODLE platform and is physically delivered to each student at the beginning of studies (see above). In Particular, the Article 9 "preliminary procedures before the exams" and Article 13 "Exceptions" also defines the time limit

for taking the exam and eventual absences. Students' absence, illness and other mitigating conditions are mainly addressed after the request of the student is delivered and the request is recorded by the dean's office. According to the Study Regulation - besides the standard forms of assessment according to the foreseen timeframe, at the student's request, a student's entrance to examination may be allowed only if the dean of the academic unit approves her/ his request to enter the exam before the foreseen timeframe. This is permissible when the student is part of international exchange-study programs when she/he is pursuing practical teaching abroad.

Above all, the following are some of the student's rights for complaints provided by the Study Regulation:

- a) Students have the right to complain about violations of the exam development rules. The appeal is submitted to the dean within 48 hours, from the moment of the completion of the exam.
- b) The responsible programme officer makes a final decision after verifying the violations in cooperation with the Quality Committee and the Vice-Rector for Teaching.
- c) If the complaint is fair, the examination shall be cancelled within three days from the day of the appeal and another exam takes place within that examination period.

Assessment

The expert panel appreciates the organisation and transparency of assessment in all the programmes. The amount and requirements of assessments with regard to the intended learning outcomes seem to be appropriate. They are fully in-line with international practice.

Defined assessment criteria exist and are transparent for students as well as for staff.

The students the experts talked with were well aware of the assessment criteria, they know what is expected and they know whom to contact in the case of problems or questions.

According to the experts, the staff undertaking the assessments is adequately qualified. The expert panel appreciates that Heimerer College undertakes great efforts to improve the assessment capabilities.

All examination regulations are available online. There are clear and objective regulations for student absence, illness and other mitigating circumstances.

A wide range of assessment tasks is used, which, however, are not in every case really comprehensibly assigned to the competences or knowledge to be tested.

Recommendations or conditions

None.

3.4 Organisation of the study programme

Furthermore, the implementation of the programme has to be evaluated. The expert panel assesses the appropriateness of entry qualifications and the regulations for the recognition of qualifications (i.e. Lisbon Convention). It has to be reviewed whether the organisation of the study process allows the programme to be carried out in such a way that the intended learning outcomes will be achieved and whether the organisation of the study process also takes the diversity of students and their needs into account. It is evaluated how the implementation of the programme is managed (roles and responsibilities) and even whether the workload of the programme is adequate with respect to the necessity to reach the intended learning outcomes in the scheduled time frame. The organisation of the student life cycle (i.e. all (organisational) relationships between the student and the institution from enrolment to graduation) is also part of this criterion. The experts check whether the care services and student advisory services are suitable and – in case of a cooperation with internal and external partners – how the cooperation is organised.

Current status

Entry qualifications

The entry and application processes are regulated by the Regulation of Studies, which also define the target group for each study programme. All information on study opportunities is published on the website of the college¹¹ and other means of information such as social networks, to notify everyone about the possibility of registration.

For the application to a Bachelor's programme at Heimerer College, applicants must have at least 12 years school education, which is completed with a secondary school degree or Matura examination.¹² Candidates must issue also the transcript as a record of grades showing their high school success, issued by the school and recognized by Ministry of Education and Science (MES) of the Republic of Kosovo. Besides, applicants have to pass the entry exam. Further completed basic studies, verified by a certificate or diploma might be acknowledged.

For application acceptance, the exam counts 40 %, Matura 30 % and the documented school grades another 30 %.

To start a Master's programme, students have to provide a diploma (at least Bachelor level). The average grade from the Bachelor's studies count 20 %, a personal interview is obligatory which counts another 60 %, knowledge in English language may count up to 20 %, too.

Enrolment is possible for each winter term. The application period is about 3 months (in 2021 from July 5 to October 5).

¹¹ <https://kolegji-heimerer.eu/> (accessed February 10, 2021)

¹² Before 2008 Matura exam was not organized.

