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***AAB COLLEGE***

***MASTER (MA) MARKETING AND BUSINESS  
ADMINISTRATION***

***RE-ACCREDITATION***

**FINAL REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM**

June 2021, Vienna-Riga



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Context

**Date of site visit: 14<sup>th</sup> May, 2021**

**Expert Team (ET) members:**

- *Mag. Dr. Dietmar Paier*
- *Ms. Asnate Kazoka, PhD student*

**Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):**

- *Mr. Naim Gashi*
- *Shkelzen Gerxhaliu, Senior Officer for Monitoring and Evaluation*
- *Arianit Krasniqi, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Accreditation*
- *Leona Kovaçi, Senior Officer for Monitoring and Evaluation*
- *Ilijane Ademaj, Senior Officer for Monitoring and Evaluation*

**Sources of information for the Report:**

- *Self-evaluation report Master (MA) Marketing and Business Management, 2021*
- *Scientific publications of the academic staff*
- *List of participation in conferences of the academic staff*
- *Student numbers*
- *List of students engaged in the internship in 2018/ 2019*
- *List of activities carried out by the Faculty of Economics 2015 - 2020*
- *List of syllabi for the programme*
- *CV's of the academic staff*

**Additional documents requested by the ET:**

- *Corrected Student numbers for MA Marketing and Business Management in Prishtina for the last three years by years and semesters, including:*
  - *number of applicants*
  - *number of admissions*
  - *number of first-year students disaggregated by gender*



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- *total number of students in semester*
- *dropouts*
- *number of students within standard period of study*
- *number of students exceeding the standard period of study*
- *number of graduates*
- *average graduation grade for each cohort of graduates*
- *Detailed admission requirements for the MA Marketing and Business Management and information about the requirements applied in the last three years (applicant, previous education (study programme/field and institution), admission requirements)*
- *Strategic Plan of the Faculty of Economics*
- *AAB College Statute*
- *AAB College Strategic Development Plan*
- *Semester reports for the year 2020 for MA Marketing and Business Management*
- *Quality Assurance Guide*
- *Regulation on Quality Assurance*
- *Quality Assurance Guideline (if different from the previous two)*
- *Templates of questionnaires conducted by the Quality Assurance Office*
- *Results of internal evaluations and reports prepared by the Quality Assurance Office in 2020*
- *Regulation on Master's Studies*
- *Results of Turnitin application since it was introduced*
- *Policy on Academic Misconduct*
- *Framework with relevant indicators for performance appraisal for the Faculty of Economics*
- *Library resources available for implementing the MA Marketing and Business Management (by indicating titles, year of issue and copies available in the library)*
- *Example of a recent "Success report", mentioned in the Self Evaluation Report, p. 9, footnote 1*
- *Staff regulation for selection and appointment of new academic staff including performance evaluation and advancement of academic staff*
- *Strategic plan for research*
- *QA plan for harmonization and standardization of teaching*
- *Regulation on the scientific requirements or standards for master theses (or guidelines for students on master thesis)*



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### Criteria used for program evaluation:

- *Standards & performance indicators for external evaluation according to the Accreditation Manual of KAA, July 2018*
- *Criteria of Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact, Sustainability*

### 1.2. Site visit schedule

#### Expert Team

- Prof. Dr. Dietmar Paier, University of Applied Science Vienna, Austria
- Ms. Asnate Kažoka, University of Latvia, Latvia

#### Coordinators of KAA

- Naim Gashi, Executive Director of KAA
- Shkelzen Gerxhaliu, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring
- Arianit Krasniqi, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Accreditation
- Leona Kovaci, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring
- Ilirjane Ademaj, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring

#### Site Visit Program

09.00 – 09.50	Meeting with the management of the faculty where the programme is integrated ( <i>no slide presentation is allowed, the meeting is intended as a free discussion</i> )
09.55 – 10:40	Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff
10:40 – 11:30	Lunch break

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11:30 – 12:30	Meeting with the heads of the study programme
12:35 – 13:20	Meeting with the teaching staff
13:25 - 14:10	Meeting with the students
14:15 - 14:55	Meeting with the graduates
15:00 - 15:30	Meeting with employers of graduates
15:30 - 15:40	Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts
15:40 - 15:50	Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and program

Study programs	Experts	Responsible persons of study program
Marketing and Business Management / MA (Reaccreditation)	Dietmar Paier Asnate Kažoka	Ali Ismajli Besime Ziberi

### 1.3. A brief overview of the institution and program under evaluation

AAB College is the first and largest non-public higher education institution in the Republic of Kosovo. AAB was established in 2002 with a single program in Journalism and Mass Communication. Currently AAB operates 14 faculties which provide study programmes on bachelors and masters level in three campuses - Prishtina, Ferizaj and Gjakova.

Vision of the AAB College states that *“AAB is a leading university institution in the region in applying an innovative approach towards higher education, science and technology. AAB sets new trends in the area of higher education in Kosovo and in the region and is part of the most relevant networks of institutions of higher education in Europe and wider. AAB is a leader towards the country’s European integration processes and is a promoter of economic and societal development.”*

According to the Statute, the purpose of the AAB College is to develop education and scientific research, to be available to everyone based on equality and merits with no ethnic

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discrimination, to play the lead role in educational, scientific, cultural, social and economical development of Kosovo, to develop its programmes with an international and European orientation and to help on the elevation process of civic democracy.

The Faculty of Economics was established in the academic year 2005/2006 and launched the master's level of studies in the academic year 2009/2010. The mission of the faculty is to provide each student with a favorable environment to achieve his or her career goals, with an emphasis on personality development, and to provide them with quality education in all fields of economics.

In the Faculty of Economics AAB College offers three bachelor study programmes (Banking, Finance and Accounting, Management and Informatics, Marketing and Business Administration) and three masters (Banking and Informatics, Marketing and Business Administration, Management) study programmes.

