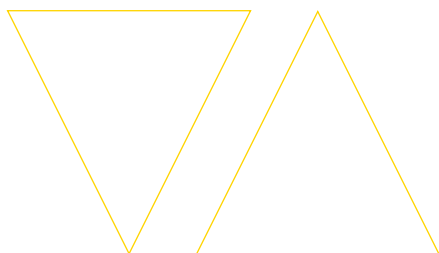


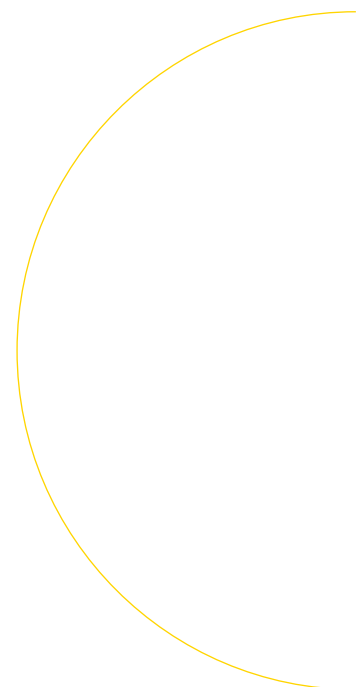
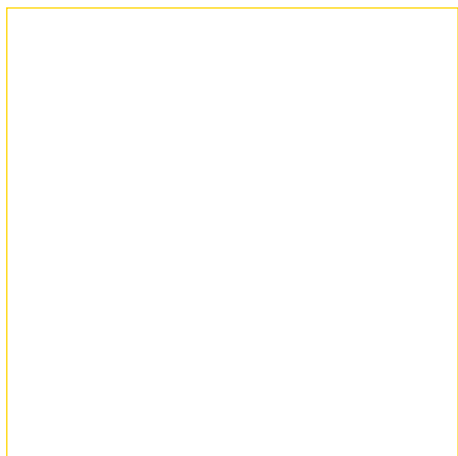
Assessment Report

Nursing (B. Sc.)



Kolegji Heimerer – Heimerer College, Prishtina, Kosovo

Accredited from 25/04/2024 to 24/04/2030



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I. 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 the quality of healthcare education and offers study programmes at the Bachelor and the Master level. The language of instruction is Albanian, some lectures are held in English.

The following Bachelor study programmes are offered:

- Nursing (B. Sc.)
- Health Sciences for Therapeutic Profiles: Speech Therapy Profile and Occupational Therapy Profile (B. Sc.)
- Psychology (B. Sc.)
- Health Professional Pedagogy, Professional Field Nursing (B. Sc.)
- Health Sciences for Diagnostic Profiles: Laboratory Technician Profile (B. Sc.)

Moreover, five study programmes are offered on the Master level:

- Management of Health Institutions and Services (M. Sc.)
- Clinical Psychology (M. Sc.)
- Nursing ANP (*Advanced Nursing Practice*) (M. Sc.)
- Medical Laboratory Sciences (M. Sc.)
- Digital Healthcare (M. Sc.)

Each Bachelor study programme has a duration of three years (six semesters) and requires a minimum of 180 ECTS credits. The Master study programmes last two years (four semesters) with a total of 120 ECTS credits each.

Responsible academic unit/faculty	Health and Nursing Sciences
Number of students in the department	659
Undergraduate	554
Graduate	105

Full-time academic staff in the department	36		
Part-time academic staff (department level, heads and FTE)	19		
Administrative and technical staff (department level)	11		
1 st year students (department level)	250		
Graduates (department level, in total)	1128		
Floor space (m ²)	720 m ²		
Media in university library (books, journals, digital media)	916 Books 1,500 JSTOR Magazines		
Department budget	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
	600,000 EUR	1,018,380 EUR	1,293,390 EUR

Tab. 1: Data on the college and the department responsible for the study programme

II. The accreditation procedure

The assessment procedure was carried out as an informed peer review on the basis of a self-evaluation report provided by Heimerer College. For organizational reasons, the site visit was made by only one member of the expert panel in person while the other experts participated online. Following the visit, the experts prepared their report (this document), which formed the basis for the decision by the EVALAG Accreditation Committee.

The procedure itself applies the eligibility for purpose approach which assesses to what extent a study programme complies with the EVALAG criteria for programme accreditation.¹ These are formulated in coherence with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).²

The criteria focus, first of all, 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).³

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 may 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 if it is likely that the institution will be able to remedy the shortcomings within 18 months after the assessment.

¹ https://www.evalag.de/fileadmin/dateien/pdf/akk_international/standards_kriterien/prog_acc_process_criteria_171201.pdf (accessed 04 March 2024)

² https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf (accessed 04 March 2024)

³ 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 based on guidelines from EVALAG. At the same time EVALAG formed an international expert panel consisting of four experts including one student expert:

Academic experts:

- Prof. Dr. Hauke Schumann, Professor for Medical Education and Vice-Rector for Education at the Catholic University of Applied Sciences in Freiburg, Germany.
- Prof. Dr. Lukas Slotala, Professor for Health and Nursing Sciences at the Technical University for Applied Sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt, Germany.

Expert from professional practice:

- Dr. Beatriz Atienza Carbonell, Medical Doctor at Consorcio Hospital General Universitario de Valencia, Spain.

Student expert:

- Jule Bösl, Midwifery Science Student (B. Sc., 3rd year) at *htw saar* University of Applied Sciences in Saarbrücken, Germany.

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

From the side of EVALAG, Dr. Michael Kolander coordinated and carried out the project with organisational support by Inga Brak.

The site visit (see Annex) took place on 22 February 2024 at Heimerer College in Prishtina (Kosovo), with Jule Bösl representing the expert panel on site and inspecting the facilities and the equipment on campus. The rest of the expert panel participated online⁴.

During the site visit, the expert panel had discussions with the leadership of the university and the department, with academic and administrative staff and with students and alumni. Before the site visit, the college provided a video of its facilities (e. g. seminar and practice rooms, lecture halls, library, cafeteria) to give an impression of the campus to the entire expert panel.

After the site visit, the expert panel wrote the assessment report which was submitted to the college for correction of potential factual errors on 25 March 2024. The college sent a statement on this report (see Annex).

The experts thank Heimerer College for the opportunity for additional questions and for the open discussions and for their excellent and highly professional support on the preparation of the meetings, during the site visit, and afterwards.

⁴ For this purpose, ZOOM was used as technical platform, based on 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. Only authorised persons had access to the meeting sessions, no discussions during these video conferences were recorded.

The following assessment report is structured along the six assessment criteria, which form the basis for the decision about the international programme accreditation by EVALAG. 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 site visit. On this basis, the expert panel assesses the criterion. Finally, the experts provide their recommendations for further improvement.

III. Programme assessment

1. Programme profile

The profile and the objectives of a study programme form an essential criterion for its 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 Bachelor study programme "Nursing (B. Sc.)" conforms to subject code 12.6 according to the *Erasmus Subject Area Codes (ESAC)*. The programme has a duration of three years (six semesters) and currently, a number of 250 students per year who study by attending classes on campus regularly. Hence, it is not a distance learning study programme. In line with the *European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)*, the programme requires 180 ECTS credits in total. A table with general information about the programme including subject area, programme holders and number of credits is included below.

Name of study programme	Nursing (B. Sc.)
--------------------------------	-------------------------

Founding year	2010
Final degree	B. Sc. In Nursing
Duration of study	3 years (6 semesters)
Credits (ECTS or other system)	180 ECTS
Student enrolment capacity per semester/study year	250
Number of students (current semester)	554
1 st year students (current semester)	250
% international students	0
Drop-out rate (current semester)	0%
Full-time academic staff in the programme	34
Part-time academic staff in the programme	7

Tab. 2: Data on the study programme

According to the self-evaluation report, it is the main objective of the study programme to give the students the information, abilities, and skills they need to provide independent professional nursing care, and become competent nurses with an approach of patient-centred and evidence-based care.

Furthermore, the college states that the programme objectives are carefully created in compliance with the *National Qualifications Framework*, the *European Higher Education Area Qualifications Framework* and the *International Council of Nurses*, assuring conformity with recognized educational standards and credentials in the nursing area.

The curriculum of the programme is aligned with and meets the standards of European curricula for nursing programmes and is designed along the curricula of similar study programmes at higher-education institutions in several countries (e. g. Ljubljana, Maribor, Malta and Bern University)⁵. Besides, the program complies with the EU standards and directives of *2013/55/EU* for nursing education at the bachelor level⁶. The college enables students to benefit from cross-cultural learning and information sharing through exchange opportunities for students and academic staff with higher-education institutions in countries from inside and outside the European Union.

⁵ See: https://www.zf.uni-lj.si/images/ANG/ZN_-_predstavitevni_20-21_jan.pdf, <https://www.um.edu.mt/courses/programme/UBSCHNUR9-2023-4-O>, <https://www.fzv.um.si/en/undergraduate-1st-degree-study-programme-nursing-care> (accessed 06 March 2024)

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02005L0036-20171201&rid=1> (accessed 06 March 2024)

The college states that graduates of the study programme “Nursing (B. Sc.)” will be highly-qualified, skilled and knowledgeable in local and global healthcare career markets and will be able to provide advanced professional practices in the field of nursing. Moreover, both students and academic staff are given the possibility and the resources for scholar publications on nursing-related research topics in compliance with college rules and regulations and according to the requirements by the *Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA)*.

With regard to human resources, the college informs that they guarantee the availability of qualified teachers for each course in the study programme and by that ensure that the teaching personnel possess the necessary expertise and qualifications to offer high-quality education. As for the facilities, the college aims at establishing and maintaining a state-of-the-art infrastructure, including modern buildings, tools and technology that are needed to offer high-quality education in the field of nursing. For that, the college also offers a wide range of current literature on nursing topics, both in Albanian and in foreign languages such as English or German. In terms of advisory services, the college has student-centred services that offer the necessary support and guidance throughout the students’ academic education (also see 3.5 *Resources*).

In order to guarantee all these objectives of the study programme and to keep up and even improve the quality of the study programme, the college conducts annual reviews and updates of policies, regulations, and terms of reference at both the institutional and the programme level to ensure compliance with the latest educational standards and best practices.

Learning outcomes

The objectives and learning outcomes of each course are described in the module syllabuses that were sent to the expert panel for a check on the learning outcomes on the level of the modules. Overall, the college pursues the objective of preparing graduates who are highly-skilled, competent and experienced and who have an advanced understanding of nursing science as well as practical experience of working in the field and of doing research. At the end of the study programme, graduates have obtained general and specialist knowledge and skills for their professional activities.

More precisely, the college aims at equipping the students with the following competences that can be categorized in knowledge, practice skills and professionalism and professional development.

The **knowledge** that graduates are supposed to have gained throughout the three years of studying entails an in-depth understanding of nursing theories, concepts, and evidence-based practices as well as the capability of applying knowledge of biological, physical, behavioural and social sciences to nursing care. They can be expected to understand the principles of pharmacology

and medication administration and to be able to develop an understanding of healthcare policies, ethics, and legal aspects related to nursing practice.

The **practice skills** comprise thorough and accurate assessments of people's health across the lifespan, the development and implementation of holistic care plans based on nursing assessments and evidence-based practices and the provision of skilled and compassionate nursing care to diverse individuals, families, and communities. Graduates also have demonstrated their proficiency in nursing interventions, such as wound care, patient monitoring, and health promotion activities and their critical thinking and clinical reasoning to make informed decisions and solve problems in nursing practice. They furthermore learned how to communicate and collaborate with patients, families, and interdisciplinary healthcare teams and how to provide culturally sensitive and patient-centred care to individuals from different backgrounds and proved their proficiency in medication administration by safely and effectively administering prescribed medications, adhering to dosage calculations, medication management principles, and established best practices.

The learning outcomes addressing **professionalism and the professional development** include respecting autonomy, upholding patient rights, and advancing social justice in healthcare settings. In addition to that, graduates of the study programme will have participated in activities that promote professional expertise and abilities while keeping up to date with developments in nursing practice and will have internalized the value of ongoing professional development and make a commitment to lifelong learning. Further professional skills gained throughout the study programme are leadership abilities by effectively coordinating and organizing nursing care, the application of research findings and evidence-based practices to enhance the quality of nursing care and patient outcomes, the critical analysis and integration of the current state of research into nursing practice to ensure evidence-based decision-making and the effective use of technologies and informatics in the practice of nursing and the provision of healthcare.

The college states that the learning outcomes and the curriculum will be made accessible to the public on the website of Heimerer College. Students enrolled in the study programme can look into course materials and resources – and by that the learning outcomes of each course – in the learning management system *MOODLE*. Besides, the college states that students receive comprehensive information on the courses at the start of each academic year.

Relation to academic and professional requirements and public needs

According to the self-evaluation report and the interviews with the college representatives, there are several societal and demographic developments that increased the need of designing and implementing the study programme “Nursing (B. Sc.)”. For a start, the college refers to the growing population of

Kosovo coming along with an increasing need for healthcare services. An aging workforce enhances the need for new and young workers in the field of nursing. From a technical perspective, advancements in technologies and treatment methods as well as in healthcare procedures intensify the demand for new nurses with the most up-to-date training and abilities to provide patients with high-quality care in order to stay up to date with these developments. The “brain drain” stemming from an observed nurse migration to labour markets in foreign countries is another factor contributing to the need of keeping up the quality of healthcare services and of supporting the growth of nursing as a profession in Kosovo.

Relation between study and research

According to the self-evaluation report as well as the interview sessions during the site visit, Heimerer College created the study programme with the idea of fusing theory, practice, and research into a single and cohesive framework.

Diverse learning methods are incorporated into the curriculum: Blended learning, project-based learning, design thinking, problem-based learning, research-based learning, simulation-based learning and practice-based learning are applied. These teaching strategies are the basic tools the college uses to promote the students’ learning success. The students are given the opportunity to develop their abilities to find relevant information about certain subjects or issues in the area by incorporating these strategies and participate in activities that introduce them to looking for and to critically interpreting scientific literature, for instance via problem-based learning or blended learning. The students gain skills in choosing suitable intervention and evaluation approaches based on research results and through evidence-based practice. The curriculum adheres to a directive that allocates a particular percentage of hours to theoretical and practical training in order to guarantee a thorough learning experience. The theoretical courses are planned to take up at least a third of the overall instructional time. Even more emphasis is placed on the practical component, with at least 50% of the total hours being dedicated to clinical practice. Through practical training, the students may improve their nursing abilities, apply their learning experiences from the classroom in practical situations and gain expertise in patient care.

The practical part takes place both internally in the laboratories of the college and the *Student-Run Multidisciplinary Allied Health Practice Centre (SMAHPC)* whereas the external part of practice takes place in private and public health institutions based on prior mutual agreements with these institutions. At Heimerer College, clinical exercises are carried out in small groups of 10 to 12 students under realistic situations in modern nursing labs. These settings provide students a hands-on learning opportunity by replicating actual healthcare environments. The students have the chance to get involved with several nursing specializations during their clinical practice which gives

them insights to various nursing fields and helps them develop specific professional areas of interest. Clinical practice is supervised by clinical mentors in order to guarantee a successful learning experience. These mentors work in the primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare sectors of the Kosovan health system. The students start their clinical practice in the primary sector (in outpatient clinics) during the second semester of the programme. They go on to the secondary health care institutions which include regional hospitals in the third and fourth semester. Moreover, the students gain additional clinical practice at the *University Clinical Centre of Kosovo (UCCK)* during their fifth and sixth semester. This link between teaching and practical experiences during the study programme is a crucial part of the curriculum and also combines the students' learning efforts and research. Besides, the staff members inform the students about multiple areas of research within the courses and discuss information and case studies and give students an understanding of new developments in research and on the ongoing process of collective learning in the research community. Since 2021, the college has been implementing a new approach on achieving the research competencies, through a student-run interdisciplinary innovative research lab (*S2IRL*) which has the purpose of promoting student competences in the field of research. Examples of the supervisors of current thesis projects in the study programme "Nursing (B. Sc.);" confirm state-of-the-art research topics and methods. With an ANP master programme and the possibility of doing PhD studies, the path of academic development is paved.

Another ongoing project at the college that aims at enhancing the practical and research skills among students is the *Future Care Lab (FCL)* which was developed to promote digital and robotic care use in the Western Balkans. Financed by the German Ministry of Education and Science and inspired by the laboratory of the same name at the University of Halle-Wittenberg, it is equipped with several robots, such as the *Pepper Robot* and *Medisana* that are employed to practice the use of socially assistive technologies. This initiative has been effective in creating an area that offers nursing degree students an interactive learning setting. The students get the chance to put their newly learned skills and knowledge into practice in this laboratory, which helps them better to understand the field of robotics and digital healthcare. Besides, the students can actively participate in research projects aimed at enhancing patient outcomes by using robots and other digital equipment.