Regulations for the recognition of qualifications

Heimerer College recognises educational achievements of students, which have been acquired at other higher education institutions. The recognition of qualifications (i.e. Lisbon Convention) is sufficiently regulated in the study regulations of the college.

Organisation of the study process

Heimerer College uses MOODLE as its e-learning platform as well as several digital resources (e.g. Google Meet). Especially during the current pandemic, virtual teaching and learning is conducted for lectures, seminars, classes, assignments, and communication. Even assessment had to be newly organized. The college has an extensive counselling system for students, which support students in different situations. Students are assisted in arranging their internships. Monitoring processes signal when students are at risk of falling behind in their study progress. Furthermore, the lecturers are also easily approachable for the students.

The teaching and learning forms, qualification goals of the programme, pedagogical concept, admission requirements, selection procedures, internships, study and examination requirements, recognition of achievements at other higher education institutions, regulations for student absence, illness and other mitigating conditions etc. are described in detail in the study regulations and module handbooks of the programme. The rules and regulations as well as the handbooks of all current programmes are available on the college's MOODLE system, are updated regularly and are adapted to changed requirements.

Information on the new study programme has not yet been published since they have to be accredited before.

Management of the study programme

The responsibilities are clearly regulated. Each faculty is organized with dean, vice dean, several assistants for organizing teaching and research projects as well as responsible persons for organizing practice. Responsibilities are defined in Terms of Reference. Their work is interrelated, and they cooperate to achieve the study programmes outcomes.

The direct responsibility for the implementation and the management of the study programme lies with dedicated persons for each programme.

Student workload

The allocation of credits at Heimerer College for a study programme or educational component is carried out according to the estimated student workload needed to achieve the defined learning outcomes. The overall student workload consists of a time for attending lectures as well as the time for preparing and taking exams, thesis writing, seminars and semester assignments. An effort of 30 hours is taken as a basis to earn one credit point. One study year's effort equals 1,800 hours of work. Consequently, a Bachelor's programme corresponds to 5,400 hours of work, Master's programmes correspond to 3,600 hours of work.

The theoretical and practical classes vary on the content of each study programme but in general they must include at least 1/3 of the total number of hours, while the practical part of at least 1/2 of the total number of hours. Clinical exercises, again depending on the study programme, are conducted in average, with 10-12 students in the college, in simulated conditions in modern equipped cabinets for practicing training. Outside the college, clinical practice is conducted in groups of 8 students. According to the self-report, this division is fully in line with the institutional capacities and specifications of the services provided, as foreseen in the study programme.

For students who are already working in a health institution where the practice of certain competencies should take place, their work experience is recognized by Heimerer College for those competencies they have achieved as part of their job.

Student life-cycle and student support system

Clinical practice is supervised by clinical mentors who are appointed throughout the Kosovo health system, primary, secondary and tertiary. Students in the first-year start practicing in the primary sector (outpatient clinic); in the second year they continue in the secondary sector (regional hospitals) and in the third year in the tertiary sector at the (University Clinical Centre of Kosovo – UCCK). Students are evaluated by mentors and lecturers after the end of the clinical practice period, with a direct practical assessment based on the assessment form and with a test to verify that they meet the required skill standard in terms of knowledge, practical skills, personal development and professional practice. During the period when the student is in practice, documents must be created for each period of student practice to show that the environment where the practice has been held has been appropriate for the student's educational needs. It is intended that during the clinical practice students get acquainted with different areas of studying and get the first idea of where they would like to work after graduation. At the same time, employees at the clinic can identify students with good skills and competencies that will in the future calculate their potential for work.

Student life-cycle is organized in a lot of steps starting from the application for registration where the candidates meet with registration officers and after that they apply and wait for the enrolment exam. During this period the registration office informs candidates (future students) of the subjects and materials needed to prepare for the exam. After the exam and enrolment procedure the college organizes the open-doors day and the integration week for all first-year students, led by the Dean Office and supported by the Pro-Rectorate for Teaching and the Centre of Heimerer Students. On the open doors day first year students are informed with the structured regulation of the institution. A welcome cocktail is organized to know each other, the academic staff and to get familiar with the institution. After that students are invited in groups to inform them about teaching methods, curriculum, methodology of implementation of the study program, including lectures, exercises, and practical part, also how to use official emails, System of Managing Data of Students (SIMS), MOODLE etc.