During the previous accreditation of MA Marketing and Business Management the expert team had formulated recommendations related to integration of the current bachelor study programmes, differentiation of the programmes, reconsidering the number of ECTS and number of exercise/ practical classes, ensuring sufficient number of full-time staff, introducing activities for planning the long-term career of the academic staff and increasing the mobility of the academic staff and students, consideration of the AACSB methodology, consideration of the new study courses introduced. Since the last review the AAB College has considered some of these recommendations but disregarded some of the other ones as already introduced.

## **2. PROGRAM EVALUATION**

### **2.1. Mission, objectives and administration**

The mission of AAB College according to the mission statement published on the website is:

- provision of quality and diversified programs of higher education and applied science for the labor market in Kosovo, the region and beyond;



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- advancement, creation and dissemination of knowledge through scientific research in order to improve the well-being and health of the population, as well as cultural, social and economic development;
- provision of an environment that results in social mobility and personal development of the individual, responsible citizen.

The mission of the Faculty of Economics is to provide each student with a favorable environment to achieve his or her career goals, with an emphasis on personality development by providing teaching in modern and practical forms and in line with developments and processes in national and international markets in order for the students to be competitive in global markets.

The mission of the study programme MA Marketing and Business Management is to develop students' analytical, strategic, research and creative skills, promoting concepts derived from the field of marketing.

This way the expert team (ET) can conclude that the mission of the study programme generally is in line with the mission statement of the institution, meaning that the main purpose is to prepare competitive specialists for the labour market.

The demand for the study programme is justified by the fact that employers are in the lookout for students qualified in multidisciplinary studies of economics that combine administrative, managerial and information technology skills. The view expressed by the employers was that the students on master's level are more specialised and therefore ready to take on new challenges. In the case of the Marketing and Business Management study programme that would mean that the bachelor study programme provides information about different aspects of marketing but the master's study programme prepares for strategic work. It was also highlighted that bachelor students lack working experience.

However, while the employer representatives saw a significant difference between the graduates of both levels, the ET did not receive a convincing explanation on how the learning outcomes of this study programme are linked to knowledge, skills and competencies related to master's level according to the National Qualification Framework (NQF) or the European Qualification Framework (EQF) which foresees „highly specialized, extensive and in-depth knowledge“, „specialized skills and techniques" and competencies enabling „managing and





transforming work or study contexts that are complex, unforeseen, and require new strategic approaches”.

From the SER and discussions it seemed that the study programme is focused and following the needs of employers rather than building a solid knowledge base for research and further developments in this area which would be the goal of a master's studies.

From the discussions it was also clear that there is no specific didactic and research concept except “putting students at the centre” that was explained in a different way by different academic staff members.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
<b>Standard 1.1.</b> The study program mission is in compliance with the overall mission statement of the institution.	X	
<b>Standard 1.2.</b> Relevant academic and professional advice is considered when defining the intended learning outcomes which are consistent with the National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.		X
<b>Standard 1.3.</b> The study program has a well-defined overarching didactic and research concept.		X
<b>Standard 1.4.</b> There are formal policies, guidelines and regulations dealing with recurring procedural or academic issues. These are made publicly available to all staff and students.	X	
<b>Standard 1.5.</b> All staff and students comply with the internal regulations relating to ethical conduct in research, teaching, assessment in all academic and administrative activities.	X	
<b>Standard 1.6.</b> All policies, regulations, terms of reference and statements of responsibility relating to the management and delivery of the program are reviewed at least once every two years and amended as required in the light of changing circumstances.	X	



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## **Compliance level: Partially compliant**

### **Recommendations:**

- 1. To establish a scientific and knowledge base in marketing and business management which would generate knowledge and predict the future needs rather than solely respond to the current needs of the labour market;*
- 2. To perform a mapping with similar study programmes in other countries in regard to programme structure to ensure that the study programme is compliant with EQF level 7;*
- 3. To establish a research and didactic concept for the study programme and Faculty of Economics in general.*

## **2.2. Quality Management**

The AAB College operates according to the Quality Assurance Regulation which was developed in 2009 and Quality Assurance Guidelines which were developed in 2015. The main regulatory framework of the AAB College, including the Quality Assurance Guidelines, is available on the AAB College. However, the documents have been presented in different sections of the website and the navigation from the main page of the website is not user-friendly.

The content of the regulation and guidelines is overlapping to a certain extent. As one of the standards of KAA for programme accreditation specifically addresses the revision of the quality assurance arrangements (including the policies and regulations), it is suggested to revise and differentiate them by only mentioning the main targets of quality assurance processes, main responsibilities in the regulation and further detailing the different processes, their regularity and involved parties in the guidelines.

AAB College is currently revising their framework for quality assurance. One of the initiatives is the submission of Quality Assurance Office reports directly to the Senate and not the Vice-rector and development of a procedure for internal revision of the study programmes.

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Among the strategic objectives for the AAB College and respectively the Faculty of Economics for the period 2018 - 2020 is to provide increased support for transparent and participatory quality assurance procedures. The annual work plan of the Faculty of Economics for this strategic objective includes digitalisation of the teaching process, development of a center for personnel performance development and better facilitation of student internships as well as some other activities. A separate budget line in the AAB College is foreseen for the quality assurance activities and in the period 2018 - 2022 this amount is increasing year by year.

The Quality Assurance Guideline currently describes the roles of everyone involved and lists the quality assurance procedures. The majority of processes are focused on external evaluation or preparation for the external evaluation.

The Quality Assurance Guideline does not document the specific survey mechanisms that are taking place at the AAB College and does not provide information on their regularity. The regularity is however mentioned in the annual working plan but it should rather be set on the level of regulation or guidelines, to ensure consistency and integration in the general planning processes. Among the survey templates provided to the ET there are graduate surveys, employers survey, student survey for teaching and learning, student survey for support for online teaching and learning support. The ET did not receive any evidence of the staff self-evaluation processes.

The development of a survey for employers was in fact mentioned as one of the targets for 2021 in the annual work plan.