The *Student-Run Interdisciplinary Allied Health Digital Practice Centre (SI-AHDPC)* is a three-year project started in 2021 that addresses relevant national priorities. The project contributes to developing and updating relevant curricula in health studies by reinforcing interdisciplinarity as a crucial aspect. In particular, the project strives for modernization of relevant curricula in terms of developing new and innovative e-learning materials and teaching tools, the application of methodologies and pedagogical approaches (simulation and blended learning) enriched by virtual and mixed virtual realities and the development of new and innovative ICT-based practical placements (practical training space for virtual therapy and tele-health service provision).

The *Regional Challenge Fund (RCF)* is a project funded under German cooperation. The aim of this initiative is to undertake a comprehensive review and an upgrade of all practical modules within the “Nursing (B. Sc.)” programme by relying on the expertise of external professionals. Furthermore, the teaching staff undergoes training programmes that are tailored to align with the upgraded modules. Within the constraints of the applicable regulatory framework (RCF rules), the external nursing staff will also have the opportunity to participate in these training activities and thereby may enhance their competences and increase their employability on the labour market. Furthermore, this enhanced skill-set among external staff will enable them to provide more effective guidance and support to interns during their practical experiences. The underlying objective of these endeavours is to ensure that the study programme equips undergraduate students with state-of-the-art knowledge and skills, fosters their professional growth and facilitates their integration into the nursing profession. In order to complete the upgrading procedure, the college considers it to be crucial to purchase the necessary teaching materials. This comprises the acquisition of relevant and up-to-date literature sources, the creation or purchase of instructional films and the purchase of tools required for the *Virtual Training Institute (VTI)* to duplicate the settings of participating clinics. In order to increase the efficacy of this initiative, the internship program will undergo a thorough reorganization. Participating institutions are required to be actively involved and committed, to offer internship positions and to guarantee that the interns experience a sufficient amount of mentoring. A rotating approach with opportunities for all students of a cohort to do internships at the six specified institutions each year is intended. In exceptional circumstances, students may even have the chance to do numerous internships throughout the course of the three-year study programme. So far, 27 students of the Nursing Programme had the opportunity to go abroad on a study exchange and as another part of these agreements, Heimerer College welcomed 12 international students for a stay in Kosovo. The same holds true for the academic staff with 21 members academic staff having received teaching and training opportunities at European partner institutions and with welcoming 18 international academics in the nursing programme of Heimerer College.

International dimension

In the self-evaluation report, Heimerer College mentions existing collaborative partnerships with international higher-education institutions as a major manifestation of its international orientation and of the exchange of knowledge across borders. With these joint academic initiatives, the department and the students engage in shared learning experiences that foster collaborative projects and expand the scope of nursing education.

The college as well as the students interviewed during the site visit describe the facilitation of student mobility as a part of its commitment towards a com-

prehensive education. For that, the study programme offers exchange opportunities to the students to give them insights into different healthcare systems and allows them to do internships and clinical placements in international healthcare institutions. To ensure a holistic and internationally-oriented education, the study programme strategically integrates international perspectives into its curriculum. For instance, modules address cross-cultural nursing practices to help students with the adaptation of healthcare strategies to diverse target markets.

The programme actively contributes to enhancing nursing knowledge on an international level through international research projects. The faculty and the students engage in collaborative and cross-national research projects which combine different perspectives on pressing healthcare issues. The participation in international conferences enhances the visibility and recognition of the programme and of its commitment to promoting nursing practices on a global scale.

In the self-evaluation report and during the site visit on campus, the college expressed its conviction that these international partnerships with healthcare organizations abroad offer helpful experiences for the students in the nursing programme. These alliances expose students to different healthcare systems and practices and by that, they broaden their understanding for nursing practices. What is more, they create opportunities for joint initiatives and research collaborations and foster the exchange of best practice approaches. Over the past years, the college established mutual agreements with higher education institutions such as Bern University of Applied Sciences (Switzerland) through the signing of a *Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs)*. These agreements are aimed at fostering academic and student mobility as well as joint projects for instance by offering shared lectures. Additionally, the nursing program has been a part of *ERASMUS+ Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE)* projects which led to collaborating with institutions like Manisa Celal Bayar University (Turkey), JAMK University (Finland), Metropolia University (Finland), Carinthia University (Austria), Arteveldehogeschool (Belgium), Nicolaus Copernicus University (Poland), Maribor University (Slovenia), Akdeniz University (Turkey), the Medical Laboratory Association in Tirana (Albania), İstanbul Maltepe University (Turkey), the International University of Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Sakarya University (Turkey) and the network of the Heimerer schools. These partnerships further facilitate international cooperation, knowledge exchange and the advancement of nursing education.

Heimerer College announces that their internationalization strategy includes the expansion of partnerships with international institutions for an increased collaboration, the integration of emerging global health issues into the curriculum to keep students up to date with regard to healthcare advancements and the strengthening of initiatives for student and faculty mobility to foster a continuous exchange of knowledge and experiences.

Enhancing the foreign language skills is another crucial aspect of the international dimension of the study programme. The *International Career Programme* at Heimerer College provides nursing language classes in German ("Pfleger", at level A2 and B1 of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*) and German language courses between the levels A1 and B2. Through partnerships with universities and healthcare institutions in Austria and Germany, the programme offers hands-on training and assists the students with the German diploma recognition procedure.

Staff qualification (see also criterion 5)

According to the self-evaluation report, the composition of the staff involved in the study programme pursued the objective of having various backgrounds and disciplines represented. While the majority of the staff comprises lecturers with a background in nursing, there are also representatives from other fields to ensure a comprehensive coverage of the multidisciplinary content in the programme. Furthermore, the college announces that *Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs)* will be appointed as lecturers for undergraduate nursing courses. This step aims at providing a bridge between academic knowledge and clinical practice by involving experienced APNs into teaching. With their clinical experience and specialized knowledge from the field, the APNs are supposed to enhance the educational process for students. This strategy furthermore aims at improving the quality of education while strengthening the link between theory and practice and expanding the career prospects of the students. During the accreditation process, the college provided access to the CVs of the APNs.

The college representatives point out that they hired nurses who hold a PhD from universities in Austria, Germany and Switzerland and who gained additional working experience at universities abroad. Two staff members graduated from the Master study programme on "Advanced Nursing Practice" while five staff members hold a Master degree in Nursing. Four staff members are currently pursuing a Master degree in "Advanced Nursing Practice".

In addition to that, the college emphasizes that it is committed to fostering the further professional development of its teaching staff by offering them ongoing opportunities for that purpose. The college also puts a focus on providing specialized assistance to individuals facing difficulties and aims at enhancing the familiarity with various teaching methods within the staff. Support for the staff is further facilitated through their engagement in internationally co-funded projects and collaborations with universities and quality organizations within the European Union and beyond. With regard to ensuring the quality of the academic staff, the college refers to its adherence to the *Quality Assurance Strategy and Policy* as well as to the *Regulations on the Quality Assurance System*. In these documents, the college outlines its plan to promote the skill-enhancement opportunities, encourages staff development, defines expected outcomes and facilitates the collection and analysis of relevant data. The college describes these measures to aim at ensuring a

high standard of teaching quality and at further improving the competences of the academic staff.

Assessment

Programme profile and objectives

Based on the written documents provided by the college and on the discussion rounds during the site visit, the experts come to the conclusion that Heimerer College offers a high-quality education programme in nursing on the bachelor level. They could see that the college management, the teaching staff and the students and alumni are all aware of the need for training additional specialists in nursing in order to address this need on the Kosovan labour market. At the same time, they acknowledge the efforts made by the college to prepare the students for a further professional or academic career abroad. However, 885 hours of lectures and exercises and 1995 hours of self-study might be in line with the European standards of theoretical teaching in "Nursing (B. Sc.)", since self-study needs structure, specific goals, guidance and assessment in the end showing that the goals are reached. The college therefore should specify in detail that self-study in this programme is equivalent to the amount of theoretical teaching according to European standards. The college representatives indicated to take further action in that regard. As a first step, they drafted a module catalogue with revised numbers of hours across lectures, laboratory exercises and self-studying for the modules.

The experts consider the objectives of the study program "Nursing (B. Sc.)" to be fully in line with the profile and the strategic goals of Heimerer College.

Learning outcomes

The experts appreciate the clear overview on the intended learning outcomes and the distinction of learning outcomes related to knowledge, practice skills and professionalism. In addition to that, the contents of the modules are well defined and described in the syllabuses so that the learning outcomes can also be derived on a more small-scale level for each course. The experts wish to reinforce the announcement made by the college in the self-evaluation report according to which the learning outcomes and the module descriptions will be made publicly accessible on the internet.

Besides, the expert panel considers the learning outcomes to be adequate for the type and the level of qualification of the study programme to be accredited. The detailed handbook of nursing practice is specific and comprehensive and – as stated by the students interviewed – it is in everyday use. In cases of not reaching competence goals in practice phases, lab learning is offered at the college to compensate this. However, the differentiation of "achieved" versus "not achieved" is not very specific and detailed items and explanations, checklists or rubrics would be helpful. Furthermore, they rec-

ognize the comprehensive efforts by the college to align the programme profile and the intended learning outcomes to professional and academic guidelines (also on the international level) and also praise the openness by the college to adapt the contents of the study programme to the nursing education programmes offered by other higher-education institutions in various European countries.

Relation to academic and professional requirements and public needs

Throughout the entire site visit, it became clear to the expert panel that there is a high degree of employability for graduates of the study programme. This was confirmed by the experiences the alumni reported from their own entrance into the labour market. Moreover, the experts can understand the need for well-trained nurses within the Kosovan society due to demographic transitions but also given the prevalent emigration by healthcare professionals to other countries. In this context, the experts approve of the college offering an educational programme that nonetheless supports and prepares the students for pursuing a professional or academic career outside of Kosovo and consequently, lets the students have a say whether they want to work in Kosovo or abroad after their studies.

Relation between study and research

The experts could see from the curriculum and from the course descriptions that research methods are a relevant factor in the study programme. The thesis at the end of the study programme fulfils the standards of scientific work and of academic writing. It also became obvious to the expert panel that the college undertakes multiple measures to link teaching with the practical application of the course contents. The different projects and laboratory infrastructures underline that the students are confronted with findings from recent research and involved in research projects. The connection between research and teaching manifests itself exemplarily through the research project on using robotics and on applying digital healthcare. This linkage between studying and focusing on state-of-the-art research clearly finds acclaim by the students as the experts found out during the site visit. However, for learning related to virtual reality (VR) as well as in simulation learning, adequate instruction by teachers and sufficient support for the students needs to be ensured by the college according to the experts.

International dimension

The experts consider the international orientation to be one of the main advantages of the study programme and the college in general. They recognize the efforts by the university to promote international exchanges for students but also for the academic staff. Also the alignment of the study programme

to similar curricula from higher-education institutions across Europe broadens the international dimension of the nursing programme and increases the students' chances of spending a study period abroad while attending courses that are comparable to the curriculum at Heimerer College. As already outlined for the programme profile, the study programme is designed along national and international standards.

Staff qualification (see also criterion 5)

According to the expert panel, the academic and teaching staff is adequately qualified with regard to the profile and the objectives of the nursing study programme. Moreover, the experts agree with the college that the study programme will benefit from hiring additional staff members who hold a PhD in nursing and have academic experience from universities abroad. Besides, the experts are convinced that the integration of Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs) and their profound professional experiences into the staff will prove advantageous as well. The measures of supporting the teaching personnel and of ensuring the teaching quality are deemed adequate as well by the experts. However, a structured staff onboarding and continuous training (e. g. with regard to digital learning tools, VR based teaching as well as simulation based scenarios, debriefing and competence-based examination methods) might be helpful.

Areas for improvement

While the experts appreciate the efforts by the college to foster international exchange for students and to support them pursuing a career abroad, they did not fully understand whether all graduates of the study programme are technically eligible to work in another country or if there are some additional requirements to be met that are not automatically achieved when graduating from the study programme. Hence, the experts would like to ask the college to elaborate on possible specifications and regulations for students seeking employment in another country as they also think that the students would benefit from additional clarity in that regard. The college points out that its International Career Centre offers support and resources for that. However, it is also acknowledged that guidance for students and their international career aspirations is another aspect that the college should focus on in the future.

Recommendations

The college should specify in detail that self-study in the programme is equivalent to the amount of theoretical teaching according to European standards.

The college should clarify if there are additional regulations or requirements for students aiming at pursuing a career abroad that go beyond merely graduating from the study programme.

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. 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 are taken into account.

Current status

Programme structure

The study programme "Nursing (B. Sc.)" is a three-year full-time programme with a total of 180 ECTS (*European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System*) credits. Each of the six semesters requires the attainment of 30 ECTS credits on average. The first and the second semester are the only exceptions from this average value, with 28 ECTS credits to be achieved in the first semester and 32 ECTS credits being the target amount for the second semester. The table below shows the courses offered in the study programme, along with the amount of ECTS credits and the allocation of hours for each course. These time specifications are divided into three categories: lecture (L), nursing labs exercises (Lab E), and self-studies (S/S). In addition to that, the table also contains the names of the staff and assistants assigned to each course. Also, the cumulative clinical hours for each specific course are listed as clinical practice alongside the number of ECTS credits. Elective courses are marked with the letter E. The college explains that the theoretical and the practical contents are variously distributed across the course of studies but that theoretical teaching accounts for at least one third of the overall hours of studying whereas the practical part of the curriculum amounts to at least 50% of the entire number of hours to be spent by the students.

1 st year							
First Semester, 1 st Year		Hour/week			Professor & teaching Ass		
No.	O/E	Module	L	Lab E	S/S	ECTS	
1	O	Nursing Care	30	3 0	150	7	Prof. Ass. Dr. Naime Brajshori MSc. Lulezim Gashi MSc. Florent Nimani BSc. Clemens Pappritz (Guest Lecturer)
2	O	Ethics and Philosophy and Legislation in Nursing Care	15	15	60	3	PhD. Ditar Kabashi PhD. Cand. Kaltrina Azizi MSc. Elona Bellaja
3	O	Anatomy and Physiology	15	15	60	3	Prof. Ass. Dr. Gazmend Bojaj MD. Gloriosa Dobra
4.	O	General Pathology and Physiopathology	15	15	60	3	PhD. Rukije Mehmeti MSc. Arjeta Zhubi
5.	O	Methods of Education and Health Promotion	15	15	60	3	PhD. Cand. Besarta Taganoviq MSc. Endrit Nimani
5.	O	Scientific English for Nurses	15	15	60	3	Prof. Ass. Dr. Linda Ukimeraj
6	O	Biochemistry and Biophysics	15	15	60	3	Prof. Ass. Dr. Shemi Veseli
1	E	Elective Course	15	15	60	3	N/A
Total for first semester, 1st year					28		
Second Semester, 1 st Year							
1	O	Nursing Care in Geriatric, Gerontology and Rehabilitation	30	15	105	5	Prof. Ass. Dr. Flaka Siqeca PhD. Cand. Klara Cahani
2	O	Pharmacology and Dosology for Nursing	15	15	60	3	PhD. Cand. Natyra Kastrati MSc. Blerta Haxha
3	O	Microbiology and Parasitology	15	15	60	3	PhD. Agim Osmani
4	O	Clinical Practice I	540 clinical hours			18	MSc. Aferdita Mustafa MSc. Arjeta Zhubi
5	E	Elective Course	15	15	60	3	N/A
Total for second semester, 1st year					32		
Total for 1st year					60		
2 nd Year							
Third Semester, 2 nd Year							
1	O	Paediatrics and Nursing Care for Children and Adolescents	15	15	60	3	MSc. Aferdita Mustafa MSc. Edita Krajnova
2	O	Gynaecology and Obstetrics with Nursing Care for Women's Health	15	15	60	3	PhD. Cand. Besarta Taganoviq MSc. Fitore Bajraktari
3	O	Public Health with Epidemiology and Nutrition	15	15	60	3	Prof. Ass. Dr. Bernard Tahibergolli MSc. Albin Pllana
4	O	Clinical Practice II	540 clinical hours			18	MSc. Fitore Bajraktari MSc. Edita Krajnova
5	E	Elective Course	15	15	60	3	N/A
Total for third semester, 2nd year					30		
Fourth Semester, 2 nd Year							
1	O	Nursing Care of Internal Medicine Patient	15	15	60	3	Prof. Ass. Dr. Petrit Beqiri PhD. Cand. Adelina Lahu
2	O	Psychology and communication in Nursing Care	15	15	60	3	Prof. Ass. Dr. Nevzat Shemsedini MSc. Else Zejnnullahu
3	O	Sociology of Health and Disease	15	15	60	3	Prof. Ass. Dr. Flaka Siqeca PhD. Cand. Ganimete Zogaj MSc. Flaka Emini
4	O	Research and Evidence Based Practice in Nursing Care	15	15	60	3	Prof. Ass. Dr. Vjose Hajrullahu PhD. Cand. Besarta Taganoviq
5	O	Clinical Practice III	450 clinical hours			15	PhD. Cand. Adelina Lahu MSc. Else Zejnnullahu
6	E	Elective Course	15	15	60	3	N/A
Total for fourth semester, 2nd year					30		
Total for 2nd year					60		
3 rd year							
Fifth Semester, 3 rd Year							
1	O	Psychiatric Nursing and Mental Health	15	15	60	3	Prof. Ass. Dr. Bujar Obertinca MSc. Qemajl Krasniqi
2	O	Community Health Nursing	15	15	60	3	Prof. Ass. Dr. Blerim Hetemi MSc. Arjeta Zhubi MSc. Else Zejnnullahu
3	O	Organization, Management, Quality and Safety in Nursing Care	15	15	60	3	Prof. Ass. Dr. Naime Brajshori PhD. Shehide Qerimaj Lushtaku
4	O	Clinical Practice IV	540 clinical hours			18	MSc. Qemajl Krasniqi MSc. Arjeta Zhubi MSc. Else Zejnnullahu
1	E	Elective Course	15	15	60	3	N/A

