



Sustainable Higher
Education and
Research in Kosovo

With funding from

 Austrian
Development
Cooperation



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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

SHER

Sustainable Higher Education and Research in Kosovo

Guidelines for the SHER Joint or Double Degree (JDD) Programme

Executive Summary of SHER Joint or Double Degree (JDD) Programme Guidelines

Objectives:

1. **Align with European Standards:** Integrate Kosovo's institutions into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and European Research Area (ERA).
2. **Labor-Market-Relevant Curricula:** Prioritize STEM, environmental sciences, healthcare and social sciences to address Kosovo's workforce needs.
3. **International Partnerships:** Enable student and faculty exchanges with European institutions.
4. **Institutional Capacity:** Improve governance and quality in higher education.
5. **Gender Equality and Inclusivity:** Provide equal access for women and underrepresented groups.

Programme Structure:

Phase 1: Curriculum Development – Grants of €10,000 for initial programme design and partnership building.

Phase 2: Accreditation & Launch – Grants of €40,000 for programme accreditation, promotion, and recruitment.

Focus Areas:

1. **STEM and Technology:** Enhance scientific skills and innovation.
2. **Environmental Sciences:** Address green economy needs.
3. **Healthcare:** Meet public health priorities.
4. **Social Sciences:** Support sustainable socio-economic development.
5. **Cultural Studies:** Promote Kosovo's heritage and intercultural understanding.

Cross-Cutting Themes:

1. **Gender Equality:** Encourage female representation, especially in STEM.
2. **Inclusivity:** Provide support for underrepresented students.
3. **Human Rights-Based Approach:** Uphold fairness and transparency.
4. **Environmental Focus:** Contribute to sustainable development.
5. **Social Inclusion:** Support access to education for disadvantaged groups.
6. **Digital Transformation:** Integrate digital skills into curricula.

Application Process:

Phase 1: Kosovo public HEIs apply with curriculum plans and partnership strategies.

Phase 2: Selected public HEIs from Phase 1 apply for accreditation and programme launch funding.

1. General Information on the Programme and Overall Objective

The programme Sustainable Higher Education and Research in Kosovo (SHER) aims at contributing to a sustainable, evidence-based, needs-oriented and gender-responsive Higher Education and Research sector in Kosovo that is in line with the principles of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the European Research Area (ERA) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 and 9. It contributes to the provision of enhanced inclusive and equitable quality of education that promotes research, innovation and internationalization taking into account gender equality and the third mission of universities.

The SHER Joint or Double Degree (JDD) Programme is part of the Sustainable Higher Education and Research (SHER) initiative and the Kosovo Education Strategy, designed to strengthen Kosovo's higher education system through international collaboration and alignment with European standards. By facilitating partnerships between Kosovo's public higher education institutions (HEIs) and universities in Austria and other EU countries, the programme aims to develop Joint or Double Degree Programmes that are recognized both domestically and internationally.

The funding for this programme is provided by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and is co-financed by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) of the Republic of Kosovo.

2. Programme Objectives of the SHER Joint or Double Degree Programme

To achieve its vision of strengthening Kosovo's higher education system, the SHER Joint or Double Degree Programme has established a set of core objectives. These objectives focus on aligning Kosovo's HEIs with European standards, fostering partnerships, and developing curricula that meet the evolving demands of the workforce. By emphasizing international collaboration, institutional capacity building, and inclusivity, the programme aims to ensure that Kosovo's academic institutions are well-positioned to contribute to both local development and global educational networks.

Aligning with European Education Standards: The programme seeks to integrate Kosovo's HEIs into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA), adopting quality standards that support Kosovo's long-term educational goals.

Developing Competitive and Labor-Market Relevant Curricula: Joint and double degrees will provide students with skills and knowledge directly applicable to Kosovo's workforce needs, ensuring that graduates are equipped to address national and international challenges in fields such as STEM, environmental science, social sciences, and healthcare.

Fostering International Mobility and Collaboration: By promoting partnerships with European institutions, the JDD Programme enables student and faculty mobility, research collaboration, and knowledge exchange, contributing to a globalized educational experience for Kosovo's academic community.

Enhancing Institutional Capacity: Through curriculum development and international partnerships, Kosovo's HEIs will strengthen their institutional structures, adopt best practices, and build capacity in governance, research, and academic leadership.