Upon request of the ET, a semestral report for the Faculty of Economics was provided. This report lists the internship opportunities and the cooperation that has taken place in the academic year and presents the success rate specifically of the students of the MA Marketing and Business Management in all study subjects. The report lists five difficulties and four recommendations but it is not clear how these difficulties have been identified and what will happen/ has happened with the recommendations. Within the framework of this assessment the ET is assessing the MA Marketing and Business Management therefore it appreciates that specifically the completion rates for this study programme have been included in the report. However, as this is the semestral report for the whole faculty and there are a number of other study programmes, it is not clear why other programmes have not been analysed.



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The ET was also presented with the results of graduates survey for 2021, a report based on student questionnaires for the evaluation of the administration for the summer semester 2019, based on student questionnaires for the evaluation of the academic staff (no indication of year).

All the mentioned reports were prepared at the level of the Faculty of Economics. Reports include a number of general recommendations and also some recommendations specifically for the teaching and learning process. From the information provided, it was not clear what are the further activities related to these recommendations and whether and how they are implemented. The reports presented also do not offer any comparison with the previous results. It should also be noted that none of these reports are available publicly on the AAB College website.

The SER also included some analysis of questionnaires related to on-line learning and adjustments during the COVID period.

From the SER and discussions it was evident that the Quality Assurance Office of the AAB College is very active. It participates in the working groups for development and revision of study programmes. It provides the data from questionnaires from graduates and students, gives suggestions on how to draft questions for online examination, provides recommendations about literature for the study courses.

The academic staff whom the ET met were well informed about the procedure of assessment by students and the following procedure for discussing the results. However, the staff emphasised that the relations between staff and students are close and the staff is at the disposal of students at any time therefore critical issues are rarely raised in the surveys.

Students whom the ET met had not provided any suggestions through the survey mechanisms but were aware of colleagues who had done it. The students were generally confident that their voices were heard.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
<b>Standard 2.1.</b> All staff participate in self-evaluations and cooperate with reporting and improvement processes in their sphere of activity.		X

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<b>Standard 2.2.</b> Evaluation processes and planning for improvement are integrated into normal planning processes.	X	
<b>Standard 2.3.</b> Quality assurance processes deal with all aspects of program planning and delivery, including services and resources provided by other parts of the institution.	X	
<b>Standard 2.4.</b> Quality evaluations provide an overview of quality issues for the overall program as well as of different components within it; the evaluations consider inputs, processes and outputs, with particular attention given to learning outcomes for students.	X	
<b>Standard 2.5.</b> Quality assurance processes ensure both that required standards are met and that there is continuing improvement in performance.	X	
<b>Standard 2.6.</b> Survey data is being collected from students, graduates and employers; the results of these evaluations are made publicly available.		X
<b>Standard 2.7.</b> Results of the internal quality assurance system are taken into account for further development of the study program. This includes evaluation results, investigation of the student workload, academic success and employment of graduates.		X
<b>Standard 2.8.</b> The institution ensures that reports on the overall quality of the program are prepared periodically (eg. every three years) for consideration within the institution indicating its strengths and weaknesses.	X	
<b>Standard 2.9.</b> The quality assurance arrangements for the program are themselves regularly evaluated and improved.	X	

**Compliance level: Partially compliant**

**ET recommendations:**

- To revise the Quality Assurance Regulation and the Quality Assurance Guidelines in order for them not to overlap;*



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2. *To ensure that the main regulatory documents are easily accessible on the website of the AAB College;*
3. *To develop a clear and pre-defined timeline for survey mechanisms which would be included in the quality assurance guidelines and applied every year;*
4. *To compile summary reports based on the survey results and statistical data both on the study programme and faculty level and ensure that the findings (recommendations) of these reports are taken into account by the AAB College governance structures;*
5. *To develop and conduct self-evaluation for staff members;*
6. *To introduce mechanisms for increasing the response rate for the surveys.*

### **2.3. Academic staff**

The AAB College provided documents which demonstrate the existence of regulations and procedures for selection, appointment and promotion of professional and academic staff. In the SER (p.29), the College also provided an overview on the position, qualification, academic title and workload of the faculty staff, however, without indicating which part of the staff is assigned to the program in particular. Also, no information on contract duration and workload by tasks was made available which makes it difficult to assess which proportion of the academic staff is scheduled for the program overall and for which tasks in particular.

The Code of Ethics for Academic Staff was provided via link in Albanian language only, while other documents could not be examined since several links in the SER did not work properly. Thus, the ET has to take into account that a mere declaration of the AAB College exists which states that engagement of all academic staff is complying with the relevant Administrative Instruction No. 15/2018 on Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Kosovo.

During the site visit, the ET learned that in the last year, a training on the transition to online teaching for academic staff was organized, which a certain number of teachers of the program attended. Training opportunities did not include research skills in particular.



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The ET was informed during the site visit that no formal system which identifies the needs of staff development exists; particular needs or demands of staff development are based on informal processes. Teachers also reported that some participated in training on research methodology occasionally. Also in the area of research skills, informal settings seem to prevail where staff members obtain new ideas and exchange with colleagues. Overall, further training of teachers in teaching and research skills is not built on a distinct staff development plan. Thus, the overall situation as compared against the recommendations from the former evaluation of the program has changed only little. Regarding staff mobility, several initiatives have been made. However, this does not rely on a systematic plan for staff development, either.

From the syllabi of the programme it can be concluded that professors are available for consultation of students, although the work time assigned to this task is not, as was mentioned before, split up in the overview of the academic staff.

No information could be obtained about the self-assessment of the academic staff, which, if existing, also seems to be done on an informal basis. Overall, teachers reported implementation of interesting teaching concepts, from which it can be concluded that the „material“ for knowledge sharing exists, yet this knowledge is not exploited systematically in terms of knowledge management which would support continuous improvement of teaching skills and teaching quality.

The lack of plans for continuous improvement of teaching strategies and improvement of teaching materials must be regarded as a weakness of the program and this impression could not be dissolved during the site visit.

