

**Accreditation Draft-Report
External Expert Team
AAB College 2015**

**DRAFT
Evaluation Report**

by the team of experts,

assessing four study programs of AAB College within the field of Economics

in the process of re-accreditation by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency

March 30th, 2015

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1. Introduction

1.1. Preamble

The Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) is requested by the Minister of Education, Science and Technology of Kosovo to evaluate all private institutions of higher education which operate in Kosovo. According to this request it was decided that the bachelor programs and the master programmes of AAB College shall undergo a program accreditation (or reaccreditation, as appropriate) at the site in Pristina and the branches Ferizaj and Gjakove. In order to evaluate the study programmes the KAA established a team of experts. The following experts were appointed to the team:

- Prof. Dr. Miha Skerlavaj/ Norwegian Business School (NO) and University of Ljubljana (SI)
- Prof. Dr. Tanja Dmitrovic/ University of Ljubljana (SI)
- Ms. Janine Wulz /European Student Union (EU)

According to the Kosovar assessment regulations a site-visit of the AAB College by the team of experts is part of the evaluation process. Therefore a Site-Visit (SV) was organised by the KAA for March 17, 2014. The team visited the Prishtina location and have met with management, faculty from all three locations, and students respectively.

According to the Code of Good Practice for Site-Visits and the Guidelines for experts (Academic Programmes), edited by the KAA, the team of experts delivers the following evaluation report. The evaluation report is based upon a Self Evaluation Report (SER) including a staff list and their CVs of the AAB College and the final site-visit reports which have been delivered in the process of accreditation in 2012, 2013 and 2014, including numerous recommendations. The team of experts asked for additional documents. The requested documents were delivered and are listed in Annex 1 of this report.

The frame of reference for the evaluation report are international standards of comparable institutions of higher education (benchmarks) and the standards, edited by the KAA (10.2013). This report will conclude with a number of recommendations concerning each of the course programs proposed: they are the personal opinion of the expert team and are formulated with the experiences mentioned above in mind. The report is a collective document and represents the opinions of the team.

Many elements of programme structure, quality and implementation are uniformly regulated across all AAB programmes (e.g., quality assurance, student management, staff management, research and internationalization strategy, etc.). All evaluated programmes share the same facilities / physical infrastructure. Hence the ET's assessment of these elements pertains to all evaluated programmes.

The team of experts was asked by the representatives of the KAA not only to evaluate the study programmes of AAB College within the field of Economics / Business but also to deliver a proposal for the decision of re-accreditation. The following programs have been assessed:

- Banking, finance and accounting (BSc, reaccreditation)
- Management and informatics (BA, reaccreditation)
- Marketing and business administration (BA, reaccreditation)
- Marketing and business management (MA, reaccreditation)

This report could not have been written without the support of the staff of the KAA in the first place, and also without a number of helpful face-to-face contacts in AAB College.

1.2. Strategic context

AAB College (hereafter AAB) is the first non-public higher education institution in Kosovo. At the beginning, AAB provided study programs in the field of Arts and Mass Communication and has ever since expanded into other study fields, including Economics / Business which is the subject of present evaluation. AAB is facing rapidly changing business environment characteristic for transitional economies, characterized with rapid shifts in legislative frameworks. In particular, over recent years establishment of new public universities represents a significant change both in terms of student as well as staff attraction and retention.

Programs submitted for reaccreditation are run under the domain of Faculty of Economics, with responsible dean and program coordinators. There are currently nine economic programs accredited, seven actively running, and four submitted for this round of evaluation. Common to most of them is that they operate in mature if not even saturated market, with offering from at least 25 institutions.

One of strategic challenges ET identified and put forward to the discussion with AAB management was the fact that portion of permanent staff in the field of economics has not improved and remains at around one third. AAB is addressing this challenge by primarily developing junior faculty and has 14 PhD students expected to graduate in the period of next two years. Their career progression afterwards is less clear and depends significantly upon the status of promotion (habilitation) guidelines and the way they would be implemented. AAB is obviously an attractive employer for staff for variety of reasons, however longevity of contracts is not among them (3-year contracts typically).