Promoting Gender Equality and Inclusivity: The programme prioritizes gender equality and the inclusion of underrepresented groups, ensuring that vulnerable populations, including women and minorities, have equitable access to high-quality education and mobility opportunities.

3. Programme Structure and Phased Approach

The SHER JDD Programme is structured **into two phases**, each focusing on distinct stages of programme development and implementation:

Phase 1: Curriculum Development and Partnership Establishment

This initial stage is designed to support Kosovo public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as applicants, enabling them to develop joint or double degree programmes in partnership with EU HEIs, with a preference for Austrian institutions. Up to four Kosovo HEIs can receive grants of €10,000 each (note that a single Kosovo HEI can apply for multiple grants) to develop labor market-aligned curricula and establish foundational international partnerships.

Phase 2: Accreditation and Programme Launch

Selected Phase 1 grantees will be invited to apply for Phase 2 funding, aimed at finalizing the submission for accreditation and to the extent feasible, launching the JDD programmes. This phase supports the accreditation process, programme promotion, and student and faculty engagement, with up to two grants of up to €40,000 each.

4. Strategic Alignment with National and European Priorities

The SHER JDD Programme is carefully aligned with Kosovo's national goals, as outlined in key documents such as the National Development Strategy (NDS), National Science Programme (NSP) 2023-2028, and the Kosovo Education Strategy (KES). The programme also aligns with international frameworks, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), focusing on SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and

Infrastructure). Additionally, it adheres to accreditation standards and the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for quality assurance, ensuring alignment with both national priorities and the strategic objectives of Kosovo's public HEIs. Through the JDD Programme, Kosovo's HEIs are empowered to enhance global competitiveness, contribute to sustainable economic growth, and foster inclusive, high-quality educational opportunities in line with European standard

5. Long-Term Vision

The SHER JDD Programme envisions a future where degrees awarded by Kosovo's public HEIs are recognized and valued locally, regionally, and internationally. By enhancing the quality, relevance, and inclusivity of Kosovo's higher education system, the programme seeks to boost employability, stimulate innovation, and contribute to the country's socio-economic development. Sustained partnerships with European institutions will help ensure a lasting impact, supporting Kosovo's evolution into a knowledge-based and globally connected society.

6. Programme Priorities and Expected Outputs

The SHER Joint or Double Degree (JDD) Programme is designed to align Kosovo's higher education sector with both national and European priorities, supporting impactful and sustainable Joint or Double Degree Programmes. This initiative aims to address Kosovo's strategic needs by focusing on high-quality education, research, and international collaboration, with particular emphasis on labor market relevance, gender equality, and inclusivity. By aligning with these core priorities, the programme helps Kosovo's HEIs build their capacities and global standing.

6.1. Key Focus Areas

1. STEM, Environmental Sciences, Healthcare, Social Sciences, and Cultural Studies:

The JDD Programme prioritizes these fields as essential to Kosovo's socio-economic development. By focusing on STEM, environmental sciences, and healthcare, the programme addresses critical skills gaps and fosters innovation to support public health, sustainable resource management, and technological advancement. Social sciences and cultural studies are equally prioritized to promote intercultural understanding and preserve Kosovo's cultural heritage, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared to contribute to various sectors in Kosovo and internationally.

2. International Collaboration and Mobility: A core element of the JDD Programme is enhancing international partnerships, particularly with European HEIs. This collaboration promotes student and faculty mobility, giving participants the opportunity to gain international exposure, practical experience, and access to global knowledge networks. By fostering cross-border academic exchange, the programme enables Kosovo's HEIs to align with European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and European Research Area (ERA) standards,

building robust, enduring networks that strengthen Kosovo's presence on the international academic stage.

3. Labor Market Relevance: The JDD Programme is tailored to ensure that degree programmes are directly aligned with labor market needs in Kosovo. Through applied learning experiences, such as internships, fieldwork, and collaboration with local industries, students gain practical skills that meet current workforce demands. The programme's emphasis on labor market alignment ensures that graduates are prepared for immediate employment in their chosen fields, supporting Kosovo's industrial and technological growth by producing a workforce that can adapt to evolving industry needs.