During the further academic year with formal lectures, exercises, and practice are invited to participate in extracurricular activities, when they become more experienced. They may even become a tutor and help new students to integrate.

Students are regularly informed via e-mail, MOODLE, social media, and internet sources, and they may participate in democratic processes with the Student Council

and the Academic Council. In the final study period of writing the thesis, students get full support from the institution (with seminars on how to write a thesis and even for related topics) as well as a personal mentor.

The college has implemented a model of dedicated study advisors during the whole study period. These advisors are appointed at the beginning of the first year, each responsible for about 20 to 30 students. They will hold regular meetings with students (about every two weeks) with the purpose to encourage and motivate them to participate in various activities like research, projects, humanitarian activities, debates, trainings, and more. Study advisors also discuss student concerns (addressing them to the Dean and addressing issues depending on the student's concern) and connect students to the resources of the college for addressing and solving problems and eventual difficulties. The study advisor herself/ himself is a teacher, she/he is assisted by student tutors.

Cooperation with internal and external partners

In 2018, Heimerer College (HC) has adopted an institutional strategy 2018-2023 which sets the strategic and specific objectives, including those pertaining to the international/ institutional cooperation. It serves as the reference document in terms of allocating the actual resources in line with the institutional strategic objective of internationalization.

The HC has developed specific internal processes that define the specific roles and responsibilities of relevant institutional units with regard to these priority areas of internationalization:

- Exchange of staff and students
- Development of international projects/events
 - Joint academic programmes
 - International projects
 - International seminars/ conferences/ symposiums
- Cross border cooperation
- Integration at international relevant organizations/associations/networks

Currently, Heimerer College has a rather diverse and unique network of partners. It has successfully accomplished expanding its list of partners with whom it has signed formal agreements, containing clear terms of cooperation. The college is partner in three ERASMUS+ projects, two of them focused on capacity building (leading applicant in a project and member in the other) and one on a strategic partnership project.

Assessment

Entry qualifications

In the view of the experts, the entry qualification and regulations are appropriate, transparent and sensible. All information on the requirements and procedures can be found on the university website.

Regulations for the recognition of qualifications

Prior qualifications from other universities are recognised according to the Lisbon Convention. Corresponding regulations and a clear and transparent procedure exist. Recognition of prior professional work practice is also practiced.

Organisation of the study process and management of the study programme

The roles, obligations and responsibilities in the management are clearly defined and appropriately structured, people involved the experts could talk to are highly motivated and professional. Besides, the college has established methods and means for student involvement, both in giving feedback and in decision-making.

Student workload

Having heard the students, the expert panel assumes that the workload of the programmes is manageable. The college observes the students' workload regularly. However, the college itself reports quite high dropout rates (9 %). Besides, only 40 % of students complete their studies within the standard period of study. The university must conduct more detailed research into the causes of this.

Organisation of the student life cycle

The experts note that there is excellent communication between students and teachers: learning groups are small, there seem to be lots of formal as well as informal contacts between teachers and students. The students the expert team could interview were very positive against the good organisation and atmosphere of the study process.

Student support system

According to the interviews with students, care services of Heimerer College and student advisory services are highly developed and both known and favoured by the students. Web information and communication services offered by the college play an important role and are frequently used.

Cooperation with external and internal partners

According to the experts' view there are robust cooperation links with both local organizations and institutions and higher education institutes from abroad. Within the college, the different departments and subjects also seem to harmonise excellently with each other, which the expert panel was able to perceive very clearly during the various interview sessions with changing compositions of persons.

Areas of improvement

Heimerer College should do more intensive research on reasons of students' drop-out and study delays and should develop countermeasures.

Recommendations or conditions

None.