As was mentioned before, the AAB College did not provide information on the assignment of academic staff to the program under evaluation, which prevented the ET from a more positive assessment of the corresponding standards. In general, the ET wants to emphasize that there is no reason to provide key information in the SER only with regard to the faculty level and not, as it is required, in a detailed way at the program level.





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<i>Standard</i>	<i>Compliance</i>	
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<b>Standard 3.1.</b> Candidates for employment are provided with full position descriptions and conditions of employment. To be presented in tabular form data about full time (FT) and part time (PT) academic/ artistic staff, such as: name, qualification, academic title, duration of official (valid) contract, workload for teaching, exams, consulting, administrative activities, research, etc. for the study program under evaluation.		X
<b>Standard 3.2.</b> The teaching staff must comply with the legal requirements concerning the occupation of teaching positions included in the Administrative instruction on Accreditation.	X	
<b>Standard 3.3.</b> Academic staff do not cover, within an academic year, more than two teaching positions (one full-time, one part-time), regardless of the educational institution where they carry out their activity	X	
<b>Standard 3.4.</b> At least 50% of the academic staff in the study program are full time employees, and account for at least 50% of the classes of the study program.		X
<b>Standard 3.5.</b> For each student group (defined by the statute of the institution) and for every 60 ECTS credits in the study program, the institution has employed at least one full time staff with PhD title or equivalent title in the case of artistic/applied science institutions.	X	
<b>Standard 3.6.</b> Opportunities are provided for additional professional development of teaching staff, with special assistance given to any who are facing difficulties.	X	





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<b>Standard 3.7.</b> The responsibilities of all teaching staff, especially full-time, include the engagement in the academic community, availability for consultations with students and community service.		X
<b>Standard 3.8.</b> Academic staff evaluation is conducted regularly at least through self-evaluation, students, peer and superiors' evaluations, and occur on a formal basis at least once each year. The results of the evaluation are made publicly available.		X
<b>Standard 3.9.</b> Strategies for quality enhancement include improving the teaching strategies and quality of learning materials.		X
<b>Standard 3.10.</b> Teachers retired at age limit or for other reasons lose the status of full-time teachers and are considered part-time teachers.	X	

**Compliance level: Partially compliant**

**ET recommendations:**

1. *Define standards for teaching skills and research skills in terms of abilities that teachers must be able to do in teaching and research.*
2. *Include methodologies for research-guided teaching in these standards.*
3. *Develop a training plan for midterm improvement of the teaching skills of all academic staff including different distance learning methodologies.*
4. *Make participation in the training program obligatory for all staff members within a certain time.*
5. *Set up an internal program to initiate systematic documentation and sharing of knowledge of teaching staff on teaching concepts and teaching methods as well as on improvement of teaching materials.*



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### 2.3. Educational process content

The SER does not contain information on the qualification objectives of the program. However, the learning outcomes are presented in detail and from the ET's point of view, well structured and entirely comprehensible, as they are divided in general learning outcomes and in learning outcomes related to marketing and business management as two distinct competence areas (p. 32f.). Unfortunately, no convincing explanation could be obtained about how these learning outcomes are linked to particular knowledge, skills and competencies in terms of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) or of the European Qualification Framework (EQF).

During the site visit, the ET learned that among the main improvements which have been implemented in the program in the last two years were changes in subject matters and in the number of exercises which were increased. In addition, it was reported that students get more involved in data collection, have more opportunities to apply methods of market research and the number of case studies has increased, too. Furthermore, two new courses - „B2B marketing“ and „Supply Chain Management“ were introduced following a recommendation of the previous evaluation. The ET regards these measures as reasonable improvements.

Yet, these improvements cannot hide some deficits of the curriculum. First, it should be noticed that, although a significant increase in research methods as a sort of cross-sectional subject in the courses can be assumed, there is no distinct course on market research, although this is supposed to be a key skill for graduates of a program like this. Such a course would give the opportunity to integrate new modes of capturing digital data for marketing purposes or big data approaches and to link this with digital marketing campaigning. Perhaps, these contents could also be integrated in the course on „E-Marketing“; however, the relevance of these contents suggest a distinct course.

Second, another interesting feature is the composition of elective courses in semesters 1 to 3. In semesters 1 and 2, the subjects of electives do not show a concise logic. In semester 1 students may choose between business and management courses, yet without a marketing option. In semester 2, the electives do not contain a marketing course. In semester 3, students can choose between three courses, namely „Preparatory Seminar for Master Thesis“, „Marketing Strategies Management“ and „Organizational Behavior“. This means that students have the opportunity to choose a pathway through semesters 1, 2 and 3, which does not deal

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with marketing at all. As a consequence, the curriculum of the master program does not unfold a distinct profile in terms of options for specialization. Such a specialisation would be the case when students have the option to choose between marketing and business management priorities. In the meetings with graduates and employers, the ET learned that several suggestions of these parties regarding the further development of the curriculum have been integrated by the College, while other ideas have not been taken into account so far. In particular, the suggestions of graduates and employers refer to enterprise resource planning, business intelligence and artificial intelligence and big data as key approaches and ingredients of modern marketing and marketing research. Also, customer relationship management is a topic which should be given more space in the curriculum.

The lack of specialisation options is a serious question for a master program like this in particular, since it shows that in the master program a diversity of subjects prevails which is usually characteristic for undergraduate studies, but not for master studies. According to the NQF, graduates of master programs should have „highly specialized, extensive and in-depth knowledge“, „specialized skills and techniques“ and competencies enabling „managing and transforming work or study contexts that are complex, unforeseen, and require new strategic approaches.“[1] The concatenation of subjects in the curriculum of the program under evaluation does not give students full opportunities to develop specialized knowledge, skills and competences, since this would require a curriculum where they have the opportunity to deepen skills over time, create linkages between subjects and develop own strategies for transforming work and individual learning.