4. Inclusivity and Gender Equality: The SHER JDD Programme is committed to advancing inclusivity within Kosovo's higher education system, with a particular focus on increasing the participation of women and underrepresented groups. By implementing measures to encourage the involvement of these groups, especially in traditionally male-dominated fields like STEM, the programme promotes a more diverse academic environment. JDD programmes are also expected to integrate gender perspectives into curricula and research agendas, addressing gender-relevant topics and offering support services such as scholarships and mentorship for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

5. Sustainability and Green Economy: Aligned with Kosovo's commitment to sustainable development, the JDD Programme aims to support the country's transition to a green economy. By prioritizing environmentally focused programmes, the initiative prepares students to address challenges in sustainable resource management, environmental protection, and climate change. Incorporating sustainability principles into both curricula and research projects, the programme fosters skills that contribute to Kosovo's national sustainability goals and encourages research in green technologies, supporting long-term economic resilience and environmental stewardship.

6. Institutional Capacity Building: To ensure the long-term success of Joint or Double Degree Programmes, the JDD Programme emphasizes building the governance and strategic planning capabilities of Kosovo's HEIs. Through exposure to best practices in governance, strategic planning, and academic leadership, institutions can adopt frameworks that align with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for quality assurance. This focus on institutional capacity building ensures that HEIs in Kosovo are equipped to sustain high-quality programmes, strengthen their educational foundations, and maintain programme quality beyond the initial funding period.

6.2. Expected Outcomes

The SHER JDD Programme is designed to generate meaningful outcomes that strengthen Kosovo's higher education sector, enhance research capabilities, and contribute to socio-economic development. These outcomes align with both national priorities and European quality standards, preparing Kosovo's HEIs to support local growth and compete in a globalized academic environment.

1. Development of Innovative and Interdisciplinary Curricula: Degree programmes developed through the JDD initiative are aligned with European standards, ensuring that curricula meet the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for quality assurance. Emphasizing interdisciplinary and applied learning approaches, these curricula equip

students with practical skills through internships, research projects, and collaboration with industry. By addressing priority fields such as STEM, healthcare, environmental sciences, and social sciences, these programmes are tailored to meet the skill demands and address challenges in Kosovo's labor market.

2.Enhanced International Mobility and Collaboration: By facilitating exchange programmes for students and faculty, the JDD Programme fosters academic mobility between Kosovo and European partner institutions, particularly in Austria and the broader EU. This mobility enhances the academic experience, providing students with international exposure and enriching faculty research collaborations. Through sustained partnerships, Kosovo's HEIs strengthen their integration within the EHEA and ERA, gaining access to a wealth of resources, research initiatives, and joint knowledge-sharing opportunities.

3.Strengthened Research Capacities at Kosovo's HEIs: The JDD Programme supports Kosovo's HEIs in building their research capacity through joint projects with European partner institutions. These projects focus on critical areas relevant to Kosovo's development and workforce needs, such as sustainable development, healthcare innovation, and technology. Increased research output and innovation, achieved through collaboration with European standards, improve the global competitiveness of Kosovo's HEIs and enhance their ability to contribute to the country's development goals.

4.Improved Institutional Governance and Programme Management: By adopting best practices in governance and quality assurance, Kosovo's HEIs improve their resource allocation, strategic planning, and management capabilities. The adoption of European governance standards ensures the sustainability of Joint or Double Degree Programmes, as institutions build strong academic foundations that contribute to efficient programme management. Strengthened governance enables HEIs to maintain programme quality and adapt to evolving academic and industry standards over time.

5.Enhanced Inclusivity and Gender Equality in Higher Education: The programme actively supports the participation of women, ethnic minorities, and other underrepresented groups, especially in fields where they have traditionally been underrepresented, such as STEM. By offering scholarships, mentorship programmes, and other support services, the JDD Programme removes barriers to higher education for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Integrating gender perspectives into curricula further promotes research and learning that address gender-relevant issues, contributing to gender equality within Kosovo's academic landscape.

6.Strengthened Kosovo Accreditation and Quality Assurance Standards: Programmes developed under the JDD initiative adhere to European accreditation standards, ensuring that Kosovo's HEIs meet the highest levels of academic quality. This alignment with the ESG framework enhances the recognition and portability of degrees across Europe, increasing graduate mobility and employability. By supporting Kosovo's ongoing higher education reform, the JDD Programme contributes to setting a new benchmark for academic quality in the region.

7. Positive Socio-Economic Impact and Contribution to Sustainable Development: Graduates from JDD programmes are equipped with the skills necessary for immediate entry into the workforce, supporting Kosovo's economic growth and technological advancement. By focusing on sustainability and green economy principles, the programme enables

graduates to address environmental challenges and contribute to Kosovo's green economy transition. Additionally, the programme's alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), reinforces its commitment to promoting sustainable, inclusive, and high-quality education that drives long-term development.