Total for fifth semester, 3 rd year						30
Sixth Semester, 3 rd Year						
1	O	Nursing Care for Surgery Patients	15	15	60	3 MD. Nazmi Kolgeci MSc. Aferdita Mustafa MSc. Liridon Marku
2	O	Emergency Medical Service	15	15	60	3 MD. Ismet Jusufi PhD. Cand Kaltrina Azizi MSc. Lulezim Gashi
3	O	Clinical Practice V	450 clinical hours			15 MSc. Liridon Marku MSc. Lulezim Gashi
5	E	Elective Course	15	15	60	3 N/A
5	O	Diploma Work			180	6 N/A
Total for sixth semester, 3 rd year						30
Total for 3 rd year						60
Total for BSc level						180

Elective courses

First Year

No.	E	Module	Hour/week				ECTS	Professor
			L	Lab	E	S/S		
1	E	Academic Writing	15	15	60	3	Prof. Ass. Dr. Diedon Dorambari MSc. Endrit Nimani	
2	E	Prevention and Control of Nosocomial Infections	15	15	60	3	MD. Njomza Ukaj MSc. Aferdita Mustafa	
3	E	Health Information Systems	15	15	60	3	PhD. Liridon Bllaca	
4	E	Environmental Impact on Health Protection	15	15	60	3	Prof. Ass. Dr. Ilirjana Bajraktari	

Second year

1	E	Palliative Nursing Care and Oncologic Patients	15	15	60	3	Prof. Ass. Dr. Ilirjana Alloqi
2	E	Applied Statistics in Health Sciences	15	15	60	3	Prof. Ass. Dr. Diedon Dorambari
3	E	Immunology and Infectious Disease	15	15	60	3	Prof. Ass. Dr. Petrit Beqiri
4	E	Healthy Aging	15	15	60	3	Prof. Ass. Dr. Flaka Siqueca

Third Year

1	E	Entrepreneurship and Innovation	15	15	60	3	PhD. Cand. Adnan Hoxha
2	E	Project Writing	15	15	60	3	PhD. Cand. Adnan Hoxha MSc. Albin Pllana
3	E	Anaesthesia and Nursing Care in Intensive Units	15	15	60	3	PhD. Ismet Jusufi MSc. Liridon Marku
4	E	Wound and Pain Management	15	15	60	3	Prof. Ass. Dr. Blerim Hetemi

Table 3: Curriculum (as shown in the self-evaluation report)

Organisation of students' learning experience

The curriculum contains 32 courses in total, of which 26 are mandatory courses and 6 are elective courses. There are 2520 clinical hours in total. The college states in the self-evaluation report that the *National Qualifications Framework*, the *European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education*, and the *International Council of Nurses (ICN)* criteria were all considered for the strategic development of the learning objectives for the programme.

The programme is precisely regulated and comprehensively described through syllabuses that have been developed with the academic staff and by looking at other nursing and healthcare study programmes and at recent advancements in the nursing field. Each syllabus serves as a detailed document that provides essential information about the module, including its academic unit, level, status, year of study, number of classes, ECTS credits as well as the full name and contact details of the lecturers and programme administration. The syllabus begins with a description of the module and outlines its

purpose and defines the expected learning outcomes. It furthermore specifies the various activities in the course, such as lectures, exercises, practical work, consultations, field exercises, classroom sessions, seminars, assignments, self-assessment, tests, final exams, projects and presentations. The college states that these activities are carefully distributed across hours, days, and weeks to provide a structured learning experience for each module. By providing detailed information on the module content, learning outcomes, activities, teaching methods, assessment methods and the workload for students, the syllabuses serve as a tool for both students and teachers to find orientation in the curriculum.

Module: Nursing Care in Geriatric, Gerontology and Rehabilitation

ECTS Credits: 5

Professor: Prof. Ass. Dr. Flaka Siqeca,

Assistant: Ph. D. cand. Klara Cahani

Course description:

This module, which focuses on geriatric, gerontological, and rehabilitation nursing, aims to give nursing students the specific knowledge and abilities needed to offer thorough and compassionate care for the elderly population. The necessity for healthcare providers who can meet the particular requirements of the elderly is only going to increase as our society becomes older. This module explores the theories, methods, and guiding principles of nursing care in the context of aging and rehabilitation in an effort to equip nursing students to meet this demand.

Learning Outcomes:

- This comprehensive learning program is designed to provide participants with a profound understanding of geriatric and rehabilitation nursing. The key learning objectives span various crucial domains to ensure a holistic and effective approach to caring for older adults.
- Explore the physiological and psychological changes associated with aging. analyse prevalent health issues and conditions among the elderly. Formulate strategies to promote healthy aging and prevent age-related complications.
- Examine the holistic care needs of older adults, addressing their physical, mental, and social well-being. Acquire communication skills vital for effective engagement with elderly individuals and their families. Address ethical considerations and cultivate cultural competence in gerontological nursing.
- Gain insight into rehabilitation principles and practices for individuals recovering from illness, injury, or surgery in elderly patients. Learn to assess functional abilities and formulate tailored rehabilitation

plans for elderly patients. Explore interdisciplinary collaboration and coordination of care in rehabilitation settings.

- Develop hands-on clinical skills essential for geriatric and rehabilitation nursing, including mobility assistance, wound care, and medication management. Engage in simulated scenarios to enhance critical thinking and decision-making in complex care situations.
- Emphasize the importance of patient-centred care, respecting the autonomy and preferences of elderly individuals. Foster a compassionate and empathetic approach to nursing care for the aging population

Learning and Teaching Methods:

- Theoretical information is delivered through lectures, seminars, and workshops.
- Practical hands-on experience will be obtained through practical hours in simulation labs and case studies.
- Guest lectures by geriatric and rehabilitation nursing professionals.

Assessment Methods:

- Practical assessments evaluating clinical skills and application in geriatric and rehabilitation settings is a criteria for entering final examination.

Final assessment:

- Written examinations assessing theoretical knowledge.
- Class/Participation Assignments
- An alternative option for evaluation in this module is the successful passage of two colloquiums.

Teaching tools/IT:

- Digital Flipchart
- VR/AR for case scenarios
- Computers
- Audio and Visual tools

Ratio between theoretical and practical part of the study in the module:

Lec- ture/Seminar	Clinical cise	Exer- -	Clinical tice	Prac- -	Self- Study	Work- load
30	15		-		105	150

Literature:

1. Garrett, D. 2012. New Insights in Aging: 500 words at a time
2. Arnett, Dixon and Chan, Wende Dawson, The Wisdom To Choose: A Comprehensive Guide to Health and Independence for Elders. Northridge, CA: Studio 4 Productions, 2002.
3. Handbook of Theories of Aging: Vern L, Bengtson and K. Warner Schaie, Editors by Vern L. Bengtson, Klaus Warner Schaie. Springer Publishing Company, 1999
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5. Northrup, Christiane, M.D., Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom. New York: Bantam/Dell Publishing Group, 1998. F.
6. Thomas, William H., M.D., Life Worth Living: How Someone You Love Can Still Enjoy Life in a Nursing Home. Acton, MA: Wanderwyck & Bunham, 1997.
7. Weston, Liz Pulliam, "Most Households Not Saving Enough for Retirement, Analysis Shows," Business Section, 4/27,00. Los Angeles: The Los Angeles Times, 2000.
8. Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy

Table 4: Sample of a syllabus (as shown in the module catalogue)

The curriculum is furthermore characterized by practical components that the college designed to provide undergraduate nursing students with extensive exposure to clinical settings and to nursing practice. This includes hands-on experiences in various healthcare facilities where the students work directly with patients under the supervision of experienced mentors. The clinical practice component is organized for student groups (approximately ten students per group) and is in line with the institutional capacities and regulations and specifications outlined in the nursing curriculum. By actively participating in the clinical practice, the students gain practical insights into the challenges of patient care, enhance their nursing skills and apply theoretical knowledge in real-life situations.

The clinical practice is a fundamental component of the study programme and is conducted under the guidance of clinical mentors who are registered nurses and appointed across the healthcare system in Kosovo. The healthcare system in Kosovo is made up of a wide variety of facilities that offer medical treatment. These facilities include primary care facilities, secondary care facilities, and tertiary care institutions. **Primary healthcare facilities** serve as the first point of contact for individuals seeking healthcare services. They are located in various cities and municipalities throughout Kosovo

and are responsible for providing primary healthcare services, health promotion, preventive care, and early intervention. These institutions are typically staffed with general practitioners, nurses, and other healthcare professionals who deliver essential healthcare services to the community. Regional hospitals in Kosovan cities serve as **secondary healthcare facilities**. These hospitals provide highly-specialized medical services and procedures that need more specialist knowledge and advanced equipment. They feature specialized departments and sections, including those for surgery, internal medicine, gynecology, obstetrics and pediatrics. Patients forwarded from primary healthcare facilities can get advanced medical care, diagnostic procedures, surgeries, and specialty treatments in secondary healthcare institutions. The *University Clinical Centre of Kosovo (UCCK)*, a significant referral and teaching hospital, is the primary representative of **tertiary healthcare facilities** in Kosovo. As a comprehensive medical facility, *UCCK* offers intricate and highly-specialized healthcare services. Advanced clinical procedures, medical research, and teaching are clustered there. Cardiology, neurology, oncology, critical care, emergency medicine and other specialist units are examples of the specialist departments and units that tertiary healthcare facilities like *UCCK* have.

The college has established *Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs)* in collaboration with these healthcare institutions. These formal agreements outline the mutual commitments and partnerships between the college and the healthcare institutions in Kosovo. These *MoUs* further facilitate the exchange of knowledge, resources and expertise between the study programme and the healthcare institutions and provide a framework for cooperations and shared educational opportunities, clinical placements, research collaborations as well as professional development initiatives.

The practical hours for students start in the first year of studying (specifically in the second semester) within primary healthcare institutions in Kosovo. This initial clinical practice covers 18 ECTS credits (equivalent to 540 clinical hours). In the second year, during the third semester, students engage in clinical practice within secondary healthcare institutions, including the seven regional hospitals located in different cities across Kosovo. This practice phase entails 18 ECTS credits as well and is divided into two specialized areas: pediatrics and clinics or wards for gynecology/obstetrics. In the fourth semester, the students move on towards the clinical practice in the field of internal medicine at secondary healthcare facilities, for which they get 15 ECTS credits (equivalent to 450 clinical hours). The clinical practice during the third year is primarily focused on the tertiary healthcare sector, namely the *University Clinical Centre of Kosovo (UCCK)*: In the fifth semester, students undergo clinical practice amounting to 18 ECTS credits (equivalent to 540 clinical hours), which are divided into two domains: mental health and community care. In the sixth semester, students continue their clinical practice in surgery clinics, accumulating approximately 450 clinical hours and 15 ECTS credits. Each student is provided with a *Notebook of Practice* which

serves as a record of their daily study activities and progress towards achieving the required competences of each year. At the end of each clinical practice phase, the students undergo evaluation sessions conducted in nursing labs. These evaluations entail performing various nursing procedures under the supervision of course assistants who have a background in nursing and specialized knowledge in the specific area of the practice being assessed. Evaluation forms are utilized to assess and document the performance of each student, ensuring a comprehensive and standardized evaluation process. These evaluation procedures and documentation serve as tools for monitoring the students' practical skills development and providing constructive feedback.

The internship component of the curriculum includes placements at both public and private healthcare facilities that have infrastructures for nursing services. The students participate in peer-supervision sessions and have a venue to talk professionally about their cases with the experts they work with outside Heimerer College. The students get instructions and guidance before participating in these sessions to make sure that they are prepared for this collaborative learning experience. The students are additionally supervised by academic personnel throughout the internship who offer guidance and assistance on the job and by that, foster the students' educational progress. The expert panel was provided a list of healthcare institutions cooperating with Heimerer College for these practice phases.

The curriculum uses a wide variety of teaching methods, such as lectures, seminars, hands-on activities, and clinical practice. With these interactive lessons, the college aims at actively involving the students. Additionally, there is a focus on individual efforts, for instance when the students work with their mentors and participate in academic activities. Consequently, each student has the chance to get a learning experience that is specifically adjusted to her or his individual needs and interests and aims at providing a better grasp of the course contents. In the self-evaluation report as well as during the site visit, the college stated that input by the students is appreciated and considered for the development of instructional strategies. The students and alumni confirmed to the expert panel that they perceive their feedback to be important for the college staff that is responsible for teaching and the administration.

Mechanisms for providing knowledge and application of scientific methods

The main teaching methods used in the study programme are the following:

- **Blended Learning** combines traditional teaching inside a classroom with online learning activities. Nursing students participate in a combination of in-person meetings and online learning units in a blended learning setting. With this teaching method, students may access course materials, take part in online conversations, and complete projects at their own speed. Hence, flexibility and individualized learning is fostered. Technology and interactive

online materials are used to improve the learning experience, to encourage active participation among the students and to offer chances for collaborations between students and teachers through blended learning. Blended learning in the education on nursing aims at providing a dynamic and engaging learning environment that supports student accomplishment and the development of critical nursing competences by integrating the advantages of both in-person and online learning.

- **Practice-Based Learning** emphasizes the use of theoretical knowledge and abilities in actual clinical situations. This strategy highlights the value of practical experience and active involvement in nursing. The students participate in supervised clinical practice through practice-based learning, giving them the chance to watch and actively take part in all areas of patient care while being guided by experienced mentors. By immediately applying their knowledge in actual healthcare settings, this teaching method enables students to improve their clinical reasoning, critical thinking and technical skills. Students get a greater awareness of the challenges and difficulties of nursing practice by participating in patient encounters, evaluations, treatments and multidisciplinary teamwork. Additionally, practice-based learning encourages the growth of professionalism among the students as they can continuously enhance their competences, their confidence and their professional identity as aspiring nurses through inner reflection and external feedback.

- **Research-Based Learning** focuses on integrating research concepts and evidence-based practice into the teaching and the learning process for the students. This method enables students to actively participate in research projects, critically evaluate the data that is already available, and enhance their knowledge on nursing. The students gain knowledge on how to formulate research questions, study relevant literature, gather and analyze data, and interpret research findings through research-based learning. They gain expertise in statistical analysis, study design and evidence evaluation which is beneficial for their abilities of clinical judgments and patient care. Nursing students who participate in research-based learning may have a greater comprehension of the value of evidence-based practice and support the continued advancement of the nursing profession via research inquiry and implementation.

- **Design thinking** incorporates a methodological approach that aims at enabling students to define, conceptualize and create prototypes, test out solutions, and put them into practice. Through attentive listening, careful observation, and active participation, students may get a thorough grasp of the needs and perspectives of patients. They are able to learn crucial information about the difficulties patients and healthcare stakeholders encounter as a result.

- **Project-Based Learning** requires students to work on projects that address challenging subjects or solve real-world problems. They create a product or give a public presentation for a real audience to share their expertise.

- **Problem-Based Learning** is a student-centred approach with students gaining knowledge on a subject by working in groups. Next to the progress made in terms of learning, this approach improves a variety of abilities, including problem-solving skills, critical thinking, communication, leadership, and teamwork.

- **Simulation-Based Learning** is a teaching strategy that gives nursing students hands-on learning opportunities by using virtual surroundings and realistic scenarios. The students get the chance to practice their clinical abilities, judgment and communication in a secure environment. Students can learn from errors, obtain feedback, and check their performance through simulations by employing mannequins, virtual reality or standardized patients. Additionally, simulation-based learning encourages cross-disciplinary cooperation and teamwork. Overall, the college considers it to be an effective strategy for improving the students' clinical abilities and to prepare them for patient care in their professional life.

Assessment

Programme structure

The expert panel assesses the curriculum of the study programme as adequately and logically structured to make sure that graduates will have achieved the intended learning outcomes. The syllabuses give comprehensive insights so that the experts can see that the students get a solid education on various academic and professional aspects of nursing. Besides, the experts are convinced that the students themselves benefit from the syllabuses as they get an informative impression of which learning outcomes, workload and assessment procedures they can expect in a course.