Second challenge is declining number of students in field of economics which is not surprising given the business environment. AAB has shown to be proactive in this respect by engaging in developing new program Sector management (with specializations in e.g., health management, education, culture, and sports). Even more important is development of existing programs into new languages including Turkish and English (and Bosnian for other programs). It is clear to from the document Updated list of internationalisation activities and on-site visit, that AAB is proactive in developing promising set of institutional bilateral agreements. AAB is also aware that implementing those, in spite of all the limitations (such as visa regime for Kosovo, inadequate level of English language proficiency among students etc.), would require even higher level of engagement and perseverance over a longer period of time.

It was ET's impression that AAB has reflective and proactive management team that readily

engages in peer-to-peer debate on challenges and is absorbing suggestions in welcoming manner. Suggestions from previous rounds of evaluations were implemented to great extent. What unfortunately still remains as not implemented is misuse of the word 'university', that remains to be broadly advertised even though it does not match the AAB's factual status*.

(* As a part of feedback to the draft report, AAB provided additional explanation that 'Institucioni I Arsimit Universitar AAB' stands for higher education institution in Albanian and promised to carefully review all promotional materials to avoid inadequate use of the word).

Recommendations to AAB:

- Staff: Increase portion of the permanent staff in the fields of business and economics in two ways. First, by further developing PhDs and offer them career development framework (by providing clear habilitation criteria and requirements as well as strengthen institutional research support). PhD students should be supported in selecting PhD programs and ambitions, to develop AABs their future personal competence and consequently competence of AAB. AAB can both demand and facilitate this by investing in staff on more long-term basis (beyond three-year contracts). Second, continue scanning the environment for returning Kosovarian mid- and senior-career academics to be attracted to AAB on a permanent basis. Moreover, guest professors could be invited to teach and research at AAB for shorter time periods.
- Internationalization: Continue and strengthen internationalization efforts (within limitation given), both in terms of attracting incoming students from the region as well as opportunities to develop confidence and competence in using English language by existing students. Internationalisation at home efforts could be strengthened also by the use of literature from diverse regions, online courses, online exchange platforms and activities to support the contact between local and international students.
- University: review institutions advertisement and communication, if the term "university" is still used in an inadequate way.

2. Banking, Finance and Accounting (BSc, reaccreditation)

Banking, finance and accounting (hereafter BFA) is a three-year, 180 ECTS program at the BSc level. It is one of the most frequently offered programs in the context of Kosovar higher educational system. Hence, it is also one of the most competitive programs in Kosovo HEI market. Given this fact and the increase in offer from the public universities, it is not surprising to see number of students dropping (529 in year 2012/13 to 360 in 2013/14). The decrease comes especially on the account of full-time students (ratio full-time/ part-time students was 316/213 in 2012/13 and 204/156 in 2013/14).

2.1. Academic program and student management

Academic programme

ET would like to commend responsible for a well prepared and informative SER in general, and for this program in particular. There are couple of minor issues in the SER than should be taken care of in future. These include:

- p. 44: in-service form of studies does not exist;
- p. 46: wrong names of benchmarked programs from University of Ljubljana;
- p. 61: missing concrete list of literature used at the Business law course.

Recommendation to AAB:

- SER: We highly advise faculty most active in preparation of the Albanian version of the SER to read the document in detail after being translated. Factual errors should be at forefront of your attention. Avoid copy-pasting across programs, especially in terms of the introductory text. It is genuinely important for ET to understand that BSc and BA programs on your offer are in fact, and not only pro-forma programs rather than specializations.

Having said this, we do think that existing program does correspond to the overall institutional mission statement and principles of operation. Also, its quality, range, and academic aims are appropriate for the academic degree of BSc. Program structure and contents are reasonable and have been pre-accredited. Suggestions for improvement have been readily adopted and implemented to a large extent.