3.5 Resources

Central to the criterion “resources” is whether there are appropriate resource endowment and deployment in the involved faculties. The experts evaluate the existence of sustainable funding and financial management. They also evaluate whether the staff is adequately qualified and sufficient to ensure the intended learning outcomes and which strategies and processes for staff recruiting and staff development are used. The experts examine if the amount and quality of facilities and equipment (library, laboratories, teaching rooms, IT equipment, etc.) allow the provision of the programme and if the resources are adequate to reach the programme’s objectives.

Current status

Financial management and funding

Based on past years as well as strategic planning for the next six years, Heimerer College demonstrates sustainability based on proper planning, consistency of enrolled students over the years as well as international projects involving key benefits and activities are dedicated to study programmes, including the new “Nursing – Advanced Nursing Practice” programme. Within the strategic planning as well as the planning of the program itself, there is also a financial plan that ensures the sustainability of program implementation for the next six years.

Together with the self-report the college provided an income-expenditure overview.

Staff

Heimerer College has policies, procedures and guidelines adopted in accordance with the applicable legislation on higher education and as required by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA). The academic staff of the college is registered with the KAA in accordance with the criteria set by the KAA in terms of teaching positions. The academic staff of the new programme will be 14 heads, most of them with a PhD degree. 12 out of 14 (90 %) of the academic staff cover full time positions in college. 8 of them have PhD in health sciences. 3 out of them have PhD in Nursing Sciences with more than 20 years’ experience in higher education institutions. 4 of them are PhD candidates, 2 master of sciences in nursing. The first PhDs of Nursing Sciences in South eastern Europe that were graduated in Germany are founder and leader of our college. The Department of Nursing has 3 PhD in Nursing, 4 PhD Candidates in Nursing and 6 MSc in Nursing. Everybody of the academic staff has done master or PhD studies abroad in EU countries.

Staff recruiting process

As mentioned before and with all other programmes of the college, academic staff recruitment and selection for the new Master's programme follows the "Regulation on the Grading and Engagement of Academic Staff" which is included in the "Guidelines for Academic Staff". The regulation ensures that the selection, appointment, and promotion of academic staff is made according to the relevant qualifications and relevant workplace experience, thus effectively ensuring that all candidates are treated equally. The regulation on the degrees, titles, selection and promotion of academic staff is based on Law no. 04 / I-037 on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo and in the Status of Heimerer College.

Facilities

Heimerer College has a modern well-equipped campus in Prishtina with laboratories, teaching rooms, a library, IT equipment with a total area of 5,030 square meters. Room for social activities is provided as well.

Dedicated cabinets are used for teaching and learning in the three profiles, all equipped with corresponding learning material.

Besides, the college offers its students and staff a range of electronic services for communication and efficient management of teaching and learning processes:

- the Student Management Information System (SIMS) which is the college's internal platform in which students have the opportunity to perform their services more easily, be informed, submit exams, see grades, schedule of lectures exercises, exams, different events as well as are able to submit requests for services provided by the student service
- a MOODLE e-learning system for facilitating the work of students and academic staff, the development of learning and access to literature
- equipment for teleconferences for online lectures
- E-library for use within the campus.

The whole teaching facility infrastructure is suitable for students with special needs. There are two elevators in the building of a capacity of 1,000 kg or 13 persons each. The entrance of the college building is wide and suitable for people with disabilities. In addition, the halls and cabinet halls are of enough width for students with disabilities. Also, as far as personal needs are concerned, the college has a well-equipped toilet, according to the highest standards, considering the needs of students with special needs.

Due to the current pandemic it was not possible to visit the campus but the college provided the experts with pictures, lists of equipment and a five minute film on the campus.

Library

The library has 26 working places for students and is open during business days. In addition to the library, students have access to the classrooms which are free after the

class schedule and at the period of the exams. These rooms can be used individually as well as for group preparation. Another 30 places for group work are implemented in the computer cabinet which is part of the library.

Heimerer College's library is equipped with 916 books, research and other materials that are also accessible electronically. Most of the printed material (approx. 150 copies) is not older than 20 years. Material in Albanian, English and German is provided.