In addition, in semester 3, students may choose between the preparatory master seminar and other topics. Thus, the students who opt for the preparatory master seminar might get advantages for the preparation of the master thesis which is to be written in semester 4. Here, it would be reasonable to offer this course to all students as a mandatory course in order to ensure equal opportunities and to ensure imparting of common scientific standards to all students. Basically, it is irritating that this course is not mandatory since it is fundamental for preparing students for scientific quality and good scientific practices in general.

Most of the syllabuses are detailed and include the relevant information according to the formal requirements. However, a significant number of syllabi learning outcomes are developed in a rather traditional way attributing a passive role to the student which contradicts the student-centred approach that is emphasized in the SER. The formulations used in the syllabi, for

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example, „to provide knowledge...“, „to familiarize students with ...“, „are able to understand ...“ does not confirm the use of systematic learning taxonomy which usually builds on active, competence-oriented formulation of skills and competences. Furthermore, there are some syllabi where the weekly schedule seems to be a copy of textbook contents (e.g. the „Strategic Marketing Management“ course). Such deficits seriously undermine the quality of a curriculum.

From the course descriptions it is evident that in most courses a formative assessment approach is used where the final mark is based on performance throughout the semester.

During the site visit, it became clear that no overarching teaching concept exists for the program. Some teachers emphasized that it is important to “put the student in the centre” and explained this concept by pointing out the teacher’s role as a facilitator while students prepare materials, conduct case studies, participate in discussions and work out assignments. Here, also didactical methods to develop critical skills and doing guided self-reflections on one’s own skills were mentioned. Other teachers emphasized a more socratic, dialogue-oriented way of teaching and again others pointed out that there „very personal teaching methodologies“ are used. Overall, no overarching didactic concept or guideline is at place that would give orientation not only for teachers, but also for students which particular teaching methodologies they can expect at the various stages of the curriculum.

The SER states that the study programme includes internships but the curriculum of the study programme does not provide any evidence of this nor are internships mentioned in syllabi mentioned as a part of courses. During the site visit, teachers also clearly stated that they „do not have internships as a part of the study program“. This is entirely contradictory to what is stated in the SER, where „Internships in relevant institutions and student monitoring“ is even mentioned as a strength (p. 41).

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[1] Kosovo National Qualification Authority (2020) National Qualifications Framework, p. 47f. Online: <https://akkks.rks-gov.net/en/nqf/national-qualifications-framework> (May 31, 2021).



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Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
<b>Standard 4.1.</b> The study program is modelled on qualification objectives. These include subject-related and interdisciplinary aspects as well as the acquisition of disciplinary, methodological and generic skills and competencies. The aspects refer especially to academic or artistic competencies, to the capability of taking up adequate employment, contributing to the civil society and of developing the students' personality.	X	
<b>Standard 4.2.</b> The study program complies with the National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. The individual components of the program are combined in a way to best achieve the specified qualification objectives and provide for adequate forms of teaching and learning.		X
<b>Standard 4.3.</b> The disciplines within the curriculum are provided in a logical flow and meet the definition and precise determination of the general and specific competencies, as well as the compatibility with the study programs and curricula delivered in the EHEA. To be listed at least 7 learning outcomes for the study program under evaluation.		X
<b>Standard 4.4.</b> The disciplines within the curriculum have analytical syllabuses which comprise at least the following: the discipline's objectives, the basic thematic content, learning outcomes, the distribution of classes, seminars and applicative activities, students' assessment system, the minimal bibliography, etc. The full course description/ syllabuses of each subject/ module should be attached only in electronic form to the self-assessment report for the study program under evaluation.	X	
<b>Standard 4.5.</b> If the language of instruction is other than Albanian, actions are taken to ensure that language skills of both students and academic staff are adequate for instruction in that language when students begin their studies. This may be done through language training prior to the commencement of the program.	-	-
<b>Standard 4.6.</b> The student-teacher relationship is a partnership in which each assumes the responsibility of reaching the learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are explained and discussed with students from the perspective of their relevance to the students' development.	X	



<b>Standard 4.7.</b> Teaching strategies are fit for the different types of learning outcomes programs are intended to develop. Strategies of teaching and assessment set out in program and course specifications are followed with flexibility to meet the needs of different groups of students.		X
<b>Standard 4.8.</b> Student assessment mechanisms are conducted fairly and objectively, are appropriate for the different forms of learning sought and are clearly communicated to students at the beginning of courses.	X	
<b>Standard 4.9.</b> Appropriate, valid and reliable mechanisms are used for verifying standards of student achievement. The standard of work required for different grades is consistent over time, comparable in courses offered within a program, and in comparison with other study programs at highly regarded institutions.	X	
<b>Standard 4.10.</b> Policies and procedures include actions to be taken in dealing with situations where standards of student achievement are inadequate or inconsistently assessed.	X	
<b>Standard 4.11.</b> If the study program includes practice stages, the intended student learning outcomes are clearly specified and effective processes are followed to ensure that those learning outcomes and the strategies to develop that learning are understood by students. The practice stages are allocated ECTS credits and the work of the students at the practical training organisations is monitored through activity reports; students during practice stages have assigned tutors among the academic staff in the study program.	-	-
<b>Standard 4.12.</b> In order to facilitate the practice stages, the higher education institution signs cooperation agreements, contracts or other documents with institutions/organisations/practical training units.	-	-

**Compliance level: Partially compliant**

**ET recommendations:**

- 1. Review the priorities of the study programme in order to include methodological and generic skills and competencies defined for the European Qualification Framework level 7.*
- 2. Review the subjects of the elective courses and create opportunities for real specialisation.*





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3. *Integrate e-subjects such as business intelligence, enterprise resource planning, big data and artificial intelligence into the curriculum, preferably as options for specialization.*
4. *Revise syllabi rigidly which contain mere content lists of textbooks as weekly programs.*
5. *Develop a systematic overarching didactic concept which provides teachers and students with information which teaching concepts will be used to support achievement of the learning outcomes both at the curriculum level and at the course level.*
6. *Develop a detailed concept for self-organized and self-regulated learning and develop indicators for monitoring the progress in self-organized learning.*
7. *Assign the tasks enumerated in bullet point 1 – 5 to the Scientific Teaching Council and assign it with monitoring the further development based on empirical evidence on a regular basis.*
8. *Ensure the necessary mentoring / support in case of students from diverse educational, professional and personal backgrounds.*
9. *Review the concept of the internship/practice stages in the study programme and develop/adjust the syllabi as well as the required documentation of internships are intended.*

## **2.4. Students**

The MA Marketing and Business Management is open for applicants who have completed basic bachelor education. All candidates are subject to an admission exam which makes up to 70% of the total admission score. Candidates who fail to achieve 50 points in the admission exam do not qualify for admission regardless of the competition. The admission exam for MA Marketing and Business Management is based on the following subjects - Marketing, Business Management, Consumer Behaviour. It was mentioned by the students that in case students come from a different area, there can be additional subject exams and also additional study subjects.