However, there is an issue of workload that requires immediate attention. Based on the site visit, ET has to unfortunately establish that ECTS allocation is in cases of courses type 1 and 2 overinflated. This partially applies to the notion that there are 15 hours of consultations per students. More importantly and troublesome is that according to students exercises (tutorials) only last 45 minutes, while they should last twice as much. In fact, many of the students expressed desire to have more exercises as they find them valuable in practical terms. In the case of BFA program, typical group size is too large to be. Even though enrolled number of students is higher, the de-facto group size for regular students is 70-80 both for lectures and exercises. This might be cost-effective, but is unfortunately not contributing to the quality of student experience and has been recognized by shortcoming by both ET as well

as students.

Recommendation to AAB:

- Exercises: AAB should urgently and immediately increase the length and scope of exercises to match accredited program. Group size should not exceed 30 students in order to have effective learning process.

While most of the courses offered do correspond to the titles, and have updated and appropriate literature, there is one notable exception. Knowledge and innovation management (p. 91) is such by the name alone. Literature is in fact more about quality management and as such fails to introduce student to the opportunities offered by innovation processes in transitional economies. There are fascinating lessons to be learnt from developing economies, and the way how lack of resources leads to resource-full solutions. Inspiration can come from fields of organizational behaviour, entrepreneurship, and strategic management and countries like India, parts of Africa and Latin America. There are numerous good case studies available on concept like jugaad (make-do) innovations, corporations like Tata and more.

Recommendation to AAB:

- Knowledge and innovation management: AAB is required to redesign the course offering to fit the title. Additionally, as this is strategically important program offering, ETs suggest you specialize some of the incoming or existing PhD students in the topic of innovation processes in transitional economies and firms. That should have positive externalities in terms of teaching, research, as well as internationalization.*

*As a follow-up to the draft report, AAB provided new syllabus for the Knowledge and Innovation Management course. ET is both impressed by the speed of reaction as well as concerned in terms of the implementation. The syllabus is still very weak in its innovation management part. There are no lectures but one dedicated to the topic, no literature prescribed as well as no cases from innovation in transition economies offered. ET would suggest using selected chapters from books like Tidd & Bessant, 2013, Managing innovation, 5th edition as well as cases closer to the transitional reality of innovations in Kosovo (available from e.g. the Case Centre). Syllabus needs to be improved further and quality controlled by adequate bodies at AAB before implemented.

Student management

Students at AAB are involved in a number of evaluative processes and see themselves in the centre of the institutions activities. However, the number of full-time students is decreasing during the last year. Beside measures to attract more students, already a number of efforts are made to ensure students do not drop out of the system. However, measures taking in account the social dimension in higher education, by providing support to student groups at risk could reduce drop-out numbers and attract new target groups.

AAB has a proven track record of capacity to listen to student suggestions and has for instance developed an interesting teaching innovation called AAB improvised bank. Ca. 10 students is in fact applying method of classroom as an organization, to experience organizational structure and work design of different organizational departments needed for a commercial bank to be operating. This project is a fruitful step towards more practical training of students at the AAB, which could be extended.

Students are involved in AAB at many levels, but are not an active part of the institutional management. The student union is not an active partner at all levels, participating in decisions. This impression was supported by the fact, that no representative of the student union was part of the study visit. Moreover, student representatives need a specific grade average to run for student union. This is a limitation to students' democratic rights. Students at the AAB are satisfied with teaching content in general. Some improvements could be made by the extension of exercises, to provide more learning opportunities in smaller groups. Transversal skills are not in the centre of the teaching process by now, but would be highly demanded especially in ICT area.

Employability records provided upon further request do not differentiate across programs so it is difficult to estimate the effect that program has on student employability. Furthermore, AAB records do not differentiate between students that came employed in the program and those that became such as a results of it.