The experts consider the students' workload to be high, especially given the frequency of practice phases in the programme. But according to the students and alumni who the experts met during the site visit, the workload is manageable.

Mechanisms for providing knowledge and application of scientific methods

The experts could see that the curriculum provides the necessary knowledge and methodological expertise in the field of nursing. The college applies traditional and innovative teaching methods – and a combination thereof – that help convey the intended learning outcomes. Besides, the experts recognize the mentoring system to be beneficial for the students as they have a person to turn to if they need individual support for certain learning objectives. The students and alumni confirm this impression and furthermore emphasize their active involvement in course activities.

Organisation of students' learning experience

The diversity of teaching methods, the important role of practice phases and the mentoring system are all factors that the experts consider to be contributing to the organization of a learning experience that takes the diversity of students and their needs into account, employs appropriate student-centred teaching and learning methods and encourages students to take an active part in creating the learning process. The students and alumni praised these teaching elements as well during the site visit and also stated that the rather small group sizes in the courses give them the chance to adequately practice in class.

Areas for improvement

Apart from their positive assessment of the curriculum, the experts identified some aspects of the programme "Nursing (B. Sc.)" that the college might consider to adjust so that the learning experience for the students can be improved further.

The information in the self-evaluation report stating that at least one third of the total amount of teaching hours should be dedicated to theoretical teaching contents was difficult to retrace for the experts when looking into the syllabuses describing the modules. Since they consider the share of theoretical nursing aspects to be comparatively low from what they could see in the documents provided by the university, the experts would like the college to elaborate a bit further and in-depth on how the intended amount of theoretical teaching in the study programme is reached. As outlined above (see "Programme profile and objectives"), the experts think that 885 hours of theoretical teaching would be below the European standards and therefore they ask the college to provide a detailed description if self-study hours are expected to compensate for this shortage of theoretical teaching hours. They also think that the current and future students would benefit from a clearer overview in that regard.

The experts acknowledge that the college expressed the intention to expand the use of digitalization in the study programme, for instance for the notebook that is used to keep track of the students' learning progress and achievements. However, they recommend to consider an integration of digital tools such as *augmented reality (AR)* or *virtual reality (VR)* into the curriculum and the teaching methods. The students and alumni agreed with this idea and can imagine that they would benefit from an increased familiarity with digital and technical tools. In that regard, the experts point out that VR and simulation learning need trained instructors, concepts and examination methods. The college indicated that integrating these advanced technologies is an objective to be pursued for the further development of the study programme.

While the experts conclude that research skills and academic writing have a sufficient significance in the curriculum, they got the impression from talking

to the students and alumni that there is a wish for a higher steadiness and regularity of research-related contents being addressed during the three-year study programme. The experts suggest to the heads of the study programme to check how research skills may be reinforced within the curriculum so that students approach their first individually conducted research tasks with greater confidence. The college acknowledged that there is a gap in the curriculum on computer and software usage for the advancement of academic writing and database searches. The college representatives announced that incorporating specific modules or workshops on these topics will be considered.

The experts understood that the students are provided with a notebook that helps both the students and the teaching staff to check which practical learning objectives have been achieved already. Moreover, the notebook serves as a documental bridge between the college and the healthcare institutions where the students gain their practical experiences. In that regard, the experts wonder how the college can make sure that there is no mismatch between the state-of-the-art nursing skills as listed and required in the students' notebooks and the for some nursing-instances possibly old-fashioned approaches by the mentors who instruct and guide the students during the practice phases. Consequently, the experts advise the college to try to make sure that the students are confronted with cutting-edge skills also when they are not taught by the staff of Heimerer College. The college outlines in an initial statement that they aim at minimizing this risk by reviewing the educational materials to ensure that they will continuously cover the current best practices and state-of-the-art nursing skills and by additionally keeping a focus on the training of the clinical mentors before each start of internship modules.

When looking at the curriculum and at the syllabuses, the experts noticed that the amount of hours designated for laboratory exercises in non-clinical modules is always 15 hours (except for one module). The experts wondered if such an equalization of laboratory exercises can reflect the content-related differences across modules and the possible need for additional time in the laboratory exercises for some modules. Hence, the experts advise the college to check if a consistent amount of time for laboratory exercises across different modules is appropriate or if there are courses that could benefit from adjusting the time specifications for laboratory exercises.

In response to a question by the experts during the interviews, the study programme representatives stated that soft-skills linked to the communication with patients are covered in the basic modules as well as in specific modules on the interaction with different patient groups. However, the experts advise the college to clarify in the descriptions of the entire programme and of specific modules if and how the communication skills of students are addressed and strengthened in the curriculum. In their statement, the college representatives elaborated on the acquisition of communication skills across the curriculum.

Recommendations

The college should clarify and illustrate more detailed how the intended share of one third of the total study hours being dedicated to theoretical teaching contents is actually reached in the curriculum.

The college should consider an extended integration of digital tools such as *augmented reality (AR)* or *virtual reality (VR)* into the curriculum and the teaching methods of the study programme.

The college should find ways to reinforce the role of research skills within the curriculum so that students are confronted more steadily with these basic skills that are needed for academic projects and an academic career.

The college should make sure that there is no mismatch between the state-of-the-art nursing skills as listed and required in the students' notebooks and the for some nursing-related instances possibly old-fashioned approaches by the mentors who instruct and guide the students during the practice phases outside the college.

Given the range of nursing aspects addressed in the curriculum, the college should check if the widely consistent amount of hours intended for laboratory exercises across modules is adequate or if adjustments might be beneficial for certain modules.

The college should clarify in the description of the study programme and of the modules if and how the patient communication skills of students are addressed and strengthened.

3. Student assessment

The third criterion focuses on the organisation of student assessments. The expert panel has to evaluate how the assessment of intended learning outcomes is organised and whether the amount and requirements of assessments are adequate. They also have to 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. Finally, 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

Organisation of assessment

As for the organisation of assessments, Heimerer College refers to its *Regulation for Teachers*, its *Regulation on Studies*, and its *Guideline for Academic Staff* that make sure that there is a monitoring of procedures in the teaching

process, the exercises and the practical phases through monthly reports as well as a through a regular monitoring of processes that ensure the effectiveness of the implementation of the learning process. These documents have been made available to the expert panel.

The college states that there are clear procedures for ensuring the fulfilment of teaching and learning standards and learning outcomes. After a quality report on the evaluation of teachers is prepared, the Deans propose the list of teachers to the Academic Council that subsequently evaluates these lists according to professional criteria. Afterwards, teachers submit the syllabus of their subject. The syllabus is evaluated by the Dean's Office, the Quality Assurance Office and the office of the Vice-Rector for Teaching with regard to it addressing all topics and achieving the required learning outcomes for the students. The teaching and assessment methods as well as the literature and other didactic resources are reviewed to determine if they are adequate for the intended learning outcomes and compatible with the level of the study programme. These are prerequisites to ensure that the teacher fulfils the institutional teaching policies, contributes to the learning achievements of the students and ensures a high quality of teaching while at the same time having academic freedom and integrity.

The syllabus of a module begins with basic information regarding the academic unit, subject, level, status of the subject, year of study, number of hours, ECTS credits, place, name and surname of the teachers engaged as well as contact details of teachers and the profile. The syllabus continues with a description of the subject, the expected learning outcomes and a table setting out the activities (lectures, exercises, practical work, consultations, field exercises, colloquiums, seminars, assignments, self-study, exam preparation, tests, quizzes, final exams, projects, and presentations). Then it continues with the elaboration of the teaching methods, the assessment methods and the literature (basic and supplementary).

Amount and requirements of assessments

According to the self-evaluation report by the college, all of the study programmes are fully in line with development policies of the *National Qualifications Framework (NQF)* and the *European Qualifications Framework for the Higher Education Area (EQFHEA)*. The management of each study programme continually seeks to improve the quality based on the *NQF* and *EQFHE* by providing transparency and by striving for progress and continuous development. The programmes offer students the opportunity of flexible learning, focusing on the demands of individual students that are in line with the requirements by the *NQF* and *EQFHEA*.

The Dean's Office and the Quality Office within the college are responsible for guaranteeing and assuring a high level of quality while complying with the above-mentioned rules and laws. These offices ensure that the knowledge,

the skills and the competences conveyed in the study program are correct, objective, valid, reliable, practical, transparent and effective.

The college aims at adjusting the assessments at the expected results of each course in order to ensure the provision of quality teaching that leads the students to achieving the competences of each course and of the entire field of nursing. The college points out that there are filter mechanisms, such as an ongoing monitoring of its implementation and ongoing evaluations of knowledge, skills and competences.

With regard to the requirements of the assessments of the practical parts in the curriculum, the college provides additional explanations. After the end of the clinical internship period, students are evaluated by the clinical mentors and the assistants of exercises in a direct on-site assessment that consists of an assessment form and an exam to prove that the students have achieved the required standard of practical knowledge, skills, and competences. The activities of the students during the practice phases are determined by the competences that are intended to be achieved in a module. During the students' internships, they are required to make a report of their internship each day in which they reflect on their work in the notebooks. All these reports and reflections are reviewed by the mentors and allow a check of all the activities that students have described during their internship. As a result, suggestions and recommendations are given to the students. The exam at the end of each internship module consists of case studies. This allows a link between the theoretical and the practical part. Consequently, the evaluation of the students' performance is made according to *Bloom's Taxonomy* which means that lectures, exercises, and clinical hours are jointly evaluated. Thus, the evaluation of the students' practical abilities is done by a team including lecturers, assistants and clinical mentors who all adhere to the same evaluation approach.

Besides the evaluations organized by the academic staff, Heimerer College undertakes an extra evaluation that is carried out by two other entities within the college. These are the Vice – Rector for Teaching and the Quality Assurance Office. At the end of each academic year and together with the Dean's Office, these two offices organize the *Quality Week* during which all students from all study programmes and all cohorts across the college face an overall evaluation. The college uses the outcomes of these *Quality Weeks* as an indicator of the learning progress achieved by the students and of possible problems and shortcomings that need to be addressed. This is done by exposing the students to different tasks, such as individual interviews, questionnaires to test the students' professional skills and the writing of a substantial essay. Like that, the college collects data on the students' professional knowledge, their skills and competences that they acquired during their previous studies. At the same time, two methods are used in order to evaluate the students' technical and social skills. These are exposing them to professional problems that need to be solved and initiating role plays among

the students. With these approaches, the college aims at evaluating the students' skill-sets that are considered a crucial aspect of academic work. Besides, the college uses the findings from these activities for the advancement of didactic methods and of teaching or learning processes in general.

Requirements of the thesis and the reflection of the level of the degree

In the syllabuses of the study programme, it is stated that students receive 6 ECTS credits for successfully writing their bachelor thesis which is supposed to require 180 hours of self-study. The thesis is intended to provide an opportunity for the students to combine their theoretical knowledge, their practical skills and evidence-based research to address a relevant issue or question in the field of nursing. The assessment is determined by the project proposal (if applicable), the literature review, the project implementation, the analysis of data (if applicable), the final written report and an oral presentation of it. In the self-evaluation report, the college states that there are two criteria for a subject of a bachelor thesis. First, it needs to address a core topic of the study programme and second, it needs to be a research topic that allows students to contribute to the state of research in their field after having identified a gap or a problem that needs to be addressed and requires further knowledge. In order to assess whether a student's thesis is original and self-written, the students are required to sign a declaration in which they take formal responsibility for the originality of their work. In cooperation with the Research Office of the college, the thesis is then checked to determine if it is original or if there is a case of plagiarism. The latter would initiate procedural steps as determined in the *Study Regulations*.

The transparency and consistency of the assessment criteria

After the enrolment of new students, the college organizes *open days* and an *orientation week* to welcome the new student cohort. On that occasion, students receive a USB flash drive on which the *Study Regulations*, the syllabuses and further detailed information about the institutional regulations are stored. Moreover, the students are reminded of the assessment criteria on the first page of each exam.

The following grades are used for the assessment of the students' performances during exams. The college points out that these grades are standardized and used consistently across all modules:

- (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, less than 51 points

The assessments of the students' achievements in the study programme are organized throughout the academic year.

In each syllabus, the assessment criteria are defined. The assessment method is communicated to the students at the start of a semester (during the first lecture of a course). For the sake of transparency, the syllabuses are uploaded on *MOODLE* (the communication system between teachers and students) and consequently, they can be accessed throughout the academic year.

Adequate qualification of the staff undertaking assessments

The college indicates in the self-evaluation report that there are annually organized workshops and trainings with international, external, and internal evaluation experts to support the teachers of Heimerer College. In particular, there were three teacher trainings organised in 2023 in which two members of the teaching staff covered the topic of assessment methods. In 2024, a follow-up training on assessment methods was organised for teachers in addition to the regular training offered for the staff. The instruments of assessment are reviewed for each syllabus before the responsible member of the teaching staff starts the course. Likewise, the college notes that assessment techniques depend on the modalities of subjects and disciplines. Nonetheless, the core methodology is based on *Bloom's taxonomy* as well as on which assessment form a teacher considers the most appropriate assessment method while complying with the abovementioned regulations for assessments.

Besides, the academic and teaching staff gets support with regard to the assessments. Ten days before an exam is taken by the students, the responsible staff members prepare their exam according to *Bloom's taxonomy* in which the questions are divided into all levels of *Bloom's taxonomy*. After that, the Dean's Office and the Quality Assurance Office reflect on the exam and provide feedback to the teacher. The college states that they established this process to make sure that the academic and teaching staff is adequately implementing institutional policies.

Examination regulations

Heimerer College has a *Regulation on Studies* which defines the mechanisms, modalities and other characteristics in relation to assessment and exams. The relevant regulations are addressed by article 9 to 15 in this regulation that was presented to the expert panel for an inspection. Whenever the need arises to make changes based on certain situations, the college develops specific guidelines which are approved in advance by the *Academic Council*. For instance, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the college organized exams electronically through *MOODLE* while adhering to the prevention measures.

For this situation, the Vice-Rector's Office for Teaching and Learning developed specific guidelines on how to adapt to new online assessment methods. The academic and teaching staff received special training in that regard.

The *Regulation on Studies*, in particular article 15, also describes the steps and procedures in case of dissatisfaction and non-consistency with the assessment of students. Furthermore, the academic staff is obliged by regulations to have consultations with students before and after the exams in which any constraints and issues regarding an exam are addressed.

Clear and fair regulations for student absence, illness and other mitigating conditions

In the self-evaluation report and during the site visit, the college stated that the rights and obligations of students are regulated by the *Regulation on Studies* which is accessible for the students on the college intranet, the SIMS and MOODLE platform and is physically provided to each student at the beginning of their studies. In particular, article 9 of the *Regulation on Studies* ("Preliminary procedures before the exams") and article 13 ("Exceptions") define the time-limit for taking exams and possible absences. Absence, illness and other mitigating conditions for students are mainly addressed after a request of a student is submitted and processed by the Dean's Office.

The following is an example from the self-evaluation report on the student's rights for complaints that the *Regulation on Studies* grants and how such a complaint is processed afterwards: The students have the right to complain about violations of the exam development rules. In this case, an appeal is submitted to the Dean within 48 hours after the completion of the exam. After verifying the violations advertised in cooperation with the Quality Committee and the Vice-Rector for Teaching, the study program management makes a final decision on the complaint. If the complaint is deemed fair by the responsible entities within the college, the examination shall be cancelled within three days from the day of the appeal and another exam takes place within that examination period.

Assessment

Organisation of assessment

The assessments are organised in a transparent and clear way. The experts conclude that the responsibilities for the organisation of assessments are clearly defined and that students are sufficiently informed about the assessment methods in the syllabuses and at the beginning of each semester. In addition to that, the experts acknowledge the openness of the college towards implementing digital forms of student assessment in the future as it was outlined by the college representatives during the site visit.

Amount and requirements of assessments

The experts panel considers the amount and the requirements of the assessments in the study programme to be adequate with regard to the intended learning outcomes.

Requirements of the thesis and the reflection of the level of the degree

The requirements for the bachelor thesis are clearly described in the syllabus for this module and in the *Regulation on Studies*. Besides, the requirements adequately reflect the level of the bachelor degree to be obtained.

The transparency and consistency of the assessment criteria

The experts could see that the college makes sure that the assessment criteria are transparent for both the students and the staff and they appreciate that the college actively provides the students with the relevant documents on assessment regulations and criteria. The consistency of these criteria is ensured through the use of a standardized grading system across all modules.

Adequate qualification of the staff undertaking assessments

The experts can see from the CVs and from the discussions during the site visit that the staff members are adequately qualified to undertake assessments in the study program. The experts furthermore appreciate that the college management is taking measures to support and to monitor the teaching staff in its tasks of preparing and conducting assessments.