7. Cross-cutting themes

The SHER Joint and Double Degree (JDD) Programme integrates essential cross-cutting themes to ensure that the programme not only achieves its academic and research goals but also contributes to the broader goals of equity, inclusivity, and sustainability. These themes reinforce Kosovo's commitment to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in enhancing access to quality education, fostering gender equality, and supporting the green economy.

7.1. Gender Equality and Empowerment

Increasing Representation in STEM and Other Fields: The JDD Programme prioritizes gender equality by actively encouraging the participation of women, particularly in fields where they have historically been underrepresented, such as STEM. **Gender Balance in Programme Participation and Faculty:** Efforts will be made to achieve gender balance among students, faculty, and research participants involved in JDD programmes. Gender-sensitive policies and practices will be integrated into the programme structure to support this balance.

Research on Gender-Relevant Issues: JDD curricula and research agendas will incorporate topics that address gender-related issues, fostering awareness and producing insights that can inform policy and social change in Kosovo.

7.2. Inclusivity and Support for Vulnerable Groups

Promoting Access for Underrepresented Groups: The programme is committed to supporting underrepresented groups, including ethnic minorities, students with disabilities, and individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, ensuring equal access to high-quality education and opportunities for advancement.

Financial and Academic Support: The JDD Programme will offer scholarships, mentorship, and other support services to remove barriers for vulnerable students, helping them to succeed in their studies and in research.

Awareness and Advocacy for Inclusion: Programme partners will actively promote inclusive practices across all programme activities, from recruitment to teaching and research, creating a welcoming environment for all students.

7.3. Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)

Commitment to Equity, Fairness, and Respect: The programme will operate under a Human Rights-Based Approach, ensuring that all activities promote respect for human rights, equity, and fairness, especially for marginalized and vulnerable communities.

Ethical Research and Academic Standards: Research conducted under the JDD Programme will adhere to ethical standards, protecting participants' rights and promoting values of inclusivity and respect.

Transparency and Accountability: All programme activities, including recruitment, teaching, and evaluation, will be conducted transparently, with accountability measures to uphold participants' rights and programme integrity.

7.4. Environmental Sustainability and the Green Economy

Focus on Environmentally Oriented Curricula: The JDD Programme prioritizes curricula and research projects that address sustainability and environmental stewardship, equipping students with the knowledge to contribute to Kosovo's green economy.

Research on Sustainable Development Topics: Research projects will explore areas such as renewable energy, sustainable resource management, and environmental protection, supporting Kosovo's commitment to sustainable development.

Support for SDGs, Especially SDG 9: The programme aligns with Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), by fostering skills and research that support sustainable industrial growth and innovation in Kosovo.

7.5. Social Dimension of Higher Education

Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers: The programme will implement social dimension strategies to support students from low-income backgrounds, including financial aid, housing support, and academic resources to help students succeed.

Promoting the Bologna Process Social Dimension: By aligning with the social dimension of the Bologna Process, the JDD Programme will work to make higher education more accessible and inclusive, reflecting EHEA values and standards.

Community Engagement and Outreach: Programmes will encourage community engagement and outreach initiatives, promoting awareness of the JDD Programme and making higher education more inclusive and accessible to all Kosovars.

7.6. Innovation and Digital Transformation

Integrating Digital Skills: Recognizing the importance of digital literacy, the JDD Programme will integrate digital skills training within the curriculum, ensuring graduates are prepared for the demands of the modern workforce.

Support for Digital Research Tools: Faculty and students will be encouraged to adopt digital tools and methodologies in their research, enhancing data collection, analysis, and knowledge dissemination.

Encouraging Digital Collaboration: The programme will leverage digital platforms for collaboration between Kosovo's HEIs and European partners, facilitating cross-border research and remote learning.

8. Budget and Cost Sharing

The SHER Joint or Double Degree (JDD) Programme budget is structured to ensure efficient resource allocation, cost-effectiveness, and shared responsibility between partner institutions. This section provides an overview of budget allocations, eligible expenses, and cost-sharing requirements designed to promote programme sustainability and maximize impact.

8.1. Grant Allocation by Phase

The JDD Programme is organized into two Phases of funding, each with specific financial allocations:

Phase 1 – Curriculum Development and Partnership Establishment:

Up to four Kosovo public HEIs will receive grants of up to €10,000 each to support curriculum development, partnership formation, and foundational planning for joint or double degree programmes. This funding supports the initial stages of programme design and collaboration with European partners.