Recommendations to AAB:

- Drop-out rates: survey the reasons for students drop out and develop measures to support students at risks, taking into account the social dimension of higher education.
- Work-based learning: Support and expand learning opportunities in real or semi-real work situations. E.g. by more internships and more projects as the training-bank.
- Student representation in management: Include students in university, institutional and programme management by providing the students union an active role in democratic processes. Do not limit the opportunities to become a student representative by regulations.
- Learning opportunities in smaller groups could be improved, e.g. by extending exercises.
- Transversal skills: More opportunities to gain transversal skills could foster students employability. This is especially the case for ICT skills, but also languages and entrepreneurship education.
- Employability: Develop a system of measuring and following students 6 and 12 months post completion of each program to see the effect of the program on employability of students. Make distinction between those employed (and changing jobs and growing in ranks) and those that got job after completing the program.

2.2. Staff

AAB provided updated and KAA approved list of faculty showing 37 full-time employed staff

members and 60 part-timers with workload not exceeding. Most of the full time employees are on contracts ranging from 1-3 year in duration and almost half of the full time staff are PhD candidates. Workload rang up to 14 hours a week. Majority of the full-time employed staff are located in Prishtina, with 6 in Gjakove and 4 in Ferizaj alone (some combining two locations).

AAB has generally speaking competent staff with a mix of teaching and professional experience, and to a lesser extent also research one. It is obvious from the SER and site-visit that there is a strong culture of teaching quality AAB is striving and diligently working towards.

However, there are also significant challenges related to 1) the portion of full-time staff, 2) long-term perspective on career development past the PhD level (conditional upon habilitation criteria and longer-term employment contracts beyond 3-year periods), and 3) in part, lack of focus and ambition in directing PhD students toward choosing institutions and topics of their PhD projects. As mentioned in the introduction, we find this to be one of crucial strategic challenges we identified and put forward to the discussion with AAB management. We do rely on AAB management to fully embrace the challenge and in addition to the recommendations provided in the introduction suggest several additional program specific suggestions.

It is evident that AAB is running a centralized model of course delivery, where there is very little staff only in branches Gjakove and Ferizaj. This might be acceptable for the level of bachelor programs, however there needs to be special attention that teaching workload does not go beyond 12 hours per week. Also, it is extremely important what the further development of PhD candidate will look like and that number of permanent staff increases significantly. Longer term perspective in contracts is also needed.

Recommendations to AAB:

- Staff: Career development of staff should be considered in longer-term, more research-based and internationally focused perspective. This includes measures like: communicating habilitation criteria draft (even before officially approved by the ministry), forming longer-term employment contracts post PhD level, providing direction and additional financial support for research conferences and journal publications, inviting foreign accomplished scholar for topical research seminars and how to write and publish academic articles sessions, guiding PhD students in choosing topics and institutions for their PhD studies based on study program requirements.

2.3. Research and International Co-operation

AAB is predominantly a teaching institution that has an ambition in developing the research component. It has a comparably decent publication record that almost exclusively consists of conference proceeding publications, own research journal, and requirement from PhD students to publish four publications with ISSN prior to PhD completion. There was also a project mentioned to emphasize research-based teaching.

ET recognized many opportunities to strengthen both research and internationalization component. Most of them overlap with the suggestion how to further develop staff capacity (through research and internationalization). While the AAB proved some strategic efforts towards internationalisation at the strategic level, this could be further developed at the program level. Students claim more mobility opportunities, which could be supported by measures at institutional but also program level.

Recommendations to AAB:

- AAB should openly communicate habilitation requirements for their faculty and before ministry approval present them as a set of expectations AAB has from their faculty beyond excellence in teaching. The direction should be towards increasing the component of peer-reviewed journal publications in addition to conference ones.
- AAB should facilitate accomplishment of this expectations by providing more research funds, invite recognized international researchers on e.g. monthly basis to give research seminars on AAB relevant topics and 'how to publish' seminars.
- Student mobility: Students should be actively supported in abroad mobility at all levels, including short-time mobility and internships. Moreover curricula could be revised to include mobility windows.