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The students whom the ET met confirmed the general content of the admission procedure. However, it was not fully clear neither from the interviews nor from the documentation, what is the exact procedure for admitting students from a different study area.

The statistics on students indicate that there has always been a competition with approximately  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the applicants admitted. A large number of students in the MA Marketing and Business Management have been admitted from other higher education institutions, especially the renown public universities like the University of Prishtina. The majority of students come from bachelor study programmes in Banking, Finance and Accounting, Marketing and Business Administration. Although the percentage is small, there are students from Management and Informatics and Shipping Customs who would need additional preparation or assistance to be able to follow the studies.

The representatives of AAB College stated that most of the students on the master's level are working and therefore the AAB College is organising the lecture schedule on Saturdays or Sundays for working students and on weekdays for regular students.

The statistics provided by AAB College indicate a dropout of approximately 20% and show that 40% students exceed the standard study period. The average grade of the graduates has been quite high. The SER (p.9) states that the progress rates at the end of each semester are collected through semester reports compiled by the faculty management, which report on the percentage of students passing each exam term. Completion rates and results are collected in the electronic system where the marks are issued. From the one example provided in the annual report of the Faculty of Economics the ET could conclude that there are some efforts in analysing these results, at least for this study programme. However, the reports are not publicly available and the expert team did not find any other evidence to suggest that the performance rates and rates and reasons for dropout and exceeding of the standard study period would be analysed as quality indicators and that appropriate measures would be taken.

There is a trend that the majority of the students do not continue with master's studies directly but a year or two after graduation. It was the case of 90 students out of 128 in the academic year 2020./2021. This suggests that most of the students are working. All the students interviewed by the ET confirmed that AAB College has a brand in Kosovo for a different educational environment, as opposed to old fashioned exams. They claimed that AAB college





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offers a more modern way of teaching, workshops, interactive learning, 24/7 connection to the electronic system, good infrastructure and qualified staff.

According to the information presented in SER, for lectures the student group consists of 60 to 80 students but for practical exercises of 30 to 40 students. Given the fact that this is a study programme in management, this division is considered as appropriate.

The relationship between staff and students is very close. The AAB College referred to “students at the centre” both in SER and the interviews. The teaching staff confirmed that the results are explained to students individually during the consultation time and the students were very satisfied with the overall teaching and learning experience. The consultation times are fixed and the students confirmed that the teaching staff is available for consultation when needed.

The AAB College has developed a Regulation on Academic Misconduct which defines the different cases of plagiarism and the relevant measures. Turnitin software has currently been introduced in the AAB College at the initial state. According to the information provided during the interviews, it is used for checking all master's thesis. The software includes Albanian and English languages. The AAB College is satisfied with the plagiarism detection mechanism but it is not evaluated as effective yet.

Student rights and obligations are defined in the AAB College Statute. However, it would be advisable to include this information in a Student Handbook or similar document which is easily available and understandable to students. The AAB College states that there are defined procedures for appeals and complaints. However, neither the Statute nor the Regulation for Master's Studies describe these procedures in detail therefore the ET is not able to assess their fitness for purpose. During the interviews the AAB College representatives stated that there have not been any cases of appeals, only some requests to postpone the exam. According to the Quality Assurance Guideline, the AAB College follows two procedures in reviewing complaints - anonymous complaints in complaints' boxes, complaints pursuant to the Rules of Procedure and Code of Conduct. It would be advisable to incorporate the information related to complaints in the Regulation for Master's Studies or Student Handbook to ensure that it is accessible to students.

The Statute of AAB college states that the students will be able to transfer credits from AAB to other institutions or vice-versa. SER refers to the AAB Statute as the main document where

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the transfer process is explained. However, the place mentioned before is the only place in the Statute where transfer procedure is mentioned. According to the information provided by the AAB College during the interviews, there have been successful cases of transfer of students from other higher education institutions to AAB College. So far there haven't been any cases where a student from AAB College would transfer to another higher education institution in Kosovo. However, there have been several cases of transfer to institutions abroad.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
<b>Standard 5.1.</b> There is a clear and formally adopted admission procedure at institutional level that the study program respects when organising students' recruitment. Admission requirements are consistently and fairly applied for all students.	X	
<b>Standard 5.2.</b> All students enrolled in the study program possess a high school graduation diploma or other equivalent document of study, according to MEST requirements.	X	
<b>Standard 5.3.</b> The study groups are dimensioned so as to ensure an effective and interactive teaching and learning process.	X	
<b>Standard 5.4.</b> Feedback to students on their performance and results of assessments is given promptly and accompanied by mechanisms for assistance if needed.	X	
<b>Standard 5.5.</b> The results obtained by the students throughout the study cycles are certified by the academic record.	X	
<b>Standard 5.6.</b> Flexible treatment of students in special situations is ensured with respect to deadlines and formal requirements in the program and to all examinations.	X	
<b>Standard 5.7.</b> Records of student completion rates are kept for all courses and for the program as a whole and included among quality indicators.		X