Phase 2 – Accreditation and Programme Launch:

HEIs that successfully complete Phase 1 will be invited to apply for Phase 2 funding. Up to two HEIs will receive grants of up to €40,000 each to support the accreditation process, programme promotion, and student and faculty engagement. Phase 2 funding ensures the JDD programmes are submitted for accreditation, sustainable, and to the extent feasible prepared for successful launch.

8.2. Eligible Costs

The JDD Programme grants cover a range of activities essential to the establishment and launch of Joint or Double Degree Programmes, including but not limited to:

Curriculum Development:

Costs associated with creating and implementing new joint curricula, including faculty training, course materials, and compliance with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for quality assurance.

Workshops and consultations to adapt curricula for interdisciplinary and labor market relevance.

Expenses related to Quality assurance activities:

Expert's fee to support the JDD development, expenses related to applying for programme accreditation such as drafting the SER, application fees, documentation, and compliance with both Kosovo and European standards.

Programme Promotion and Student Recruitment:

Covers the costs of marketing and communication efforts to raise awareness of the JDD programmes among potential students and key stakeholders. This includes expenses for recruitment activities such as targeted outreach and engagement initiatives specifically designed to attract and support students from underrepresented groups, ensuring a diverse and inclusive student body.

For more information on eligibility of costs and financial reporting see the financial guidelines for joint or double degrees for the budget and the financial report.

8.3. Cost Sharing and Institutional Contributions

To ensure the sustainability and shared commitment of all partners, the JDD Programme requires that participating HEIs contribute a portion of the programme costs. Cost-sharing promotes ownership and supports long-term continuity of Joint or Double Degree Programmes beyond the initial funding period.

Institutional Contributions:

Kosovo HEIs and their European partners are expected to contribute financially to support areas not fully covered by the grant, such as additional faculty resources, administrative support, and infrastructure. Institutions may also provide in-kind contributions, such as facilities, technology, and personnel dedicated to programme implementation.

Collaborative Funding Model:

Each participating institution's contribution demonstrates their commitment to the programme's success, ensuring resource allocation aligns with shared programme goals and objectives.

This collaborative funding model strengthens partnerships between Kosovo and European institutions, promoting sustainability and programme resilience.

8.4. Budget Management and Financial Accountability

The SHER/consortium will establish formal agreements with each awarded public HEI to outline the terms of collaboration, including cooperation modalities, key milestones, expected deliverables, monitoring processes, and reporting requirements.

The SHER JDD Programme prioritizes transparency and accountability in the use of funds. Grant recipients are required to follow established procedures for financial reporting, ensuring funds are used responsibly and in alignment with programme objectives.

Funding recipients and their partners are expected to comply with the basic rules stipulated in the ADA Code of Conduct when implementing their projects (for more information see the ADA Code of Conduct INFORMATION_SHEET_PARTNER_RECIPIENTS in the annex).

Financial Reporting Requirements:

Granted HEIs will submit regular financial reports detailing how funds have been used, including an end-of-programme report to summarize all expenditures.

For more information on eligibility of costs and financial reporting see the financial guidelines for joint or double degrees for the budget and the financial report.

Monitoring and Compliance:

WUS Austria and other programme partners will conduct periodic reviews of expenditures to ensure compliance with budget guidelines and proper use of funds. Institutions found to be non-compliant may face funding adjustments or, in serious cases, withdrawal of funding to maintain the programme's financial integrity.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The SHER Joint or Double Degree (JDD) Programme is committed to rigorous monitoring and evaluation to ensure that programme activities align with objectives and achieve measurable outcomes. This section outlines the framework for tracking progress, assessing impact, and making data-driven adjustments to support the success and sustainability of the JDD Programme.

9. Selection Procedure

The selection process for the SHER Joint or Double Degree (JDD) Programme is designed to ensure that applications align with programme priorities, national objectives, and European standards. This process consists of two application Phases, each with specific eligibility checks, expert reviews, and selection criteria to identify the best-suited proposals.

9.1 Phase 1: Curriculum Development and Partnership Establishment

Objective: To select up to four Kosovo public HEIs to receive funding for developing joint or double degree curricula in partnership with European HEIs, with a grant cap of €10,000 per institution.