AAB reported on several improvement in terms of internationalization of the teaching processes, especially in terms of developing program in Turkish and English language. Currently, these internationalization arrangements are still at institutional level and KAA and coming group of experts in the next round should pay special attention to see how these efforts are being implemented and which study programs are being emphasized.

Recommendations to AAB:

- Additionally to all above described accomplishments, AAB is encouraged to attract visiting professors for short-term guest lectures in order for students to get international exposure, confidence and competence in using English language.

2.4. Finances and Infrastructure / Space and Equipment

The financial background seems to be sufficient, as it is provided in the SER. The institution has the financial possibilities to develop facilities and staff, as well as supporting measures for students. While the tuition fees are relatively high, students seem satisfied with opportunities to reduce fees because of good grades or individual background.

The infrastructure at the AAB observed during the site visit seems to be adequate and up to date. Computers are available for students, as well as WiFi and a cafeteria with affordable food. The library has a limited number of titles, compared with other universities and some books which are used during courses are not available in a bigger number. However, the library staff seems to be very motivated to enhance the quality of the library, including the use of online resources and journals.

Students are supported in their learning by a feasible online platform, where lecturers also provide needed literature and learning materials. The buildings of AAB are adequate, seminar rooms and rooms for lecturers are available and the number seems suitable for the number of students. However, rooms do not seem to be equipped well to use them for social learning methods and only little space is provided for students to meet in groups to work on their projects.

Recommendations to AAB:

- Library: Books, often used by courses should be provided in an adequate number
- Space for creative and social learning: Seminar rooms should enable social learning methods, e.g. by the possibility to remove tables. Free space at the university could be used to provide tables and seats for group learning activities. This could be developed together with students, to make sure, the learning space will be used by them.

2.5. Quality Management

AAB has regular processes of internal quality assurance in place and is obviously putting a lot of emphasis on student opinion as well as dense coordination of course content across different locations and modes of delivery. What is missing is a clearer focus on the overall program level and distinction between different bachelor level programs.

There is a significant overlap between various bachelor programs, where distinctions are made by one elective course per program in first two years as well as third year of studies to larger extent. This is a hybrid model, that is in essence closer to idea of specializations than it is to a program. Hence, AAB should pay special attention to the program as the key level of analysis of attainment of learning goals and outcomes.

As far as learning goals are concerned, it is evident that AAB has had an active role in developing learning outcomes in accordance to the Bloom taxonomy. The exclusive emphasis is on cognitive domain, which is to certain extent reasonable given the bachelor level. However, that should not exclude basic levels of skill-oriented learning outcomes as well. A competence-oriented approach in teaching and learning processes has not been developed yet. Even more importantly, learning outcomes should be measured and applied at the program level beyond the currently working feedback loop at the course level.

Recommendations to AAB:

- Program level assurance of learning: ET advises AAB to measure learning goals in accordance to AACSB assurance of learning methodology, as well as apply a matrix tool that shows which learning goals are met at which courses using which assessment methods. Both of these are power diagnostic to show the level of correspondence among planned learning goals and outcomes vis-a-vis actual

program delivery.

2.6. Overall recommendation

Based on the above analysis and evaluation, expert team **does recommend BSc program in Banking, Finance and Accounting to be reaccredited.**

3. Management and Informatics (BA, re-accreditation)

Management and informatics (hereafter M&I) is a three-year, 180 ECTS program at the BA level. It is one of the most frequently offered programs in the context of Kosovar higher educational system. Hence, it is among the most competitive programs in Kosovo HEI market. Given this fact and the increase in offer from the public universities, it is not surprising to see number of students dropping (433 in year 2012/13 to 268 in 2013/14). The decrease comes especially on the account of full-time students (ratio full-time/ part-time students was 203/230 in 2012/13 and 147/121 in 2013/14).