Heimerer College has full membership in JSTOR,¹³ a shared digital library created in 1995 that includes more than 2,000 academic journals. JSTOR was founded to help libraries and academic publishers transition their activities from print to digital operations, to expand access to scholarly content around the world and to preserve it for future generations. Every member of Heimerer College staff can have access to JSTOR's collections by browsing for the needed content and can download several articles periodically.

Staff publications in scientific journals are sent to students to be informed of the novelty occurring in their profession and encouraged to conduct research on therapeutic health sciences, as well as to be presented in local and international conferences.

All students and the university academic and administrative personnel are members of the library. They can borrow library materials in accordance with the rules.

Assessment

Financial management and funding

In the view of the experts, the financial management of the college is professional. The planning on which the new Master's programme is based, also seems comprehensible. However, the expert panel points out that the target numbers of new students are set very high, possibly even too high for adequate supervision to be possible. Alternative calculation models that assume fewer new entrants should therefore also be calculated.

Staff

From the point of view of the expert panel, the qualification of the teaching staff at Heimerer College seems adequate for study programmes at Bachelor's as well as Master's level. The college has made steps to improve its staff, namely in the months after the online-visit.

The experts assess the recruiting procedures of the college as appropriate and in line with international academic practice. The current staff/ student ratio allows the college to maintain relatively small groups and a close contact between teachers and students.

The relation between full-time and half-time staff seems appropriate. The experts note from the interview sessions that teaching is carried out by dynamic and motivated lecturers. Some of them have international working and educational experience which is appreciated by the expert panel. The experts note that the academic output of the

¹³ <https://www.jstor.org/> (accessed February 10, 2021)

teaching staff (publications) needs to be further developed in order to ensure the academic level in the long term.

Facilities

From the pictures alone, the expert panel got a good impression from the existing facilities but real assessment is not possible without a visit.

Condition

The academic staff must be further developed and empowered for teaching at Master's level. This must be reviewed after the implementation of the first academic year and reported to **evalag**.

3.6 Quality assurance

The criterion "quality assurance" focuses on the internal and external mechanisms used by the institution to monitor and improve the quality of the study programme: how the study programme is designed and implemented and how its improvement is organised.

The experts evaluate the existing quality assurance concept of the programme and what kind of quality assurance processes and instruments are implemented, which indicators are used for monitoring the achievement of the programme's objectives and how the institution and the persons responsible for the programme collect, analyse and use relevant information about their activities. Moreover, the experts examine whether quality assurance is used regularly, systematically and effectively for quality enhancement and if quality feedback loops are closed. It is also evaluated how stakeholders (students, teachers, administration, employers) are involved in quality assurance and whether relevant programme information for students and prospective students is provided.

Current status

Quality assurance concept of Heimerer College

According to the self-report, quality development is seen as a common obligation, which involves all members and internal and external stakeholders of the college. The main responsibility for quality management lies with the Rector and the Academic Council. The deans and the Programme Commission on programme level are responsible for the quality assurance of the study programme they are responsible for.

To assure and enhance its quality Heimerer College uses internal and external quality assurance instruments which are coordinated by the Quality Office which is established by the Rector and Academic Council. The quality assurance instruments and processes are implemented and described in the "Regulation on the Quality Assurance System" which aims to build a mechanism for promoting and achieving the highest level of quality and standards in educational and scientific activities, as well as the

professional activities, administrative services and other support services of Heimerer College. The “Regulation on the Quality Assurance System” covers the area of quality assurance continuous improvement and routines. It specifies the processes and mechanisms which are focused on the analysis of the actual situation and reviewing the vision in relation to the strategic developments of the college, collecting weaknesses that were noticed during the quality assurance process; drafting the strategic plan for improving the weaknesses noticed during the year; foreseeing the innovations and need for changes during the self-evaluation process.