1. Initial Eligibility Check by WUS Austria

- **Application Completeness and Accuracy:** Verification that all required documents and information are complete and accurately submitted.
- **Eligibility Compliance:** Confirmation that the applicant is a Kosovo public HEI with a **partnership agreement with a European institution.**
- **Budget and Timeline Feasibility:** Ensuring the proposed budget and timeline comply with Phase 1 guidelines and are realistic for curriculum development.

2. Expert Review Process for Phase 1

- **Selection Criteria for Phase 1:**
 - **Curriculum Development Quality:** Evaluation of curriculum innovativeness, interdisciplinarity, and alignment with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).
 - **Alignment with National Needs:** Relevance of the proposed curriculum to Kosovo's National Development Strategy, especially in priority fields (e.g., STEM, environmental sciences).
 - **Partnership Depth:** Strength of the partnership with the European HEI, including joint activities in curriculum development, research, and faculty exchange.
 - **Inclusivity and Gender Mainstreaming:** Inclusion of women and other underrepresented groups in the programme.
 - **Labor Market Relevance:** Practical learning components (e.g., internships, industry collaboration) that meet labor market needs.

3. Final Decision by Committee Selection Board for Phase 1

- **Selection Board Composition:**
 - **ADA:** Head of the Selection Board.
 - Representatives from **MESTI, SHER programme, WUS Austria, and OeAD-GmbH** (Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research).
- **Decision-Making Factors:** The Selection Board reviews expert evaluations to select the top applications, prioritizing proposals with strong partnership engagement, curriculum alignment with labor market needs, and inclusivity.

4. Formal Approval and Contracting for Phase 1

- Selected HEIs for Phase 1 will proceed to the contracting phase, overseen by WUS Austria, to initiate curriculum development activities.

9.2. Phase 2: Accreditation and Programme Launch

Objective: To invite Phase 1 grantees to apply for Phase 2 funding, supporting accreditation, programme promotion, and student/faculty engagement, with up to three grants of €40,000 each.

1. Initial Eligibility Check by WUS Austria for Phase 2

- **Completion of Phase 1 Requirements:** Verification that applicants have developed curricula and established partnerships as specified in Phase 1.
- **Accreditation and Launch Readiness:** Confirmation that applicants have a clear plan for achieving accreditation and promoting the JDD programme.
- **Budget and Timeline Feasibility:** Review of the proposed budget and timeline for accreditation and programme launch to ensure alignment with Phase 2 guidelines.

2. Expert Review Process for Phase 2

- **Dual Expert Assessment:** Each eligible application undergoes independent review by two experts to evaluate readiness for accreditation and programme launch.
- **Selection Criteria for Phase 2:**
 - **Accreditation Readiness:** Assessment of the accreditation plan, including compliance with Kosovo and European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).
 - **Programme Launch Strategy:** Evaluation of student recruitment and engagement strategies, promotional activities, and support services.
 - **Partnership Sustainability:** Plans for sustaining partnerships with European HEIs and ensuring long-term collaboration in research and curriculum updates.
 - **Inclusivity and Social Dimension:** Inclusivity measures, support for vulnerable groups, and alignment with the Bologna Process social dimension.
 - **Labor Market and Employability Focus:** Strategies to enhance graduate employability and partnerships with local industries.

3. Final Decision by the Selection Committee for Phase 2

- **Selection Board Composition** remains the same as in Phase 1.
- **Decision-Making Factors:** The Selection Committee prioritizes applications with robust accreditation plans, effective launch strategies, and a commitment to inclusivity and labor market alignment.

4. Formal Approval and Contracting for Phase 2

- Selected HEIs for Phase 2 will proceed to final contracting and receive funding to initiate programme accreditation and launch activities, guided by WUS Austria.

10. Application Process

The application process for the SHER Joint or Double Degree (JDD) Programme is designed to be transparent, accessible, and supportive of Kosovo's public higher education institutions (HEIs) in establishing Joint or Double Degree Programmes. This section outlines the steps and requirements for applying to each Phase of the programme.

10.1 Phase 1: Curriculum Development and Partnership Establishment

Call for Applications: Announcements will be posted on official platforms, including the MESTI, WUS Austria, and SHER websites.

Application Requirements:

- **Comprehensive Proposal:**

Programme Objectives and Curriculum Outline: Describe the curriculum's objectives, alignment with national priorities, and relevance to labor market needs.