3.1. Academic programs and student management

Academic programme.

ET would like to commend responsible for well-prepared and informative SER in general, and for this program in particular. The only exception is the introductory part (p. 134 – 142), which is repetitive all across bachelor programs and shows that these programs are in essence currently treated closer to specializations as they are to self-standing study programs. This is much more than purely administrative issue, while it should reflect profoundly in the way programs are designed and delivered. For instance, it was clear from the interviews with students that they are missing updated knowledge and skills in information technology, skills in general, and more practical exercises. It is ET impression that desired student profile is actually much closer to information technology for business, as it is a managerial one.

There are couple of minor issues in the SER than should be taken care of in future. These include:

- p. 141: wrong names of benchmarked programs from University of Ljubljana
- p. 150: there is outdated literature being used in Databases course. 2006 is old in terms of information technology
- p. 158: percentage of the assessment methods adds up to 200%, please correct

Recommendation to AAB:

- SER: Rethink the introductory part of the program M&I (as compared to other programs to make clear distinction between them in light of desired learning outcomes at the program level. One obvious difference between BFA and M&I bachelor level program should evidently be in higher emphasis on skills in the M&I program.
- AAB is advised to avoid copy pasting across programs, especially in terms of the introductory text. It is genuinely important for ET to understand that BSc and BA programs on your offer are in fact, and not only pro-forma programs rather than specializations.
- M&I learning goals and program delivery is expected to have stronger emphasis on information technology knowledge and skills.
- Please update actual literature being used at the course Databases with recent relevant literature.

- Correct the assessment methods percentages for the Business analyst for IT course.

Having said this, we do think that existing program does correspond to the overall institutional mission statement and principles of operation. Also, its quality, range, and academic aims are appropriate for the academic degree of BA. Program structure and contents are reasonable and have been pre-accredited. Suggestions for improvement have been readily adopted and implemented to a large extent.

However, there is an issue of workload that requires immediate attention. Based on the site visit, ET has to unfortunately establish that ECTS allocation is in cases of courses type 1 and 2 overinflated. This partially applies to the notion that there are 15 hours of consultations per students. More importantly and troublesome is that according to students exercises (tutorials) only last 45 minutes, while they should last twice as much. In fact, many of the students expressed desire to have more exercises as they find them valuable in practical terms. Groups size at M&I should be even smaller than BFA especially for computer tutorials.

Recommendation to AAB:

- Exercises: AAB should urgently and immediately increase the length and scope of exercises to match accredited program. Group size should not exceed 20 students in order to have effective learning process.

Student management.

Students at AAB are involved in a number of evaluative processes and see themselves in the centre of the institutions activities. However, the number of full-time students is dropping during the last year. Beside measures to attract more students, already a number of efforts are made to ensure students do not drop out of the system. However, measures taking in account the social dimension in higher education, by providing support to student groups at risk could reduce drop-out numbers and attract new target groups.

AAB has a proven track record of capacity to listen to student suggestions and has for instance developed an interesting teaching innovation called AAB improvised bank. Cca. 10 students is in fact applying method of classroom as an organization, to experience organizational structure and work design of different organizational departments needed for a commercial bank to be operating. This project is a fruitful step towards more practical training of students at the AAB, which could be extended.

Students are involved in AAB at many levels, but are not an active part of the institutional management. The student union is not an active partner at all levels, participating in decisions. This impression was supported by the fact, that no representative of the student union was part of the study visit. Moreover, student representatives need a specific grade average to run for student union. This is a limitation to students' democratic rights.

Students at the AAB are satisfied with teaching content in general. Some improvements could be made by the extension of exercises, to provide more learning opportunities in smaller groups. Transversal skills are not in the centre of the teaching process by now, but

would be highly demanded especially in ICT area.

More training in the ICT area was demanded by students during the site visit. Training and lectures in this field should be extended, as well as work-based learning methodology implemented. Students suggested developing a university app, which could represent a fruitful project to combine both elements.