Examination regulations

The experts could check that there are existing examination regulations for the entire college and that are applied in the study programme “Nursing (B. Sc.)”.

Clear and fair regulations for student absence, illness and other mitigating conditions

Next to regulations on assessments, there are clear and objective regulations for student absence, illness and other mitigating conditions that students can rely on during their studies. In that regard, the experts think it is additionally noteworthy that the college fosters the transparency of these regulations so that students can be expected to be aware of their rights if they happen to get into a disadvantageous situation during their studies.

Areas for improvement

Although the experts are impressed by the college fulfilling all the criteria linked to the assessment of students, they have a few remarks and suggestions in that domain for the college. For instance, it was brought up by the study programme representatives during the site visit that each member of

the teaching staff can accept up to 10 students at the same time for the supervision of bachelor theses. Considering the high number of students, the experts wondered in that regard if the teaching staff is large enough to provide supervision to all students. Moreover and given the different academic profiles among the teachers, one might expect that the restriction of one teacher supervising the theses of up to 10 students also limits the thematic freedom of choice for the bachelor theses. If a student finds out that the supervision capacity of a teacher specialized on a certain aspect of nursing that the student wants to address in the thesis, she or he might find himself in the situation of having to look for another supervisor with a different academic specialization within nursing and hence, some students might have to switch to another research question than the one they initially wanted to address in their bachelor thesis. The experts agree with the college that it is reasonable to equally distribute the thesis supervision tasks among the teachers. Nonetheless, they advise the college to make sure that students can choose the topic for their bachelor thesis without being dependent on the supervision capacity of the teacher who is specialized in their preferred branch of nursing studies.

As for the notebooks that are a way of assessing the students' practical performances by documenting their progress, the experts think that the degree of achieving the learning outcomes would be more meaningful if there was a more fine-grained grading than just differentiating between "achieved" and "not achieved". The study programme representatives made it clear during the site visit that the mentors from the practice phases can add comments to the notebooks as another form of evidence. However, the experts think that a deeper but still standardized assessment of the students' practical skills in the notebooks (e. g. rubrics or descriptions of specific performance indicators) would help both the teaching staff and the students to comparatively identify potential weaknesses and a need for further training on specific tasks.

While the experts appreciate the willingness within the college to implement digital forms of examinations, they also notice that written and oral exams are the most common forms of assessment. The experts recognize the efforts taken by the college to provide an adequate assessment form for each course. However, they suggest that the college checks the examination forms against the teaching goals (constructive alignment) to see if there are examination forms that may be suited better for a competence-based examination in some cases. Besides, the experts think it is beneficial for the students if they are exposed to a wider range of assessment forms since written and oral exams might be insufficient for an evaluation of students' performance as a competence indicator. According to the experts, objective structured clinical examinations (OSCE) might be an option for the study programme at Heimerer College to evaluate knowledge, skills and clinical reasoning competences. Besides, gaining more experience in writing term papers would help the students with getting familiar to academic writing and

scientific work and by that, it would also be advantageous for the abovementioned recommendation of strengthening the role of these research skills in the curriculum. The college representatives announced in a statement that they will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the assessment methods and that they will explore opportunities for a further enhancement of the students' generic competences through diverse assessment methods.

Recommendations

The college should make sure that students can choose the topic for their bachelor thesis without being dependent on the supervision capacity of the teacher who is specialized in their preferred branch of nursing studies.

The college should implement a deeper but still standardized assessment of the students' practical skills in the notebooks.

The college should check if an expansion of the assessment methods is feasible for single modules since the exposure to a wider range of examination forms may be beneficial for the generic competences of the students.

4. Organisation of the study programme

Furthermore, the implementation of the programme has to be evaluated. The expert panel assess the appropriateness of entry qualifications and the regulations for the recognition of qualifications (i.e. the *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 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 a 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 procedures of the admission to the study programmes at Heimerer College are defined in the *Regulations on Studies* where the target group of each study programme is explained. Applications are possible in every academic year. Information on the application process is available to everyone on the

website of the college and via other means of information (e. g. social networks) so that interested persons get the chance to know about the possibility of registration.

The enrolment criteria for study programmes on the Bachelor level – such as “Nursing (B. Sc.) – are the following:

- All candidates who have graduated from a secondary school and provide diplomas for completing a 12-year schooling career which allows them to continue with tertiary education. Along with these documents, the candidates must issue also a transcript as a record of their grades during high school, issued by the school and recognized by the *Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST)* of the Republic of Kosovo
- All candidates who have graduated from 2008 onwards and provide relevant certificates on the successful completion of their *Matura Examination* (before 2008, a *Matura Examination* was not organized);
- All candidates who have completed basic studies and provide a certificate or diploma. Together with the relevant documents they are also obliged to submit a transcript of their grades from high school;
- All candidates who successfully pass the entry exam at Heimerer College.

According to the self-evaluation report, the performance in the entry exam at the college accounts for 40% of the enrolment criteria while the *Matura Examination* and the high-school success are weighted by 30% each. The college shares this regulations also on its website on the “Nursing (B. Sc.)” study programme⁷.

During the site visit, the college gave additional information on the entry exam held at the college. Accordingly, around 500 persons apply every year but there is only a capacity for 250 students to enrol each year. Besides, the performance in the entry exam determines also the exact amount of tuition fees to be paid by the prospective students as good results lead to a discount on these fees⁸. However, successfully passing the entry exam qualifies all students for receiving a scholarship for their first year of studies. The individual amount of the tuition fees to be paid in the second and the third year depends on the students’ performance in the entry exam.

Regulations for the recognition of qualifications

In line with the *Bologna Process*, the ECTS credits awarded to students in a study programme may be transferred to another programme offered by the same or another institution. Heimerer College states that the transfer of ECTS

⁷ https://kolegji-heimerer.eu/programet_bachelor/ (accessed on 05 March 2024)

⁸ During the site visit, the representatives from the college stated that the regular tuition fees for the entire three-year study programme amount to 8,400 EUR.

credits is crucial for a successful mobility of students. Student transfers between higher-education institutions are regulated by institutional processes while respecting the state frameworks for this process. The annual deadlines for requesting the transfer of ECTS credits are between June 1 and October 15 for the winter semester, while the transfer request for the summer semester is made between January 1 and March 1.

During this procedure, the requirements are submitted to the student services office within the deadline and the necessary forms are completed and submitted. The responsible office at the college verifies if the submitted documentation conforms to the rules. Subsequently, the document is sent to the Dean's Office and is addressed during a meeting of the Assessment Committee for one of the abovementioned deadlines during the academic year. The Dean's Commission evaluates and approves or rejects the request. If the curriculum of another higher-education institution that a student attended complies with the curriculum at Heimerer College by at least 50%, and the student in question completes the number of ECTS credits required for the academic year to which she or he applies for a transfer of ECTS credits, the commission will approve the request.

Heimerer College furthermore points out that the criteria and the regulations for the recognition of qualifications according to the *Lisbon Convention* are respected. All study programmes are built in line with the *Bologna Process* and hence, the comparability with European countries in the standards and the quality of higher-education qualifications is provided. Credits for students' achievements at Heimerer College are awarded in ECTS credits according to national legislation with reference to European qualifications frameworks as well. The use of ECTS credits is reflected in the documents sent to the expert panel (such as course syllabuses, learning agreements, Transcript of Records, and work placement certificates and it becomes additionally transparent in the Diploma Supplement). The ECTS credits are awarded after students have completed the required learning activities and achieved the defined learning outcomes, evidenced through the assessment instruments and methods elaborated above.

Organisation of the study process and management of the study programme

The "Nursing (B. Sc.)" requires 180 ECTS credits. According to the standards checked by the *Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA)*, a higher-education institution needs three full-time staff members holding a PhD in order to offer a Bachelor level study programme. Heimerer College has more teachers with a PhD than required by the *KAA*. Furthermore, the staff is characterized by international and national experiences ensuring that the teaching process will be implemented according to institutional strategies. The number of hours in lectures, exercises, and practical parts are clearly defined and address the competences to be achieved during the studies.

In line with the organization of the study process, the college emphasizes that it offers opportunities for the professional development of the staff within the framework of internationally co-funded projects and collaborations with universities and organizations from the European Union and beyond. The college supports academic staff to enrol in academic programmes offered by its international collaborators and organizes training opportunities carried out by international experts and institutions. The academic staff is involved in the internationalization and the development of international projects which fosters their professional advancement. The continuous monitoring of the performance of the academic staff helps to find out if some teachers need support with carrying out their teaching tasks. In these cases, the college ensures that special assistance is provided to any person experiencing difficulties. In addition to continuous training, co-teaching is also offered to increase the quality of teaching.

Implementation of the programme (roles and responsibilities)

In the self-evaluation report as well as in during the site visit, Heimerer College gave a clear overview on the roles and responsibilities of organising and implementing the “Nursing (B. Sc.)” programme. The procedures and instances for the implementation of the study programme are addressed in this report for the accreditation criteria to which they apply and are furthermore defined in the regulations by the college, mainly the *Regulations on Studies*.

The workload of the programme

The number of ECTS credits for modules in study programmes at Heimerer College is determined according to the estimated student workload needed to achieve the defined learning outcomes. The full-time workload of an academic year is 60 ECTS credits. The college provides the following description of a common workload for students: A semester of studying at Heimerer College covers 15 weeks of lectures and two or three weeks of final exams. At least 30% of the total amount of hours are contact hours. The weekly teaching includes lectures, seminars, exercises and labs within a total amount of 20 hours. The distribution of the workload for the courses is clearly determined in the syllabus of each course. According to the national legal framework, one ECTS credit is equivalent to 30 working hours of a student and the average amount of work to be completed during one year of studies for a student is 60 ECTS or 1,800 hours of working, which includes contact hours and self-studies.

During each semester, the courses are divided according to the competences that should be achieved for a theoretical and a practical part. In the sixth and final semester, the focus is on the thesis and the related research tasks. All activities throughout the three years are organised in a way that contributes to reaching certain skills and competences. The curriculum of the programme

structures the logical order of the courses and the continuity in reaching the intended knowledge, skills and competences.

Clinical exercises are conducted (with groups of 10 to 12 students on average) in the college under simulated conditions in modern equipped cabinets for practical training, whereas the clinical practice is conducted in healthcare institutions outside the college with groups of eight students. The group size for lectures is mainly 100 students, for exercises it is not more than 25 students and for practical training not more than 10 students. This division is in line with the institutional capacities and specifications of the services provided, as foreseen in the study programme. For students who are already working at a healthcare institution where the practice of certain competences can be taken for granted, their work experience is recognized by the college for those competences they have achieved as a part of their professional employment.

Organisation of the student life-cycle

According to the self-evaluation report, the student life-cycle begins with the application of the prospective students when the candidates meet with registration officers. After that, they apply and take the entry exam. Before, the registration office informs the candidates on the subjects and materials needed to prepare. After the entry exam and the enrolment procedure, the actual student life-cycle starts at Heimerer College. The college organizes an *open day* and an *integration week* for all first-year students in October of each academic year. During the *open day*, first-year students are informed with the structured regulations of the institution. A welcoming cocktail is organized to get to know each other, the academic staff and the institution in general. After that, the first-year students are divided into groups in which they are informed about teaching methods, the curriculum, the lectures, exercises and practical parts and also about the use of the e-mail system for the communication within the college, the *System of Managing Data of Students (SIMS)* or *MOODLE*. The academic staff, the Dean's Office as well as alumni and the student council take part in that preparatory meeting with the newly enrolled students. Moreover, students learn about meetings with academic advisors and tutoring meetings.

After the integration week, students start the academic year including lectures, exercises and practice phases. The students are invited to take part in extracurricular activities which are supposed to help them gain more experience. They may even become a tutor themselves and help future student cohorts to integrate in the life-cycle of the college.

Students are regularly informed about their student life-cycle and related issues via e-mail and *MOODLE* and they can be a part of the institutional decision-making through their participation in the *Academic Council* if they are elected to the student council.

After finishing a cycle of lectures and practical tasks, the students start working on their bachelor thesis. In this final step, they receive support from the institution with seminars on how to write a thesis and on how to conduct research. For each student, there is support by a mentor and the commission of the Academic Council available while she or he is completing the thesis. After the students successfully completed their thesis, they graduate with a graduation ceremony and become ready to apply for a nursing license and to start continuing their academic training in a Master programme or to take up employment.

Care services and student advisory services

The college employs study advisors in order to support students. The study advisory service is a process with the following steps:

- Appointment of a teacher advisor for 20 - 30 students from the first year, for three years from the date of registration;
- The study advisor conducts regular meetings with students (every two weeks or on demand) with the purpose of encouraging and motivating them to participate in various activities, such as research, projects, humanitarian activities, debates or trainings.
- The study advisor discusses student concerns and connects students to the resources of the college for addressing and solving problems and possible difficulties.
- Together with a teacher who is appointed as academic advisor, a tutor is additionally assigned for a student group. The role of the tutor is to support the academic advisor in this regard.

The college additionally has a *Centre for Heimerer Students* that offers the following services:

- Training opportunities in various fields that help the students both personally and professionally
- Surveying the employment opportunities in Kosovo and abroad in private and public healthcare institutions
- Mediation for professional practice in public and private institutions
- Improving the cooperation with relevant institutions and different business sectors
- Practical work at Heimerer College
- Student counselling and training in the development of communication skills and decision-making
- Student training for writing CVs and letters of motivation
- Training on preparing for a job interview

- Training on social theatre techniques that help in skills of introducing oneself
- Possibilities of developing communication skills, critical thinking and debate through the participation in monthly debate club meetings
- Strengthening of the interaction, the coordination and the organisational activities through the participation in non-curricular activities

Besides, the students have the opportunity to get support by the *Office for Psychological Counselling* which aims at supporting all students who have psychological issues during their studies. The *Therapeutical Centre Heimerer* offers services including speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, medical services and psychological services.

Cooperation with internal and external partners

The process of selecting clinical mentors is regulated in three types of agencies: at healthcare institutions, educational institutions and NGOs. Mentors who are part of healthcare institutions are engaged in public and private health institutions at the three levels of the national healthcare system and ambulances, where they provide services in certain areas. In educational institutions, mentors are engaged in institutions such as schools and kindergartens. Mentors can also be employed at NGOs and resource centres.

The college provides the following description on the recruitment of clinical mentors:

1. For a clinical mentor to be appointed, the following conditions must be met:
 - a) Have at least a Bachelor degree (B. Sc.) in medical sciences such as nursing (for mentoring students on the Bachelor level)
 - b) Have work experience of at least five years as a nurse
 - c) Should be trained in clinical teaching (or education in professional pedagogy in healthcare)
 - d) Have experience in student mentoring
 - e) Have a work licence in the field where they mentor
2. The selection of clinical mentors is done through joint public announcements that are made by the institution where the internship is carried out and by Heimerer College.
3. The institution where the internship takes place ensures that the public announcement and the appointment of clinical mentors takes place at least thirty days before the start of the clinical internship or exercises of students from Heimerer College.

The process of clinical mentoring is described by the college as follows:

1. Student internships and exercises are supervised and mentored by clinical mentors.

2. Clinical mentors are appointed by the head of the partner institution and the internship coordinator at Heimerer College in accordance with the institutional internal rules and the mutual agreements with healthcare institutions.
3. The clinical mentors are employed by the institution where the internship is taking place and they are paid by Heimerer College with 30% of their monthly salary which is added to their regular monthly salary.
4. A clinical mentor cannot supervise more than 10 students.

The practice contents during the clinical internships are described by the college as follows:

1. The clinical internship of the students is conducted according to the work-plan of the respective unit of the institution where the internship and the student curriculum of Heimerer College are performed.
2. Prior to the commencement of the internship, the parties involved jointly develop an internship curriculum for Heimerer College students which is oriented to the curriculum at the college and the work-plan of the institution where the internship takes place.
3. The internship curriculum is drafted by the internship coordinators and the implementation is supervised by them.
4. The curriculum is finalised at least fifteen days before the start of clinical practice and the exercises.

Before the start of the modules including clinical internships, the mentors receive training by the college for the application of theoretical knowledge in practice. During these training sessions, the mentors are also familiarized with internship documents such as the internship notebooks that address the competences to be achieved during the practice phases and evaluation forms which are adapted to the practice notebook. The mentors are also instructed on teaching methods and on didactic skills. In terms of their professional development, they may also benefit through the participation in training sessions, study visits abroad, conferences and symposiums.

In 2018, the college has adopted an institutional strategy which sets the strategic and specific objectives, including those referring to international and institutional cooperations. It serves as the reference document in terms of allocating the actual resources in line with the institutional strategic objective of strengthening internationalization. The college has developed internal processes that define the specific roles and responsibilities of relevant institutional units with regard to these priority areas, such as internationalization.