The most important quality circle at Heimerer is the five-year “Strategic Plan of the College” which sets strategic and specific objectives, including those related to quality assurance. Each academic unit develops its own strategic plan in alignment with the objectives of the college. The strategic plan contains measurable outcomes of strategic planning goals and objectives and these measurable outcomes comprise of internal targets, which the college management agreed with academic and administrative units. The results contribute in defining improvement actions. These actions result in further improvement of the study programmes as well as administrative and support services.

All the academic and administrative units are included in the quality assurance process according to the planning. All internal and external participants within the educational process and scientific-research and professional activities of Heimerer College, participate in the design and development of the quality assurance system and make use of the results.

Internal participants are the students and teachers, associates, administrative, technical and support staff of Heimerer College. External participants are legal persons and organisations that relate to the activities of Heimerer College (e.g. educational institutions, healthcare, businesses, local and national government bodies, employers and alumni).

Quality assurance processes and instruments

All study programmes offered by Heimerer College are subject to regular internal and external evaluation (review) prior to their accreditation. The self-report describes self-evaluation measures conducted periodically. The results are regularly published on the website.

The model for self-evaluation adapted by Heimerer College is focused on three most important aspects for a higher education institution, including: quality of teaching, quality of learning and student support. For these three aspects, the college’s own group for quality drafted effective evaluation methods, based on the Total Quality Management model (TQM).¹⁴

¹⁴ The TQM model was developed in the 1950s by W. Edwards Deming and Joseph M. Juran. TQM follows 8 principles:

- Customer focus
- Total employee commitment
- Process approach

Heimerer College applies a 360-degree assessment process and within the assessment are several processes including the monitoring of the teaching conducted by the Quality Office. The office in cooperation with each deans' offices monitors teachers regarding the methodology, atmosphere, assessment and other components. The data is used to evaluate the teachers as well as the programs and to look for comparisons over the years to assess whether the institution has made progress and achievement in the teaching process.

At the end of each semester, various regular evaluations are organized. The results of the internal and external quality assurance system are ensured by the following processes and instruments that are common to all academic units of the college:

- Evaluation of module and teacher performance (e.g. class visits)
- Evaluation of knowledge, skills and competences (e.g. through personal interviews)
- Evaluation of student support services (through questionnaires)
- Regular surveys among alumni
- Survey with employers
- Staff performance evaluation in cooperation with the Quality Office and with 4 instruments:
 - 1) Quality of work and satisfaction level of the staff
 - 2) Evaluation of the supervisor's performance by the employees.
 - 3) Staff Evaluation by the supervisors
 - 4) Agreement for further professional development

Feedback loops

After each evaluation, reports are prepared including recommendations and activities for quality improvement both in the teaching/ learning and administrative processes. These reports and analyses identify the needs for change, bring innovative ideas for implementation, based on them recommendations are given that are then included and implemented, either in programme development or in the teaching process, and in other important processes of the profile in order to increase the quality. The reports are shared with all members of Heimerer College.

Involvement of stakeholders

All academic and administrative units are included in the quality assurance process according to the planning. All internal and external participants within the educational

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- Integrated system
 - Strategic and systematic approach
 - Continual improvement
 - Fact-based decision-making
 - Communications

process and scientific-research and professional activities of Heimerer College participate in the design and development of the quality assurance system and make use of the results.

On programme level, staff members participate in self-evaluations in all the areas and cooperate with the reporting processes arising from these evaluations. Also, at least weekly meetings are held to reflect the quality of work, based on quality reports, related co-teaching and learning process, the quality of the research and scientific aspects, as well as the quality of the various supporting and administrative services. All proposed activities are initially included in the strategic planning. They are then reflected in annual plans and are monitored in quarterly, monthly and weekly bases. Additionally, planning processes are continually completed, depending on the new needs identified by the quality assurance processes.

Students, lecturers, administrative staff are involved during the preparation of self-assessment report in the framework of the first and periodic accreditation of the institution and the study programmes. Current students' feedback as well as alumni feedback obtained through the respective questionnaires is used as an input for the improvement of the study programme. At the same time student feedback for the supporting services is also used as an input for improving and assisting academic units such as library, IT and other services.