Employability records provided upon further request do not differentiate across programs so it is difficult to estimate the effect that program has on student employability. Furthermore, AAB records do not differentiate between students that came employed in the program and those that became such as a results of it.

Recommendations to AAB:

- Drop-out rates: survey the reasons for students drop out and develop measures to support students at risks, taking into account the social dimension of higher education.
- Work-based learning: Support and expand learning opportunities in real or semi-real work situations. E.g. by more internships and more projects as the training-bank.
- Student representation in management: Include students in university, institutional and programme management by providing the students union an active role in democratic processes. Do not limit the opportunities to become a student representative by regulations.
- Learning opportunities in smaller groups could be improved, e.g. by extending exercises.
- Transversal skills: More opportunities to gain transversal skills could foster student's employability. This is especially the case for ICT skills, but also languages and entrepreneurship education.
- Practical skills: More emphasis on skills as program goals should inevitably translate into more practical experience of different kinds before last year of studies. Examples are student initiated multi-disciplinary projects like developing smart phone app for AAB to keep students updated regardless of their location.
- Employability: Develop a system of measuring and following students 6 and 12 months post completion of each program to see the effect of the program on employability of students. Make distinction between those employed (and changing jobs and growing in ranks) and those that got job after completing the program.

3.2. Staff

AAB has generally speaking competent staff with a mix of teaching and professional experience, and to a lesser extent also research one. It is obvious from the SER and site-visit that there is a strong culture of teaching quality AAB is striving and diligently working towards.

However, there are also significant challenges related to 1) the portion of full-time staff, 2) long-term perspective on career development past the PhD level (conditional upon habilitation criteria and longer-term employment contracts beyond 3-year periods), and 3) in

part, lack of focus and ambition in directing PhD students toward choosing institutions and topics of their PhD projects. As mentioned in the introduction, we find this to be one of crucial strategic challenges we identified and put forward to the discussion with AAB management. We do rely on AAB management to fully embrace the challenge and in addition to the recommendations provided in the introduction suggest several additional program specific suggestions.

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3.3. Research and International Co-operation

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ET recognized many opportunities to strengthen both research and internationalization component. Most of them overlap with the suggestion how to further develop staff capacity (through research and internationalization) related to the program M&I.

Recommendations to AAB:

- AAB should openly communicate habilitation requirements for their faculty and before ministry approval present them as a set of expectations AAB has from their faculty beyond excellence in teaching. The direction should be towards increasing the component of peer-reviewed journal publications in addition to conference ones.
- AAB should facilitate accomplishment of this expectations by providing more research funds, invite recognized international researchers on e.g. monthly basis to

give research seminars on AAB relevant topics and 'how to publish' seminars.

AAB reported on several improvements in terms of internationalization of the teaching processes, especially in terms of developing program in Turkish and English language. Currently, these internationalization arrangements are still at institutional level and KAA and coming group of experts in the next round should pay special attention to see how these efforts are being implemented and which study programs are being emphasized.

Recommendations to AAB:

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3.4. Finances and Infrastructure / Space and Equipment

The financial background seems to be sufficient, as it is provided in the SER. The institution has the financial possibilities to develop facilities and staff, as well as supporting measures for students. While the tuition fees are relatively high, students seem satisfied with opportunities to reduce fees because of good grades or individual background.

The infrastructure at the AAB observed during the site visit seems to be adequate and up to date. Computers are available for students, as well as WiFi and a cafeteria with affordable food. The library has a limited number of titles, compared with other universities and some books which are used during courses are not available in a bigger number. However, the library staff seems to be very motivated to enhance the quality of the library, including the use of online resources and journals.

Students are supported in their learning by a feasible online platform, where lecturers also provide needed literature and learning materials. The buildings of AAB are adequate, seminar rooms and rooms for lecturers are available and the number seems suitable for the number of students. However, rooms do not seem to be equipped well to use them for social learning methods and only little space is provided for students to meet in groups to work on their projects.