Assessment

Entry qualifications

According to the experts, the required qualifications and the regulations for entering the study programme are appropriate. All the relevant information is

adequately made accessible for prospective students and they are given advice on how to prepare for the entry exam.

Regulations for the recognition of qualifications

Qualifications achieved at other higher-education institutions are recognized. The college has clear and transparent regulations and procedures for the recognition of qualifications.

Organisation of the study process and management of the study programme

The experts agree that the study process is organised in a way that allows the programme to be carried out so that the intended learning outcomes will be achieved. Besides, the college has described various approaches to account for the diversity among students and their needs. The latter was also highlighted by the students and alumni during the site visit.

Implementation of the programme (roles and responsibilities)

The roles and responsibilities for the implementation of the study programme are well-defined and transparent and comprehensible for the students and all employees of the college who are involved in the study programme.

The workload of the programme

As the experts already pointed out with regard to the curriculum, they consider the workload of the programme to be high and challenging for the students but they acknowledge the relevance of practical phases in a nursing programme and rely on the feedback of the students and alumni who described the workload to be acceptable when talking to the expert panel.

Organisation of the student life-cycle

The experts approve of the efforts by the college to guarantee an organisational relationship between the students and the college from the enrolment until the graduation. What is more, this student life-cycle proves to be closed so that the college offers a constant administrative and supportive connection to the students. The experts recognize in that regard that the college already offers supporting services before the actual enrolment of the prospective students while they are applying and preparing for taking the entry exam.

Care services and student advisory services

The experts' positive impression of the wide range of care and advisory services for the students as outlined in the self-evaluation report was strengthened by the students and alumni reporting on their satisfaction and gratitude for these offers.

Cooperation with internal and external partners

The cooperation with external partners is organised very well. Major external partners are the healthcare institutions where the students do their internships and where they are supervised by clinical mentors. The experts consider these cooperations to be defined clearly and to be carried out smoothly, also for practice phases that are spent abroad. The scientific collaboration with external partners was confirmed to be functional by the representatives of the academic staff. The internal cooperation with other departments and administrative units within Heimerer College was praised by the staff members who the experts could talk to during the visit.

5. Resources

For this criterion, it is crucial whether there is an appropriate resource endowment and deployment in the involved departments. The experts evaluate the existence of sustainable funding and financial management, 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

According to the self-evaluation report, Heimerer College can guarantee financial sustainability based on its strategic planning, on the consistency of student enrolments over the years as well as on the participation in international projects. As for the institutional strategic planning as well as for the planning of the programme itself, there is also a financial plan ensuring the sustainability of the programme implementation for the next six years.

The programme is mainly financed by the tuition fees of students. The college shared a financial plan with the expert panel which underlines the financial sustainability for the study programme until 2030.

Staff

Heimerer College intends to manage and monitor its responsibilities for academic standards of higher education effectively and appropriately through the implementation of policies, procedures and guidelines adopted in accordance with the applicable legislation on higher education and as required by the *Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA)*. The college provided an overview on the full-time and part-time academic staff members involved in the “Nursing (B. Sc.)” programme that includes their names, qualifications, academic titles, contract durations, and their workload share for teaching (and exams and consultations), for administrative activities and for research. In total, the academic staff consists of 41 persons of which 34 are full-time staff members. Apart from one exception, all 41 staff members are supposed to dedicate 70% of their workload to teaching activities, exams and consultations, 5% to administrative tasks and 25% to research. The academic staff is formally registered with the *KAA*. Four members of the staff hold a PhD in “Nursing Care” and more than 20 years of substantial experience working in higher-education institutions. Besides, four staff members are pursuing a PhD in nursing. Two members of the academic staff have graduated from advanced nursing programmes and five academic staff members hold Master degrees in nursing. In addition, four employees are currently pursuing Master degrees in advanced nursing programmes. The remaining employees have a variety of backgrounds in social work or medical professions. The college furthermore points out that several members of the academic staff involved in the “Nursing (B. Sc.)” programme have undergone either Master or PhD studies abroad, primarily in EU countries.

Staff recruiting and staff development

Heimer College offers professional development opportunities within internationally co-funded projects and collaborations with universities and organizations from the European Union and beyond. The college supports the staff enrolling in academic programmes offered by international collaborators and organizes training opportunities together with international experts and institutions. The academic staff furthermore is involved in the development of international projects.

By continuously monitoring the performance of the academic staff, the college can identify those staff members who are in need of additional training. In these cases, opportunities for further training will be provided, in addition to co-teaching in order to increase the quality of teaching.

Heimerer College has a policy of continuous academic advancement of its academic staff by providing training on various topics related to teaching, such as assessments, contemporary teaching methods, blended learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning and research. The college also pursues the strategic goal of advancing scientific research at the institutional level. Hence, all members of the academic staff should be involved

in research. At least one scientific publication is compulsory for them which is also required by the *Institutional Strategy*, the *Regulation on Financial Support* and the *Academic Personnel Guide*. Academic staff additionally encourages students to get involved in research, includes research in their courses and mentors the students in research that is consistent with the contents of a module. Moreover, the academic staff offers hours for consultation beyond their mere lecture hours. Student consultation is offered on a daily basis and according to the needs of the students.

The college provides opportunities for further professional development of the teaching staff and gives special assistance to any person with difficulties. *The Regulation on Rankings, Titles, Selection and Advancement of Academic Staff* (based on Law no. 04 /L-037 on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo) ensures that the selection, appointment and promotion of academic staff is made according to relevant qualifications and relevant workplace experience and aims at ensuring equal treatment of the candidates.

Regarding performance assessments, all staff members of the college have access to the *Academic Personnel Guide* which explains the indicators and procedures for the evaluation of their performance. The process of assessing the performance of the academic staff is done through continuous monitoring by the Dean who is responsible for the study programme, the Quality Office and the Vice-Rector for Teaching. The staff participates in annually conducted self-assessments organized by the Quality Office. The college considers this approach to be useful in examining and identifying the needs for further staff training and to be beneficial for increasing the quality of teaching.

At the beginning of every academic year, the academic staff contributes to the process of reviewing and assessing the syllabuses together with the Dean of the department offering the study programme, the Quality Office and the Vice-Rector for Teaching. Regarding the quality of services, the college has a *Regulation on the Quality Assurance System* which provides a clear plan in order to ensure the quality of academic staff through skills enhancement opportunities, a description of the expected results and of the data collection for related analyses. The regulation documents furthermore refer to ongoing training activities before each semester to advance the teaching methods and assessments. The academic staff get support in order to continue their professional development which includes an ongoing training in important areas such as teaching methods and research and most importantly in progressing their academic qualifications.

Facilities and equipment

In the self-evaluation report, Heimerer College states that it is constantly expanding the opportunities for independent student learning, the access to contemporary literature and the access to scientific journals. What is more, the college has spaces for extracurricular and social activities. The expert

panel received a list of all the rooms that are available for teaching and for self-study purposes in the nursing programme and a detailed description of the equipment that the nursing laboratories contain. There are four nursing laboratories that are equipped with hospital beds, chairs, mannequins, tables, bedside shelves, moving tables, hospital carts, first-aid kits, skeletal systems and models of anatomical parts, folding screen bedsides with curtains, bins for waste management, an aspirator, a laryngoscope, *Ambu* masks, devices for detecting bacteria, stainless steel jar and round metal tins with a lid and a sponge. The college furthermore refers to the *Regional Challenge Fund (RCF)* which will expand the number of available equipment and the necessary infrastructure.

The college offers a range of electronic services for communication and efficient management of teaching and learning processes, such as:

- *SIMS (Student Management Information System)* is the internal platform at Heimerer College in which students can receive information, submit exams, see grades, schedule the lectures, exercises, exams and additional events and can submit requests for services provided by the students service.
- The *MOODLE* platform is used by the college to facilitate the work of students and of the academic staff as well as to facilitate the learning progress and the access to literature.
- Through the *Teleconferencing project*, students and academic staff members can organize online lectures, participate in them from wherever they are.
- The institutional e-mail system offers students a more rapid communication, a chat system, a calendar and many other opportunities. The communication between students is also done through the official e-mail system.
- The *e-Library* (used only within the Heimerer College) is one of the services offered by the college to facilitate the access to basic literature for the students. The *e-library* also enables students to have unrestricted access to all the books that the college has in stock on campus or that the college has provided access to.

Heimerer College has a library with 26 individual desks and 30 seats in a computer room. The library is open on business days. In addition to the library, students have access to the classrooms which are free for use outside of the course hours. The library is equipped with 916 books and other materials that are accessible in the *e-Library*. The library has around 150 physical copies of relevant literature and materials for the "Nursing (B. Sc.)" programme. In addition to the *e-library*, the college also offers access to *JStor* which is an international and digital library offering more than 1,500 magazines, books and other resources. Staff publications in scientific journals are sent to students to be informed of the recent scientific developments in nursing.

Support offices of the college administration, such as IT, finance, logistics or the Office of Diplomas in close coordination with the Dean's Offices and students services offer their support services for students during the 12 months of the year throughout the entire working hours of the college, i. e. from 9 am to 7 pm.

The teaching facilities are suitable for students with special needs. There are two elevators in the building, with a capacity of 1000 kg or 13 persons each. The entrance of the college building is wide and suited for people with disabilities.

The nursing laboratories are located in four different floors and are equipped with modern equipment, devices and materials for nursing that are updated every semester.

Heimerer College also has computer cabinets, equipped with computers, projectors and additional technologies. The learning approach is multimedia and takes place through daily work on personal computers on which students have access to the entire web-based electronic library. At the college, every employee has access to a computer and other equipment necessary for preparing the lesson and realizing their needs (one computer per employee) connected to the cable network and wireless internet throughout the object. The entire area of the facility is covered with wireless network, so that the staff and the students can access the internet from the corridors as well.

Assessment

Financial management and funding

Judging from what the experts can see from the submitted documents and from the discussion rounds with the college management, the experts conclude that the financial management of the "Nursing (B. Sc.)" programme is sustainably ensured. The financial resources are appropriate.

Staff recruiting and staff development

The experts are impressed by the high number of academic staff members involved in the study programme. Besides, they consider the level of qualification among the staff members to be adequate to ensure the intended learning outcomes. Besides, the experts appreciate the measures taken by the college to increase the teaching skills of the staff. As for the staff recruitment process, the college referred to guidelines which were shared with the expert panel and which convinced them of the transparency and implementation of regulations related to recruitment.

Facilities and equipment

Having read the related descriptions from the self-evaluation report and having watched the footage from campus, the experts conclude that the amount and the quality of the facilities, the equipment and the other resources are adequate for reaching the objectives of the study programme. This impression was confirmed by the expert who inspected the facilities and the equipment (i. e. the library, the laboratories and the course rooms as well as the IT equipment) on site.

Areas for improvement

Overall, the experts consider the financial, spatial and technical equipment to be appropriate. Nonetheless, some questions arose over the course of the accreditation process. For instance, the experts had some tentative doubts if all the course rooms are large enough for the intended sizes of student groups to fit in there. Hence, the experts would like to bring it to the attention of the college administration that the allocation of rooms for student groups – both for the actual teaching and for self-study projects – should be adjusted to the actual capacity of a certain room.

As for self-organized groups of students who want to study together, this recommendation is linked to another piece of advice from the experts. When interviewing the students and alumni and bringing up the facilities and the equipment, the experts got the impression that the students would like to have additional spaces and rooms for studying with their peers. Furthermore, the experts perceived the wish for additional literature sources being accessible for the students that they could use in particular for their individual research activities, such as the thesis. The college announced that efforts in that regard will be considered.

Upon request, the students and alumni also pointed out that they consider the prices at the canteen of the college to be too high for their student budgets. The experts are aware that this issue cannot be solely solved by the management of the “Nursing (B. Sc.)” programme but also requires the action of the college rectorate. Nonetheless, the experts want to draw the attention of the college to this issue and suggest considering a discount for students at the canteen on campus.

Recommendations

Given a noticeable variance in terms of course room sizes, the college should make sure that the allocation of rooms for a course is adjusted to the actual size of a group that is supposed to find seats in a room.

The college should make additional literature sources accessible for the students.

The college should arrange for a discount for students at the college canteen.

6. Quality assurance

This criterion 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 objectives of the programme 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 information on the programme is provided for students and prospective students.

Current status

Quality assurance concept of the study programme

Heimerer College considers quality development a common obligation for all members and internal and external stakeholders of the college. The main responsibility for quality management at Heimerer College lies with the Rector and the Academic Council. The Deans and the Programme Commission are responsible for the quality assurance of the study programmes. The college uses internal and external quality assurance instruments which are coordinated by the Quality Office. These quality assurance instruments and processes are implemented and described in the *Regulation on the Quality Assurance System* which aims at building a mechanism for promoting and achieving a high 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 self-evaluation approach adapted by the college focuses on three important aspects for a higher-education institution: quality of teaching, quality of learning and student support. For these three aspects, evaluation methods that are based on the *Total Quality Management model (TQM)* were developed. The college applies a 360-degree assessment process and within the assessment, there are several processes including the monitoring of the teaching conducted by the Quality Office. In cooperation with each Dean's Office, the Quality Office monitors teachers regarding the methods, atmosphere, assessment and other aspects of their courses. The gathered data is used for an evaluation of the teachers and of the study programme and for comparisons over time to assess whether the college made progress with regard to teaching.

The development and the improvement of the study programmes

All study programmes offered by Heimerer College are subject to internal and external evaluations before applying for accreditation. When a new study programme is designed and developed, the process starts with the Dean's Office establishing a commission. This commission consists of the study programme leaders, the academic staff for its courses, students, employers, alumni and external experts. The design and development of the study programme starts with analysing the needs by gathering information about the demands of stakeholders and the demands on the job market and by bringing these impressions in line with the mission of the college and its resources.

The curriculum of each existing study programme (such as "Nursing (B. Sc.)") is reviewed every three years. Based on the performance of the students, their achievements, their preferences, the teachers' opinions and the experts' recommendations, the Dean's Office is continuously involved in reviewing the study programmes. This is done through the evaluation of courses, study programmes, teaching and research, including feedback from students and stakeholders to identify the strengths and weaknesses of study programmes. These evaluations include performance indicators on teaching, research and responsiveness to society, the annual report of the department and any additional strategic measures by the department. By reviewing the performance of a study programme, the college and the Academic Council may identify and suggest improvements to ensure the ongoing success of the study programme.

The involvement of stakeholders (students, teachers, administration, employers)

All academic and administrative units of the college are involved in the quality assurance process. Besides, all internal and external parties concerned with the educational process and with research as well as professional activities within the college, participate in the design and development of the quality assurance system and use the results. Internal parties are the students and teachers and the administrative, technical and supporting staff of Heimerer College. External parties are legal persons and organisations that relate to the activities of the college (e. g. educational institutions, healthcare, businesses, local and national government bodies, employers and alumni).

Students, lecturers and the administrative staff are involved in the preparation of self-assessment reports in the context of (re-)accreditations of the entire institution or of the study programmes. For that, the survey-based feedback of current students as well as of alumni is used. The opinion of the students is also consulted for improving academic units such as the library, IT and other services.

According to the self-evaluation report, the college seeks to strengthen the direct representation of students in the decision-making bodies of the college. The students are represented in the Academic Council and therefore

are involved in all the discussions related to quality assurance. Together with other members of the Academic Council, they vote on the measures that address the issues arising from the self-evaluation reports. Afterwards, the student representatives share the decisions made in the Academic Council with student representatives of each study programme and each student cohort.

Students are directly involved in any quality assurance activity, the assessment of the performances by the academic staff, teaching processes, student services, library services and various additional administrative services. Students are also involved in developing evaluation instruments as their comments are integrated into the regular review of these evaluation mechanisms.

The college has also organized a complaints system which allows students to express their requests and concerns but also complaints in a *complaints and suggestive box* located at the main entrance of the college. In various working groups of the college, there is also a representative of the student council participating. Moreover, the students are involved within the tutoring process, by supporting other students in areas of interest but also offering greater career advancement within the institution.

Heimerer College has cooperations with many local, regional and international organisations. These cooperations focus on many areas such as the development of study programmes, research, practical experiences or exchange opportunities for students to expand their knowledge and skills outside the college. Based on best practice approaches and in order to keep up the quality of teaching and research, the college involves both local and international partners into the development of institutional and programme objectives. Furthermore, in order to receive feedback by external partners on the requirements and needs for certain competences, the college involves the local and international experts to make sure that those requirements and needs are taken into consideration. This is all done to ensure that the enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning in achieving competences and skills conform international standards of the labour market needs.

The indicators for monitoring the achievement of objectives

The most important quality cycle at the college is the five-year strategic plan of the college which defines 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 entire college. The strategic plans contain measurable outcomes of strategic planning objectives which include internal targets that the college management agreed on with the academic and administrative units. The results contribute to defining measures that aim at making quality improvements.