Quality assurance in research

The functions of the Vice-Rector for Research principally focus on promoting the college's research activities, as well as on education and research with particular reference to the PhD programs, evaluation of the quality of research, the development of competitive projects in collaboration with other institutions and national and international public partners, and promotion of the internationalization of research together with the Vice Rector for International Relations and the deans. This is best explained by the fact that the College has been organizing the International Symposium of Health Sciences for 11 years now. This event includes oral presentation sessions and poster presentations touching on important health areas in order to advance and increase knowledge in the field of diagnostics, psychology, nursing, medicine and digitalization of health services.

To increase the involvement of staff and students in research activities, the research office employs support staff who are directly involved in the research. According to the self-report and to the interview sessions substantial improvements have been made in relation to the engagement of staff in research. Each deanery has created "research groups" with internal and external members from various fields of expertise. The aim of the group is to focus on one area of research in the long term, to be able to provide relevant, original, and advanced research studies in this field.

The Vice-Rector for Research and Quality organizes regular monthly trainings for staff advancement in the field of research and quality improvement of Heimerer College publications. Some of the topics covered are: statistical analysis, writing of academic papers, publication process and other trainings in this field.

In order to advance the quality of scientific research at the institutional level and provide financial support, the Vice Rectorate for Research and Quality has formulated the document for financial support. The document sets out the criteria that scientific

research must contain to gain support, where one of these criteria is that only publications in journals with an impact factor greater than one will be financially supported. The financial amounts are clearly regulated, and the application process is modernized.

An integrated list of all the used topics for the diploma work of students already exists within the IT infrastructure, which is searchable, and full documents are integrated with links. The list contains which topics, mentors, types of students, and which methodologies have produced more qualitative research. This then will be used to guide the establishment of a catalogue for future topics for diploma thesis.

Heimerer College is progressing fast towards having a fully functional internal anti-plagiarism system. First, a database of electronic versions of all the submitted thesis of students in the college for all years already exists within the Vice-Rectorate of Research and Quality. Secondly, the relevant research staff have been recently introduced to the use of special anti-plagiarism software.

Assessment

The experts observe a well-developed quality assurance system based both on formal and informal processes. The academic and administrative staff are very dedicated, act professionally and ambitiously and demonstrated that they have internalised all QA processes.

The experts assess the instruments employed as well adapted for a small institution as Heimerer College, professionally designed and coordinated by its quality assurance officer.

The college uses internal and external instruments in a professional way in order to assess their activities from different point of views and to get external feedback and expertise where necessary. They use the external support systematically to improve the internal capacities of the college, and further to manage its quality independently.

The quality assurance activities focus on teaching and learning as well as on research and administrative processes related to the well-being of students. During the online meetings the students confirmed that they are very satisfied with the education and the student services at the college. Students receive a feedback on the views they express in the student evaluation surveys.

The quality assurance concept used by Heimerer College seems to be appropriate to assure and improve the quality of teaching and learning at the college. Moreover, the quality assurance instruments, which are currently in place, seem to be accepted and implemented throughout the institution and are used for further improvement.

Recommendations and conditions

The college must further develop its quality system and also apply it to the clinical practical parts. This must be reviewed after the implementation of the first academic year and reported to **evalag**.

The involvement of external experts in the university's internal quality assurance should be considered.

4. Final Assessment

Assessment levels

Level	Assessment	Description
A	Passed.	The programme fulfils or exceeds all criteria. All activities are in line with the profile and objectives of the programme and provided at a high academic level.
B	Passed subject to conditions	The programme does not fulfil some relevant criteria. However, the institution should be able to remedy the shortcomings within nine months after the assessment.
C	Suspension of the accreditation procedure	The programme does not fulfil relevant criteria, but it is likely, that it will be able to remedy the shortcomings within 18 months after the assessment. The HEI may apply for a resumption of the accreditation procedure.
D	Failed	The programme does not fulfil relevant criteria, and is not expected to be able to meet all assessment criteria within 18 months' time.