Partnership Overview: Provide details on the European partner HEI(s), including roles, responsibilities, and the collaboration structure, along with a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that formalizes the partnership.

Inclusion and Gender Equality Plan: Outline strategies to promote gender balance and inclusivity within the programme.

Budget and Timeline: Submit a detailed budget and timeline for Phase 1, ensuring alignment with the €10,000 grant limit.

- **Supporting Documents:**

Letters from European Partners: Attach letters from each European partner, confirming their commitment to specific programme components such as curriculum development, faculty exchange, or research collaboration.

Institutional Endorsement: Include a statement signed by the leadership of the applicant HEI, affirming institutional support and commitment to the objectives of the JDD Programme.

Invitation to Apply

Upon successful completion of Phase 1, selected HEIs will be invited to apply for Phase 2 funding. WUS Austria will provide these HEIs with specific application instructions for the accreditation and programme launch phase.

10.2. Phase 2: Accreditation and Programme Launch

Only HEIs that have successfully completed Phase 1 are eligible for Phase 2 funding, which supports the accreditation and formal launch of joint or double degree programmes.

- **Invitation to Apply:** HEIs that complete Phase 1 will be invited to apply for Phase 2 funding. WUS Austria will provide these institutions with detailed application guidelines for the accreditation and programme launch phase.

- **Application Requirements for Phase 2:**

Accreditation and Quality Assurance Plan: Outline the process for obtaining accreditation from relevant Kosovo accrediting bodies, ensuring alignment with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).

Sustainability and Partnership Continuity Plan: Present a strategy for maintaining the programme after initial funding, including ongoing collaboration with European partners and sustained governance, **supported by a signed MoU.**

Budget and Timeline for Phase 2 Activities: Provide a financial plan detailing the allocation of the €40,000 grant for accreditation and programme launch activities.

• **Submission Process:**

Applications must be submitted electronically to WUS Austria by the specified deadline. Late or incomplete submissions will not be reviewed. Applicants will receive a confirmation email, including the timeline for the evaluation process.

• **Notification of Results:**

Following the Selection Board’s decision, WUS Austria will notify all Phase 2 applicants of the results. Successful HEIs will receive further instructions for final contracting and the schedule for initiating the accreditation and programme launch.

10.3 Application Support and Guidance

To support applicants throughout the application process, the SHER JDD Programme will offer the following resources:

- **Guidance Workshops:** A pre-application workshop will be organized by WUS Austria and MEST to help applicants understand the requirements, selection criteria, and best practices for successful applications.
- **Dedicated Support Contact:** A dedicated contact point within WUS Austria will be available to answer questions and clarify the application requirements and process.

11. Timetable

Activity	Responsible	Deadline
Phase 1: Curriculum Development and Partnership Establishment		
Call for Applications for Phase 1 Opens	WUS Austria	Early November 2024
Information Campaign and Guidance Workshop	WUS Austria	4th December 2024
Submission Deadline for Phase 1 Applications	Kosovo Public HEIs	15 January 2025
Formality Checks and Expert Review of Phase 1 Applications	WUS Austria Assigned Experts	15 January – 28 February 2025

Activity	Responsible	Deadline
Selection Process and Decision for Phase 1	Selection Board	First half of March 2025
Announcement of Phase 1 Results to Applicants	WUS Austria	March 2025
Contracting and Start of Curriculum Development	Selected HEIs	April 2025
Curriculum Development and Partnership Activities Begin	Selected HEIs and EU Partners	April 2025 – September 2025
Phase 2: Accreditation and Programme Launch		
Invitation to Apply for Phase 2	WUS Austria	October 2025
Submission Deadline for Phase 2 Applications	Selected Phase 1 HEIs	1 December 2025
Formality Checks and Expert Review of Phase 2 Applications	WUS Austria Assigned Experts	December 2025 – January 2026
Selection Process and Decision for Phase 2	Selection Board	February 2026
Announcement of Phase 2 Results	WUS Austria	February 2026
Contracting and Programme Accreditation Process Begins	Selected Phase 2 HEIs	March 2026
Programme Launch and Student Recruitment	Selected HEIs	From October 2026

12. Information:

The main item of the information campaign will be an **Guidance Workshop** on 4th December 2024 in Prishtina. The JDD call will be announced on the programme website, MESTI website, and the website of the WUS Austria. WUS Austria will offer personal information and counselling for all prospective applicants.

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SHER Joint and Double Degree (JDD) Programme Overview