The college points out that achieving the objectives defined on the level of study programmes starts with two important components that require implementation: responsibility and accountability. Responsibility aims at increasing the quality within the programme units by identifying those problems that

impede the progress and by identifying an adjusted strategy or by generating innovative ideas that promote the quality within the programme unit. Meanwhile, accountability aims at finding indicators and to take adequate actions to overcome a situation calling for improvements.

The college management monitors all developments that occur within the programmes through various instruments. The Office for Quality Assurance is responsible for assessing the quality of teaching and learning, and also assesses all aspects related to academic work in the institution, including the support services for students. The Office for Quality Assurance provides continuous self-assessment reports within the institution which help the college management in assessing the situation.

On the level of the study programmes, the members of the academic staff participate in comprehensive self-evaluations and cooperate with the reporting processes arising from these evaluations. Also, weekly meetings are held among the staff members and biweekly meetings with other relevant college units for the harmonization of activities. During these meetings, the staff members report about their daily work and express their challenges, difficulties or successes and plan the tasks to be completed. These meetings reflect the quality of work, based on quality reports, related co-teaching and learning processes, the quality of the research aspects as well as the quality of the various supporting and administrative services. These planning processes are continually completed, depending on the new needs identified by the quality assurance processes.

The programme units using quality assurance regularly and systematically for quality enhancement

At the end of each semester, various evaluations are carried out. The following procedures and instruments across the academic units of the college are part of the internal and external quality assurance system:

1) Evaluation of Module and Teacher Performance

At the end of each semester, all students at the college participate in the evaluation of the modules and of the academic staff. Afterwards, an electronic system shows the average evaluation for every course teacher as an overall result and the result for each component of the survey, displaying the rankings of the course lecturer at the programme level as well as comments provided by students for specific concerns. In addition to the survey, the teachers and the modules are evaluated through self-evaluations by the teachers on the content of the teaching process but also of the teaching conditions.

2) Systematic observation of the teachers' performances

In order to evaluate the quality of teaching and to find out about the methods teachers use at the college as well as to see the content addressed during the lectures, the Dean's Office and the Office for Quality Assurance organize

visits to teachers during class. After each visit, the observers fill out a *Teaching Evaluation Form* and discuss the findings with the instructor with regard to future improvements.

3) *Evaluation of knowledge, skills and competences*

At the end of each academic year, the management of the study programmes and the Office for Quality Assurance organize the *Quality Week*. During this week, the students undergo various tasks in order to evaluate the knowledge, the skills and the competences they have received as students of the study programmes such as "Nursing (B. Sc.)". Besides, the college can identify problems related to teaching that require solutions. Individual interviews, questionnaires testing the students' professional knowledge and other tasks, such as creating a substantive essay, are the methods used to test the professional knowledge and methodological skills of students. On the other hand, to evaluate the technical and social skills of students, two methods are always used: solving different professional problems and role-playing. There is also the opportunity to evaluate another important aspect of the college which are the competences of the students. Findings from the *Quality Week* are used for the advancement of teaching processes.

4) *The questionnaire for the evaluation of support services*

The Office for Quality Assurance evaluates the student support services through a questionnaire and the feedback received from students serves as an input for further improvements for these services, such as the *Student Service Office*, the library services, IT, transport and other resources.

5) *Survey with alumni*

An alumni survey is carried out on regular basis by the Office of Quality Assurance in coordination with *QESH* (the student centre of the college). The results are filtered for the single study programmes and provided to those in charge of the study programmes. The Quality Office administers the questionnaire to assess the effectiveness of a programme and the applicability and practicality of the knowledge, skills and competences gained. The graduates also give recommendations on what could be improved in the study programme based on the challenges they face on the job market. The evaluation results are analysed and assessed by the Dean who is responsible for a study programme. Aggregate information from these surveys are published.

6) *Survey with employers:*

The college carries out a regular survey among employers of graduates from Heimerer College. Through this survey, the college wants to obtain reliable feedback on the performance of their graduates on the labour market. Employers may also provide additional comments on what could be improved in the curriculum of a study programme as well as other skills that graduates and prospective graduates need in order to be competitive on the labour

market. The gathered data is analysed and benchmarked in order to make improvements of the study programme.

7) Staff performance evaluation

In co-operation with the Quality Office, every year the entire staff is evaluated through 4 instruments:

- Instrument 1: Quality of work and satisfaction level of the staff.
- Instrument 2: Evaluation of the supervisor's performance by the employees.
- Instrument 3: Staff Evaluation by the supervisors
- Instrument 4: Agreement for further professional development

In 2018, a digital evaluation system was established. Evaluations are carried out through online questionnaires by *Google Forms*. All data is stored in folders with restricted access and they do not only include the statistical data, but also all the reports that derive from them, the instruments being used and the data is then used for comparisons over time.

The results of the surveys are analysed by the Quality Office and reports are prepared which contain the findings and the recommendations with regard to improvements of teaching. The reports are shared with the Academic Council (including its student representatives) and the Dean's Offices with recommendations regarding the improvements of teaching. These recommendations are then converted into measures and regular meetings are held with the responsible Deans to check if the recommendations are fulfilled.

The quality feedback loops

After each evaluation, reports are prepared that include recommendations and measures for quality improvement both in teaching and administrative procedures. These reports are shared with all members of the college. All the abovementioned evaluations result in various reports prepared by the Quality Office:

- Reports from the teachers' performance assessment (with questionnaires, monitoring visits) - twice a year.
- Reports from measuring the knowledge, skills and competences of students reached at the end of each academic year.
- Reports from the systematic observation of academic staff - twice a year.
- Reports from the practical phases of the students - every year.
- Reports from the graduate survey - every year.
- Reports from the employers' survey - every year

- Reports on the assessment of the level of staff satisfaction and quality of work - every year

Based on these reports and the Self-evaluation reports, the Quality Office makes recommendations to the Academic Council which considers those proposals, approves them and drafts plans and policies for changes in order to increase the quality. After the reports are discussed with the Academic Council, they are shared with the Rectorate, the Deans' Offices, the teachers, the students and the administration.

Based on the results of the report, each teacher is invited by the Dean to discuss the performance and setting future development indicators. All the training activities for staff members are planned and coordinated by the Vice-Rector for Teaching and Learning and the Quality Office and are approved by the Rector. Also after the staff has completed the training activities, their performance is still being monitored by the Dean's Offices, the Vice-Rector for Teaching and Learning and the Quality Office. Thus, the college provides an evaluation cycle for the teaching performances.

Quality assurance in research

The tasks of the Vice-Rector for Research mainly focus on supporting the research output, on promoting the institutional research activities and on education and research with particular reference to the PhD programmes, the evaluation of the quality of research, the development of competitive projects in collaboration with other institutions and national and international public partners and on the promotion of the internationalization of research (together with the Vice-Rector for International Relations and the Deans' Offices). The college co-organizes an annual international symposium on health-related sciences. This event includes sessions with oral and poster presentations addressing important health areas and pursuing the objective of advancing the knowledge in the field of diagnostics, psychology, nursing, medicine and digitalization of health services.

To strengthen the involvement of the staff and students in research activities, the Research Office employs supporting staff. Each department also has a research coordinator, responsible for supporting and promoting research activities within the Dean's Office.

The Vice-Rector for Research organizes regular training activities for staff advancement in the field of research and quality improvement of scientific publications by Heimerer College. Some of the topics addressed are statistical analysis, writing of academic papers and publication procedures. In order to advance the quality of scientific research at the institutional level and provide financial support, the Vice-Rector for Research has prepared a guideline for financial support. This document specifies the criteria that scientific research has to fulfil in order to be eligible for financial support. One of these criteria is that only publications in journals with an Impact Factor above 1 will be financially supported.

A list of all the topics for diploma works of students exists within the IT infrastructure of the college and full documents are integrated there. The program also has an internal anti-plagiarism system and a national anti-plagiarism software which checks for possible plagiarism in the Albanian language. Plagiarism checks in English is done by using online anti-plagiarism programmes that are publicly available and which are used informally by mentors and commission members. A formal regulation for anti-plagiarism is being developed.

The institution fosters the development of a quality culture

In its self-evaluation report, Heimerer Colleges describes quality assurance as one of the main priorities of its institutional strategy. In order to create a culture of quality assurance within the institution and to promote and to continuously pursue quality, the college has also consolidated mechanisms. Through the implementation of this strategy, the college aims at achieving the desired quality by students and teachers which leads to a high degree of satisfaction among students, clients and the cooperative partners.

The work of these mechanisms promoting quality is focused on:

- The analysis of the actual situation and reviewing the vision in relation to the strategic developments of the college
- Addressing weaknesses that were noticed during processes at the college
- Drafting the strategic plan for improving the weaknesses noticed during an academic year
- Foreseeing the innovations and need for changes during the self-evaluation process
- Presenting the strategic plan to the Board of the college and aiming to incorporate it in the plan for overall strategic development of the college

Thus, based on the data coming from each internal evaluation instrument, the Office of Quality Assurance drafts recommendations for the college management and the Academic Council. Accordingly, it is the responsibility of the college management and the Academic Council to review each recommendation and to develop precise intervention plans which provide opportunities for improving the quality of teaching, research and all the other services offered by the college.

Assessment

Quality assurance concept of the study programme

The expert panel could see that Heimerer College has established a functional quality assurance system and developed formalised processes to ensure and improve the quality of teaching, research and related areas on a

regular, systematic and effective basis. There are clear processes defined by the college on the design and the implementation of study programmes. Besides, due to the involvement of multiple bodies of the college administration, the experts conclude that the quality feedback loops are closed. Overall, the experts are convinced that the quality assurance concept helps ensuring that the learning outcomes of the study programme are achieved.

Quality assurance processes and instruments

The college uses a wide range of instruments to assess the level of quality in the study programmes. For that, it collects data from multiple member groups of the college as well as from employers and carries out in-depth analyses to identify potential needs for action with regard to the quality assurance in the study programmes. During the site visit, the college furthermore corroborated that the anonymity of the respondents is preserved when conducting surveys.

Quality indicators

The experts agree with the college that the collected survey data as well as the information gained from administrative processes allows for meaningful conclusions on the quality level in the study programmes and on potential shortcomings calling for improvements.

Involvement of stakeholders

The stakeholders (i. e. students, teachers, the college administration and employers from the labour market for nurses) are involved in the quality assurance procedures. Besides, the experts appreciate the efforts by the college to make aggregate information publicly available so that students and prospective students can access the relevant information on the quality status and on planned improvements for the “Nursing (B. Sc.)” programme.

IV. Final assessment

Overall assessment

Over the course of the accreditation process, the expert panel could see that the study programme “Nursing (B. Sc.)” has clearly outlined objectives that are in line with the profile and the strategic goals of Heimerer College. The learning outcomes of the programme are well-defined and are in line with the type of qualification level that the study programme provides. The college made it clear that the study programme follows the example of similar study programmes from various countries. However, regarding the compliance with European standards, the experts ask the college to elaborate on how the amount of theoretical teaching hours is actually reached since the 885 hours of theoretical teaching reported by the college do not correspond to European standards. The experts appreciate the efforts of the college to respond to the observed shortage of qualified nurses in Kosovo while at the same time preparing the students for a career abroad. In that regard, the experts commend the high employability among graduates and consider it a confirmation that the study programme does address needs within society and on the labour market. Furthermore, the experts understood that teaching and research are intertwined and that the academic staff is adequately qualified for the profile and the objectives of the study programme.

In the opinion of the experts, the international orientation of the study programme is one of its major advantages. Next to its alignment to the curricula at higher-education institutions from abroad, both the students and the members of the academic staff benefit from a variety of existing international partnerships with institutions linked to nursing and the chance to spend an internship or a research stay in another country. Nonetheless, the experts advise the college to provide clearer information on possible additional regulations and requirements for graduates who want to enter a labour market outside of Kosovo after their graduation which may be particularly relevant for those graduates who did not do an internship abroad before.

As for the curriculum, the experts found that the study programme is adequately structured in order to achieve the intended learning outcomes and provides the necessary knowledge and methodological expertise in the field of nursing. The learning experience is student-centred and organized in a way that the students are involved in the related processes and that their needs are considered. Besides, the experts appreciate the strong role that practical experiences in healthcare institutions outside the college play in the curriculum and that students learn from mentors while working in nursing professions. In that regard, the experts underline the importance of avoiding a potential mismatch between the way of performing nursing tasks according to state-of-the-art approaches and the possibly outdated approaches by experienced mentors in some areas. In addition to that, the college might consider clarifying the importance that patient communication skills have in the

curriculum. Moreover – and while recognizing the enhancement of digitalization at the college – the experts advise the organizers of the study programme to expand the use of digital tools such as augmented reality (AR) or virtual reality (VR) into the curriculum and into the teaching methods. Besides, the experts suggest to confront the students more steadily with the application of research skills and academic writing so that they feel even better prepared when approaching their individual research projects. Another advice related to the curriculum refers to a more detailed elaboration by the college on how the targeted share of one third of the total teaching hours being dedicated to theoretical teaching is actually reached. Moreover referring to the time specifications of the curriculum, the experts recommend to check if the widely consistent amount of hours for laboratory exercises in the non-clinical modules might be adjusted for some modules.

Besides, the experts checked several aspects related to the assessments of the students' performances. The expert panel confirms that the amount and the requirements of the assessment in the study programme are appropriate with regard to the intended learning outcomes. The college also proved that it has and uses regulations for examinations and for topics such as the absence or an illness of students and mitigating conditions. Besides, the experts could see that the college uses transparent assessment criteria and applies them in a consistent way and that the requirements of the thesis reflect the level of an individual research endeavour to be expected in a Bachelor programme. The staff undertaking these exams is adequately qualified according to the experts. With regard to the thesis, however, the college should make sure that the specialization of an academic staff member in conjunction with the limited supervision capacity does not restrain the choice of a research topic by the students. For the notebook being a special form of assessing the students' progress in terms of nursing skills, the experts furthermore recommend a deeper but still standardized assessment of the students' practical skills to be implemented. Besides, the experts think that the generic skills among the students could be enhanced by widening the range of assessment methods a bit further.

Regarding the organisation and the implementation of the "Nursing (B. Sc.)" programme, the experts are convinced of the appropriateness of the entry qualifications and they also recognize that the entry exam not only helps the college with identifying particularly eligible candidates for an enrolment to the programme. What is more, students are given the chance to get a discount for their tuition fees based on their performance in this entry exam. Besides, the college made clear that it has regulations for the recognition of qualifications that are in line with the *Lisbon Recognition Convention*.

In addition to that, the experts approve of the organisation of the study programme with regard to achieving the intended learning outcomes by taking into account the diversity among students and their individual needs for the learning process. The experts could recognize clearly defined roles and re-

sponsibilities for the organisation and implementation of the study programme. Even though the workload seems high, the experts rely on the feedback by the students they talked to during the site visit and who described the amount of work to be manageable, also when considering the additional burden of completing a German language course. There is a closed student life-cycle supporting the students administratively throughout the entire study programme and a sufficient number of care services and student advisory services provided which the students referred to as being helpful for them during the site visit. The organisation of the cooperation with external partners – such as the healthcare institutions for the students' practical phases – is clearly explained and the experts could also see that the internal collaboration with other units at Heimerer College is functional.

The availability and the deployment of human, financial, and spatial resources is adequate for the study programme according to the experts. The funding is sustainable and guaranteed for the current and for future student cohorts during the accreditation period. There is a high number of academic staff with an academic background from various countries and with a wide range of specializations within nursing. The college has a clearly defined strategy and regulations for the recruitment of its academic staff and has processes for the development of the staff. The quality of the facilities and the equipment is appropriate from what the experts could see in a video provided by the college and in person with one expert representing the panel on campus. However, the experts noticed a range in terms of room capacity that has them advise the college to make sure that the course rooms allocated to student groups are all large enough for the entire student group to have their class or study-group activities in there. Besides, the experts encourage the college to make additional literature and information sources accessible to the students and to strive for the creation of student discounts in the canteen on campus.

The experts also evaluated the quality assurance system at the college. They could see that there are clear procedures for the design and the implementation of study programmes and for their improvement. The college has developed a quality assurance concept on the level of the study programmes that is linked to the quality assurance of the college as an entire institution. Moreover, the experts understood that the processes linked to quality assurance are regularly, systematically, and effectively used for the enhancement of quality. There are closed feedback loops and the college collects and uses data for the purpose of quality assurance. The relevant stakeholders are all involved in these processes and can access the relevant information in this context.

The experts point out that they were not assessing the study programme for its compliance with European or German standards for nursing training. As for the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) that were the basis of assessment, they confirm that the academic standards according to the EVA-LAG criteria for international programme accreditations are fulfilled for the

“Nursing (B. Sc.)” programme at Heimerer College. They encountered highly motivated students and members of the academic and the administrative staff as well as satisfied alumni throughout the accreditation process and during the site visit and hence, the experts are convinced that the college will consider their recommendations for further improvements of the study programme. Finally and emblematically for the positive impressions in the accreditation procedure, the experts emphasize the supportive student community that was exemplified by one student underlining that the opportunity of doing an internship abroad is not only considered a chance for the students who actually go to another country in order to gain additional professional insights. Instead, they consider it a matter of solidarity to have their fellow students benefit from their newly gained knowledge and experience upon their return.