<b>Standard 5.8.</b> Effective procedures are being used to ensure that work submitted by students is original.		X
<b>Standard 5.9.</b> Students' rights and obligations are made publicly available, promoted to all those concerned and enforced equitably; these will include the right to academic appeals.	X	
<b>Standard 5.10.</b> The students' transfer between higher education institutions, faculties and study programs is clearly regulated in formal internal documents.		X
<b>Standard 5.11.</b> Academic staff is available at sufficient scheduled times for consultation and advice to students. Adequate tutorial assistance is provided to ensure understanding and ability to apply learning.	X	

**Compliance level: Substantially compliant**

**ET recommendations:**

- 1. To clarify the admission procedure and requirements for students coming from other study fields and make them publicly available;*
- 2. To ensure that there is sufficient assistance for students coming from other study fields;*
- 3. To include the performance (completion) rates for study courses and rates and reasons for dropout and exceeding of the standard study period as quality indicators that would be analysed on a regular basis and appropriate measures would be taken.*
- 4. To further implement the automatic plagiarism detection system in order to ensure that the process is efficient.*
- 5. To incorporate the information about complaints and appeals in the Regulation for Master's Studies or Student Handbook or similar document;*
- 6. To incorporate the information about student rights and responsibilities in the Student Handbook or similar document;*
- 7. To describe the transfer process in a regulatory document.*



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## 2.5. Research

As can be learned from the SER and related documents as well as from the information obtained during the site visit, the College realized some important activities in research. The ET praises the development of a „Scientific Research Strategy 2020-2025“, since this is an important basis for targeting the mid-term advancement of research activities and research skills. In this research strategy, the College explains its objectives regarding research in connection with the infrastructure required, the development of research skills, the assessment of research activities, establishment of a „Scientific Research Council“, networking and internationalization, third mission and the open access approach. The overall aim of this strategy is defined as „advancing basic and applied research and serve to improve educational and scientific services at AAB“ (Scientific Research Strategy 2020-2024, p.4).

As the heads of the program and the teachers reported during the site visit, some steps of implementation of this strategy have been realized already, particularly the internal funding of small research projects and financial support for participation in conferences.

Overall, the ET wants to emphasize that the research strategy is defined in a comprehensive way and it can be considered as a viable basis for further development. However, it became evident during the site visit that important steps have not been implemented so far. Here, two aspects must be highlighted: The lack of quality assurance in research and the lack of definition of research priorities.

The ET noticed during the site visit that research is not an activity which is integrated in the quality assurance system yet. In addition, research priorities have not yet been defined explicitly for the program, either. During the site visit, the ET learned that research activities are concentrated around topics such as mixed marketing, marketing strategies, digitalization and e-marketing (e.g. online sales). These topics are without doubt appropriate for the program, but they are defined only vaguely and on an informal basis so far. They do not indicate a concise, focused definition of research priorities. Given the importance of marketing-related research priorities, it becomes also evident that not many of the academic staff assigned to the program have published continuously on marketing topics. As can be seen in the CVs of the relevant academic staff and in the list of publications provided as annexes to the SER, publications in these research areas are seldom and it is a smaller proportion of the academic

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staff assigned to the program under evaluation which has a proven track record of research results. Another reason for this assessment is grounded in the fact that not all CVs and the list of publications provided for evaluation purposes is up-to-date which shows a lack of quality of materials provided for evaluation by the College. However, it can be assumed that the strategic research plan is at the beginning and expansion of research activities and publications can be expected. From the ET's point of view, definition of concise research priorities at the program level is an indispensable precondition for advancing research – and for active and targeted allocation and management of resources in terms of the financial, logistic and human resources which are needed to achieve the objectives developed in the research strategy.

Asked about the main type of research intended to be carried out, the representatives of the College referred to applied research as the most important type. The AAB College also has sufficient regulations on good scientific practices which are part of the „Code of Ethics“.

What the ET found to be missing in the program is a distinct strategy to integrate teaching, learning and research in terms of research-guided didactics. Of course, this is a consequence of the lack of an overarching teaching concept. However, this needs to be mentioned since it is highlighted as a main learning outcome of the program that students are able to „demonstrate sound specialist knowledge and marketing research skills when faced with the fast-paced, highly modern international consumer and international marketing environment.“ (SER, p.34). It is interesting that research as a didactic element can be found in several syllabi, yet is not a part of an overarching didactic concept, which would ensure systemic involvement of students in research activities and continuous development of the research skills of students. Several syllabi refer to collaboration with businesses as a means to link theory and practice, but these activities do not seem to be integrated in a systematic way into the entire curriculum. Given the importance of research skills in the curriculum, the lack of a concept for research-guided teaching is obvious.

On the other hand, the ET wants to praise that there is a distinct manual for drafting master theses which is provided to students. This manual is an instructive guide for students and it covers from the rationale for masters' theses to contents and presentations also clear instructions how to deal with scientific sources and how to comply with ethical standards of good scientific practice.



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<i>Standard</i>	<b>Compliance</b>	
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Standard 6.1.</b> The study program has defined scientific/applied research objectives (on its own or as part of a research centre or interdisciplinary program), which are also reflected in the research development plan of the institution; sufficient financial, logistic and human resources are allocated for achieving the proposed research objectives.		X
<b>Standard 6.2.</b> Expectations for teaching staff involvement in research and scholarly activities are clearly specified, and performance in relation to these expectations is considered in staff evaluation and promotion criteria.		X
<b>Standard 6.3.</b> Clear policies are established for defining what is recognized as research, consistent with international standards and established norms in the field of study of the program.		X
<b>Standard 6.4.</b> The academic staff has a proven track record of research results on the same topics as their teaching activity.		X
<b>Standard 6.5.</b> The academic and research staff publish their work in speciality magazines or publishing houses, scientific/applied/artistic products are presented at conferences, sessions, symposiums, seminars etc. and contracts, expertise, consultancy, conventions, etc. are provided to partners inside the country and/or abroad.	X	
<b>Standard 6.6.</b> Research is validated through: scientific and applied research publications, artistic products, technological transfer through consultancy centres, scientific parks and other structures for validation.	X	
<b>Standard 6.7.</b> Each academic staff member and researcher has produced at least an average of one scientific/applied research publication or artistic outcome/product per year for the past three years.		X
<b>Standard 6.8.</b> Academic and research staff publish under the name of the institution in Kosovo they are affiliated to as full-time staff.	X	