Results of the assessment

Assessment grades

No	Assessment criteria	Assessment
1	Programme profile <i>C1 Heimerer College must implement a training programme for mentors in clinical practice to ensure academic quality of practical learning.</i>	B
2	Curriculum	A
3	Student assessment	A
4	Organisation of the study programme	A
5	Resources <i>C2 The academic staff must be further developed and empowered for teaching at Master's level. This must be reviewed after the implementation of the first academic year and reported to evalag.</i>	B
6	Quality assurance <i>C3 The college must further develop its quality system and also apply it to the clinical practical parts. This must be reviewed after the</i>	B

	<p><i>implementation of the first academic year and reported to evalag.</i></p> <p><i>R1 The involvement of external experts in the university's internal quality assurance should be considered.</i></p>
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5. Accreditation recommendation of the expert panel to the evalag Accreditation Commission

The initial assessment by the expert panel revealed a number of weaknesses concerning the content and organisation, which the college worked on intensively and eliminated in the months following the online-visit.

Against the background of these activities and the newly submitted documents, the experts conclude that the final concept of the new study programme is now conclusive and the programme should be accredited.

The following recommendations (R) and conditions (C) are formulated:

Programme profile

- C1** Heimerer College must implement a training programme for mentors in clinical practice to ensure academic quality of practical learning.

Resources

- C2** The academic staff must be further developed and empowered for teaching at Master's level. This must be reviewed after the implementation of the first academic year and reported to **evalag**.

Quality assurance

- C3** The college must further develop its quality system and also apply it to the clinical practical parts. This must be reviewed after the implementation of the first academic year and reported to **evalag**.
- R1** The involvement of external experts in the university's internal quality assurance should be considered.

6. Accreditation decision of the evalag Accreditation Commission

The **evalag** Accreditation Commission agrees with the expert panel's final assessment. The new documents submitted in response to the first expert's assessment have shown clear progress.

At its meeting on June 28, 2021, the evalag Accreditation Commission decides unanimously to accredit the study programme “Nursing – Advanced Nursing Practice (ANP) (M. Sc.)” with the recommendations (R) and condition (C) mentioned in Chapter 5.

Annex: Assessment schedule

Thursday, January 28, 2021 – Preparation of online meetings

18:00-19:30	Internal meeting of expert panel (video conference), discussion of self-evaluation report, review of site visit plan
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Wednesday, February 3, 2021 – Online meetings

09:00-09:30	Internal meeting of expert panel
09:30-10:15	Meeting with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Secretary • Dean of Office for Studies and Teaching • Prorector for Research and Quality Assurance • Coordinator of Office for Clinical Practice • Leader of Quality Assurance Office • Guests from Partner Universities (Erasmus+, ...) • Representative of KAA (guest)
10:15-10:30	Brief internal meeting of expert panel
10:30-11:15	Meeting with responsible staff; split into 3 parallel groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Sciences for Therapeutic Sciences (B.Sc.) (<i>Virtual breakout room 1, Prof. Pflingsten, Mr. Biele</i>) • Medical Laboratory Science (M.Sc.) (<i>Virtual main room, Prof. Patsch</i>) • Nursing (M.Sc.) (<i>Virtual breakout room 2, Prof. Schuurmans, Ms. Atienza</i>)
11:15-11:45	Internal meeting of expert panel, break
11:45-12:45	Meeting with B.Sc. students and alumni of Heimerer College
12:45-14:15	Internal meeting of expert panel, lunch break
14:15-15:00	Meeting with academic staff (teachers) and mentors/tutors from all 3 disciplines
15:00-15:30	Meeting with employers
15:30-15:45	Brief internal meeting of expert panel
15:45-16:15	Meeting with administration (registrar, library management, laboratory management, ...), technical staff and quality management
16:15-17:30	Internal meeting of expert panel: review of the sessions, assessment along the assessment form, first draft of recommendations and conditions

17:30-18:00	Closing meeting with representatives of Heimerer College and of the study programmes
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