Results of the assessment

Assessment grades

No	Assessment criteria	Assessment
1	Programme profile	A
2	Curriculum	A
3	Student assessment	A
4	Organisation of the study programme	A
5	Resources	A
6	Quality assurance	A

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.

V. Accreditation recommendation of the expert panel to the EVALAG Accreditation Commission

According to the expert panel, the study programme “Nursing (B. Sc.)” meets the EVALAG criteria for an international programme accreditation. Therefore, the panel recommends it for accreditation and recommends awarding the EVALAG label for international programme accreditation.

The team recommends Heimerer College to consider the recommendations (R) in this report to further improve the study programme.

Programme profile

- R 1** The college should specify in detail that self-study in the programme is equivalent to the amount of theoretical teaching according to European standards.
- R 2** The college should clarify if there are additional regulations or requirements for students aiming at pursuing a career abroad that go beyond merely graduating from the study programme.

Curriculum

- R 3** The college should clarify and illustrate more detailed how the intended share of one third of the total study hours being dedicated to theoretical teaching contents is actually reached in the curriculum.
- R 4** The college should consider an extended integration of digital tools such as augmented reality (AR) or virtual reality (VR) into the curriculum and the teaching methods of the study programme.
- R 5** The college should find ways how to reinforce the role of research skills within the curriculum so that students are confronted more steadily with these basic skills that are needed for academic projects and an academic career.
- R 6** The college should make sure that there is no mismatch between the state-of-the-art nursing skills as listed and required in the students' notebooks and the for some nursing-related instances possibly old-fashioned approaches by the mentors who instruct and guide the students during the practice phases outside the college.
- R 7** Given the range of nursing aspects addressed in the curriculum, the college should check if the widely consistent amount of hours intended for laboratory exercises across modules is adequate or if adjustments might be beneficial for certain courses.

- R 8** The college should clarify in the description of the study programme and of the modules if and how the patient communication skills of students are addressed and strengthened.

Student assessment

- R 9** The college should make sure that students can choose the topic for their bachelor thesis without being dependent on the supervision capacity of the teacher who is specialized in their preferred branch of nursing studies.
- R 10** The college should implement a deeper but still standardized assessment of the students' practical skills in the notebooks.
- R 11** The college should check if an expansion of the assessment methods is feasible for single modules since the exposure to a wider range of examination forms may be beneficial for the generic competences of the students.

Organisation of the study programme

No recommendations.

Resources

- R 12** Given a noticeable variance in terms of course room sizes, the college should make sure that the allocation of rooms for a course is adjusted to the actual size of a group that is supposed to find seats in a room.
- R 13** The college should make additional literature sources accessible for the students.
- R 14** The college should arrange for a discount for students at the college canteen.

Quality assurance

No recommendations.

VI. Accreditation decision of the EVALAG Accreditation Commission

As its meeting on 25 April 2024, the EVALAG Accreditation Commission decides unanimously to accredit the study programme “Nursing (B. Sc.)” at Kolegji Heimerer – Heimerer College (Prishtina) with the following recommendations:

Programme profile

- R 1** The college should specify in detail that self-study in the programme is equivalent to the amount of theoretical teaching according to European standards.
- R 2** The college should clarify if there are additional regulations or requirements for students aiming at pursuing a career abroad that go beyond merely graduating from the study programme.

Curriculum

- R 3** The college should clarify and illustrate more detailed how the intended share of one third of the total study hours being dedicated to theoretical teaching contents is actually reached in the curriculum.
- R 4** The college should consider an extended integration of digital tools such as augmented reality (AR) or virtual reality (VR) into the curriculum and the teaching methods of the study programme.
- R 5** The college should find ways how to reinforce the role of research skills within the curriculum so that students are confronted more steadily with these basic skills that are needed for academic projects and an academic career.
- R 6** The college should make sure that there is no mismatch between the state-of-the-art nursing skills as listed and required in the students’ notebooks and the for some nursing-related instances possibly old-fashioned approaches by the mentors who instruct and guide the students during the practice phases outside the college.
- R 7** Given the range of nursing aspects addressed in the curriculum, the college should check if the widely consistent amount of hours intended for laboratory exercises across modules is adequate or if adjustments might be beneficial for certain courses.
- R 8** The college should clarify in the description of the study programme and of the modules if and how the patient communication skills of students are addressed and strengthened.

Student assessment

- R 9** The college should make sure that students can choose the topic for their bachelor thesis without being dependent on the supervision capacity of the teacher who is specialized in their preferred branch of nursing studies.
- R 10** The college should implement a deeper but still standardized assessment of the students' practical skills in the notebooks.
- R 11** The college should check if an expansion of the assessment methods is feasible for single modules since the exposure to a wider range of examination forms may be beneficial for the generic competences of the students.

Resources

- R 12** Given a noticeable variance in terms of course room sizes, the college should make sure that the allocation of rooms for a course is adjusted to the actual size of a group that is supposed to find seats in a room.
- R 13** The college should make additional literature sources accessible for the students.
- R 14** The college should arrange for a discount for students at the college canteen.

Annex: Site visit schedule

Thursday, 22 February 2024

08:30-09:30 CET	Meeting with college rector and the university administration (Dean of the School for Health and Nursing, Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Projects, Vice-Rector for Research, Vice-Rector for Finance, Head of the Quality Office)
09:30-09:45 CET	Break / Brief internal meeting of expert panel
09:45-11:00 CET	Meeting with academic staff and teachers
11:00-11:15 CET	Break / Brief Internal meeting of expert panel
11:15-12:15 CET	Meeting with students and alumni
12:15-13:30 CET	Break / Brief internal meeting of expert panel and lunch break
13:30-14:30 CET	Meeting with registrar, technical staff (student services, IT, coordinators of practical phases) and quality management
14:30-15:15 CET	Visit of the facilities and inspection of the equipment at Heimerer College
15:15-16:15 CET	Internal meeting of expert panel: review of the sessions
16:15-16:45 CET	Closing meeting with representatives of Heimerer College

Annex: Statement of Heimerer College

Programme Profile	
<p>R1 - The college should specify in detail that self-study in the programme is equivalent to the amount of theoretical teaching according to European standards.</p>	<p>As recommended, we have revised the number of hours for each module.</p> <p>In the previous Syllabus, the number of hours was as follows:</p> <p>L=450, Lab E=405 and Self-Study=1815 (not including Diploma) and 1995 (including Diploma which has 180 hours).</p> <p>After we have revised the syllabus, the number of hours is as follows:</p> <p>L=945, Lab E=885 and Self-Study=870 (not including Diploma) and 1050 (including Diploma which has 180 hours).</p> <p>Attached you have the revised Program overview of Nursing (BSc) where you can see the breakdown of all ECTS into hours for each module. Before designing the programme in detail, it should be set in the context of institutional and departmental mission statements, professional specifications (regulations, requirements), and the institutional academic framework for credit allocation (see attached the ECT's users guide, 2015).</p>
<p>R2 - The college should clarify if there are additional regulations or requirements for students aiming at pursuing a career abroad that go beyond merely graduating from the study programme.</p>	<p>At our institution, we are proud to offer an International Career Programme designed to support students in pursuing career opportunities abroad, particularly in Germany. Through this program, students have the opportunity to gain valuable knowledge and learn the German language, facilitating their transition into practice settings or career pursuits in Germany upon graduation. Our dedicated International Career Centre within Heimerer College provides comprehensive support and resources to assist students in navigating the specific licensing, certification, and language proficiency requirements that may be necessary for healthcare sector employment abroad. While graduating from our study programme is indeed a significant milestone, we understand the importance of equipping students with the necessary tools and guidance to succeed in their international career aspirations</p>

Curriculum	
<p>R3 - The college should clarify and illustrate more detailed how the intended share of one third of the total study hours being dedicated to theoretical teaching contents is actually reached in the curriculum.</p>	<p>It is addressed in the revised syllabus (see attached)</p>
<p>R4 - The college should consider an extended integration of digital tools such as augmented reality (AR) or virtual reality (VR) into the curriculum and the teaching methods of the study programme.</p>	<p>We are actively working towards integrating these advanced technologies into our professional modules, with a particular focus on incorporating VR and AR through case scenarios. It is indeed a priority for us to leverage these digital tools to enhance the learning experience for our students. In fact, the utilization of VR and AR is already outlined in the syllabi of most modules, emphasizing their importance in our teaching methodology. We are continuously exploring innovative ways to integrate digital tools into our learning processes, and VR and AR remain at the forefront of our efforts. Additionally, we are proud to mention that we also utilize Pepper Robots for pedagogical purposes, further enriching the educational experience for our students.</p>
<p>R5 - The college should find ways how to reinforce the role of research skills within the curriculum so that students are confronted more steadily with these basic skills that are needed for academic projects and an academic career.</p>	<p>Students are introduced to research skills from their first semester onwards. Initially, they acquire basic research skills through Academic Writing, which covers various techniques such as analysing fragments of research publications, independently accessing relevant research literature, utilizing research strategies and databases relevant to health professionals, understanding the structure and style of academic publications, and adhering to citation rules. However, there is a gap in computer and software usage for promoting academic writing and conducting database searches. Thus, we will consider incorporating specific modules or workshops focused on teaching students essential computer and software skills relevant to research.</p> <p>Additionally, in the fourth semester, students engage in the Research and Evidence-Based Practice in Nursing</p>

	<p>Care module, which aims to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to critically appraise and apply research evidence in nursing practice. This ensures that their nursing care is grounded in the latest scientific evidence. Furthermore, the Applied Statistics in Health Sciences module is designed to provide students in health-related disciplines with fundamental statistical knowledge and abilities required for research, data analysis, and evidence-based healthcare decision-making. Through hands-on activities and real-world examples, students develop competency in applying statistics to address health-related research issues and enhance healthcare practices. Moreover, research-based methodologies are integrated into various lectures throughout the three study years, allowing students to continually develop these competencies. We also have started implementing the Methodology called "Student-run Interdisciplinary Innovative Research Lab" where the aim is to achieve students' competencies in the field of research by addressing a community challenge and practical impact in the community.</p> <p>The college ensure that students have access to one or more mentors who cover the same research area. This will provide students with ample support and guidance regardless of the specialization of their preferred branch of nursing studies. As part of our ongoing efforts to improve, we will consider expanding interdisciplinary research opportunities within this framework. By encouraging collaboration between students from different disciplines, we aim to foster diverse perspectives and innovative solutions to address complex societal issues.</p>
<p>R6 - The college should make sure that there is no mismatch between the state-of the-art nursing skills as listed and required in the students' notebooks and the for some nursing-related instances possibly old-fashioned approaches</p>	<p>It is appreciated the concern raised regarding potential mismatches between the state-of-the-art nursing skills listed in students' notebooks and the approaches utilized by mentors during practice phases outside the college. Ensuring alignment between theoretical knowledge and practical application is crucial for the development of competent nursing professionals. Here's how we can address this issue:</p> <p>Begin by reviewing the educational materials to ensure that they reflect current best practices and state-of-the-art nursing skills</p>

<p>by the mentors who instruct and guide the students during the practice phases outside the college.</p>	<p>Clinical mentors, before each start of the internship module receive training for the application of theoretical knowledge in practice. During the training they are also acquainted with internship documents, such as: internship notebooks - that presents competencies and activities for a given competency, evaluation forms which are adapted to the practice notebook. CM, also receives education on teaching methods, focusing on implementation and the assessment part as didactic skills.</p>
<p>R7 - Given the range of nursing aspects addressed in the curriculum, the college should check if the widely consistent amount of hours intended for laboratory exercises across modules is adequate or if adjustments might be beneficial for certain courses.</p>	<p>It is addressed in the revised syllabus (see attached)</p>
<p>R8 - The college should clarify in the description of the study programme and of the modules if and how the patient communication skills of students are addressed and strengthened</p>	<p>The college's study programme and module descriptions thoroughly address the enhancement of students' patient communication skills. One prominent feature is the dedicated module titled "Psychology and Communication in Nursing Care." This module serves as a cornerstone for students to acquire and refine their communication abilities, particularly in the context of nursing practice. Through this module, students gain invaluable insights and practical skills essential for effective patient communication. Furthermore, the college offers various avenues for students to develop their communication skills, critical thinking, and debate prowess. Monthly debate clubs provide an interactive platform where students engage in discussions, honing their abilities to articulate ideas, think critically, and participate constructively in debates. In addition, student counselling and training sessions are available to nurture communication skills and decision-making abilities. These sessions are tailored to empower students with the necessary tools to navigate complex communication scenarios effectively. The teaching and learning methodologies employed, notably Problem-Based</p>

	<p>Learning (PBL), play a pivotal role in fostering communication skills. Through PBL, students are immersed in real-world scenarios, working collaboratively in groups to address multifaceted challenges. This student-centered approach not only deepens their understanding of the subject matter but also cultivates essential skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication. Peer cooperation is encouraged, further enhancing the learning experience and promoting effective communication within the student cohort.</p>
<p>Student assessment</p>	
<p>R9 - The college should make sure that students can choose the topic for their bachelor thesis without being dependent on the supervision capacity of the teacher who is specialized in their preferred branch of nursing studies.</p>	<p>The college boasts a flexible supervision model, empowering students to choose their supervisors based on their research interests rather than solely depending on the expertise of specialized teachers. Additionally, there's a structured process in place for students to select their thesis topics. This process includes providing guidelines and resources for topic selection, conducting workshops or seminars to facilitate idea generation, and arranging meetings with potential supervisors to refine research topics. Moreover, the college maintains a faculty thesis proposal review committee comprising members from diverse nursing disciplines. This committee evaluates students' thesis proposals, offering feedback and guidance to ensure that students receive support irrespective of their chosen research topics.</p> <p>Beside this there are 44 academic staff 1 staff for 6 students meanwhile according OECD (2022) the student-academic staff ratio is slightly lower in public institutions than in private institutions, with about 15 students per academic staff member in public institutions and 17 in private institutions on average across OECD countries.</p>
<p>R10 - The college should implement a deeper but still standardized assessment of the students' practical skills in the notebooks.</p>	<p>Following the completion of their clinical internship period, our students undergo a comprehensive evaluation process aimed at ensuring they have acquired the requisite knowledge, skills, and competencies for their professional development in nursing practice. This evaluation encompasses direct on-site assessment by Clinical Mentors and Assistants, alongside an exam to validate their proficiency. Throughout their internship, students maintain detailed reports and reflections in</p>

	<p>their notebooks, which are meticulously reviewed by mentors to provide constructive feedback. Moreover, students are evaluated through case studies at the end of each module, demonstrating the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical application. Aligned with Bloom's Taxonomy, our evaluation process is cohesive and holistic, conducted by a unified team of lecturers, assistants, and clinical mentors, ensuring consistency and coherence. We've also implemented tailored assessment tools to monitor students' progress and proficiency in essential nursing competencies, facilitating targeted support where needed.</p>
<p>R 11 - The college should check if an expansion of the assessment methods is feasible for single modules since the exposure to a wider range of examination forms may be beneficial for the generic competences of the students.</p>	<p>At our college, we have offered a variety of assessment methods across different modules, outlined in each teacher's syllabus. While our core methodology aligns with Bloom's Taxonomy, instructors have the flexibility to choose suitable assessment methods based on their teaching objectives. Our existing assessment forms include group projects, written examinations, class participation assignments, colloquiums, and case study presentations, all contributing to students' holistic development. We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of our assessment methods and explore opportunities for further expansion to enhance students' generic competences.</p>
<p>Resources</p>	
<p>R12 - Given a noticeable variance in terms of course room sizes, the college should make sure that the allocation of rooms for a course is adjusted to the actual size of a group that is supposed to find seats in a room.</p>	<p>The room capacities dedicated to nursing are outlined as follows: the teaching room spans 720 square meters, the laboratories cover an area of 483.5 square meters, and the office space is allocated at 60 square meters. For each student the standard is 4.2-meter square.</p> <p>Within the dynamic environment of nursing labs, students are organized into groups of 25 individuals to facilitate interactive learning experiences. These groups enable students to engage deeply with practical exercises.</p>
<p>R13 - The college should make additional literature sources accessible for the students.</p>	<p>It's understandable the importance of providing students with adequate resources to support their academic endeavours. The suggestion to make additional literature sources accessible for students is commendable, and it aligns with our commitment to fostering a conducive learning environment. Here's how we will address this suggestion: explore the options for access</p>

	the international literature in different databases, upgrade our Moodle with topics made in H5P in Albanian language.
R14 - The college should arrange for a discount for students at the college canteen.	We will see the possibilities to make discount for students in the college canteen.