<b>Standard 6.9.</b> Academic staff are encouraged to include in their teaching information about their research and scholarly activities that are relevant to courses they teach, together with other significant research developments in the field.	X	
<b>Standard 6.10.</b> Policies are established for ownership of intellectual property and clear procedures set out for commercialization of ideas developed by staff and students.	X	
<b>Standard 6.11.</b> Students are engaged in research projects and other activities	X	

**Compliance level: Partially compliant**

**ET recommendations:**

1. *Define smart research objectives for the program.*
2. *Make research an integral dimension of the quality assurance system.*
3. *Allocate financial and personnel resources to distinct research priorities and monitor goal attainment on a regular basis.*
4. *Provide clear policies for defining what is recognized as high-quality research, consistent with international standards and established norms in the field of study of the program.*
5. *Develop differentiated research methodologies for specialisations in the curriculum and for master theses.*
6. *Integrate research, teaching and learning in the didactic concept of the master program.*

**2.6. Infrastructure and resources**

The campus of AAB College Pristina provides sufficient space, classrooms, reading rooms and computer labs in a modern environment and, thus, solid space for academic staff and students for the study program.





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The materials submitted for evaluation did not contain a financial plan that would demonstrate the sustainability of the study program for the next three years at least. As a fact, this makes it difficult for the ET to assess the financial viability of the program in general, but also the specific outlook for the advancement of research activities in particular.

The ET strongly advises the FE to follow the recommendations in the previous section on research and to allocate the main part of this budgetary item for real research and involvement of students in research activities and not to spend the main parts on explorations in terms of mere business visits or excursions. Expenses for research should be dedicated to its main purpose in any case.

Regarding teaching and learning facilities, the AAB College has appropriate IT systems in place: „E-Service“ and „E-Professor“ are used for facilitating communication between teachers and students and during the site visit, the ET was informed that these systems are working and that they are used extensively.

As the ET could learn in the meetings with graduates and employers, some topics concerning digitalization were considered to be fundamental for the further development of the program. Yet, the facilities do not provide up-to-date software systems to work with big data and Business Intelligence software. The current state of the literature is broad and general, yet not specific enough in key areas of the curriculum. Furthermore, no information was obtained if there are enough international periodicals available, since this will be absolutely necessary for students to prepare their master theses state of the art and prepare them with scientific skills which ensure skills which are required for academic progression in PhD studies.

Overall, the resources for teaching and research are appropriate, however, the actual state would need regular updates urgently if the curriculum is kept up-to-date, which is self-evident, of course.





<i>Standard</i>	<b>Compliance</b>	
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Standard 7.1.</b> The adequate long-term implementation of the study program is ensured in quantitative terms as regards premises, human resources and equipment. At the same time, it is guaranteed that qualitative aspects are also taken into account.	X	
<b>Standard 7.2.</b> There is a financial plan at the level of the study program that would demonstrate the sustainability of the study program for the next minimum three years.		X
<b>Standard 7.3.</b> The higher education institution must demonstrate with adequate documents (property deeds, lease contracts, inventories, invoices etc.) that, for the study program submitted for evaluation it possesses the following, for the next at least three years:  a) owned or rented spaces adequate for the educational process; b) owned or rented laboratories, with the adequate equipment for all the compulsory disciplines within the curriculum, wherever the analytical syllabus includes such activities; c) adequate software for the disciplines of study included in the curriculum, with utilisation licence; d) library equipped with reading rooms, group work rooms and its own book stock according to the disciplines included in the curricula.	X	
<b>Standard 7.4.</b> The number of seats in the lecture rooms, seminar rooms and laboratories must be related to the study groups' size (series, groups, subgroups); the applicative activities for the speciality disciplines included in the curricula are carried out in laboratories equipped with IT equipment.	X	



<p><b>Standard 7.5.</b> The education institution’s libraries must ensure, for each of the study programs:</p> <p>a) a number of seats in the reading rooms corresponding to at least 10% of the total number of students in the study program;</p> <p>b) a number of seats in the group work rooms corresponding to at least 10% of the total number of students in the study program;</p> <p>c) their own book stock from Albanian and foreign speciality literature, enough to cover the disciplines within the curricula, out of which at least 50% should represent book titles or speciality courses of recognised publishers, from the last 10 years;</p> <p>d) a book stock within its own library with a sufficient number of books so as to cover the needs of all students in the cycle and year of study the respective discipline is provided for;</p> <p>e) a sufficient number of subscriptions to Albanian and foreign publications and periodicals, according to the stated mission.</p>	X	
<p><b>Standard 7.6.</b> The infrastructure and facilities dedicated to the implementation of the program is adapted to students with special needs</p>	-	-

**Compliance level: Substantially compliant**

**ET recommendations:**

1. *Improve access to international journals and e-books for students.*
2. *Invest in modern software systems and applications for e-subjects such as ERP, Business Intelligence, Big Data and Artificial Intelligence.*



### 3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

Standard	Compliance Level
Mission, objectives and administration	Partially compliant
Quality management	Partially compliant
Academic Staff	Partially compliant
Educational Process Content	Partially compliant
Students	Substantially compliant
Research	Partially compliant
Infrastructure and resources	Substantially compliant
<b>Overall Compliance</b>	<b>Partially compliant</b>

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the master's study program “Marketing and Business Management” offered by the AAB College is **partially compliant** with the standards included in the KAA Accreditation Manual and, therefore, recommends not to accredit the above study programme.

#### Expert Team

##### Members

**Prof. Mag. Dr Dietmar Paier**

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Signature

Dietmar Paier

14.06.2021

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**Asnate Kazoka (student expert)**

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Signature

Asnate Kazoka

14.06.2021

#### **4. APPENDICES (if available)**

*None*