Recommendations to AAB:

- Library: Books, often used by courses should be provided in an adequate number
- Space for creative and social learning: Seminar rooms should enable social learning methods, e.g., by the possibility to remove tables. Free space at the university could be used to provide tables and seats for group learning activities. This could be developed together with students, to make sure, the learning space will be used by them.

3.5. Quality Management

AAB has regular processes of internal quality assurance in place and is obviously putting a lot of emphasis on student opinion as well as dense coordination of course content across different locations and modes of delivery. What is missing is a clearer focus on the overall program level and distinction between different bachelor level programs.

There is a significant overlap between various bachelor programs, where distinctions are made by one elective course per program in first two years as well as third year of studies to larger extent. This is a hybrid model that is in essence closer to idea of specializations than it is to a program. Hence, AAB should pay special attention to the program as the key level of analysis of attainment of learning goals and outcomes.

As far as learning goals are concerned, it is evident that AAB has had an active role in developing learning outcomes in accordance to the Bloom taxonomy. The exclusive emphasis is on cognitive domain, which is to certain extent reasonable given the bachelor level. However, that should not exclude basic levels of skill-oriented learning outcomes as well. A competence-oriented approach in teaching and learning processes has not been developed yet. Even more importantly, learning outcomes should be measured and applied at the program level beyond the currently working feedback loop at the course level.

Recommendations to AAB:

- Program level assurance of learning: ET advises AAB College to measure learning goals in accordance to AACSB assurance of learning methodology, as well as apply a matrix tool that shows which learning goals are met at which courses using which assessment methods. Both of these are power diagnostic to show the level of correspondence among planned learning goals and outcomes vis-a-vis actual program delivery.

3.6. Overall recommendation

Based on the above analysis and evaluation, expert team **does recommend BA program in Management and Informatics to be reaccredited.**

4. Marketing and Business Administration (BA, re-accreditation)

The programme Marketing and Business Administration (MBA) is Bologna-type bachelor degree programme with 180 ECTS. According to SER 2014, the number of students enrolled into the programme has been relatively constant over the past three academic years (about 210), however the ratio between full-time vs. part-time students has changed in favour of full-time students. The number of graduates has increased from 29 in 2011 to 79 in 2013. Percentage of students who found jobs is also increasing over the years.

4.1. Academic programs and student management

Academic programme.

BA in Marketing and Business Administration is a first-cycle three-year Bologna-type programme, and as such conforms to international standards. AAB's mission statement is very generic and provides no elements of differentiation. In this respect, BA in Marketing and Business Administration corresponds to the mission rather well. The first year of the programme is identical to other BA programmes at the Faculty of Economics, in the second year, there is one programme-specific course (with somewhat different mix of obligatory and elective courses as compared to the other first-cycle programmes), and in the third year, there are three programme-specific courses. The programme structure is thus very similar across all three programmes which may constitute a problem of low differentiation between AAB's programmes (see Quality management section below).

The students attend four courses each semester (three required and one elective), constituting 30 ECTS. However, the number of contact hours and ECTS do not correspond fully to course descriptions. Information in SER is sometimes conflicting; for example, table offering an overview of the courses states that Management has 2 + 2 contact hours (p.105), while course description (p. 109) indicates 3 + 2 contact hours. In addition, students reported that tutorials (exercises) are often too short (1 hour), while most of the courses in the programme indicate they last two hours. There seems to be ample time for independent study; what is more, ECTS for some courses seem to be rather inflated (e.g., 4 contact hours in 9 ECTS course). Students indicated that the workload assigned to them is appropriate and manageable, even for the part-time students that have full-time jobs.

All courses have similar structure in terms of activities (typically two midterm exams, term paper, attendance/participation and final exam), hence overarching didactic concept seems to have been communicated and adopted amongst the faculty members.

Recommendations to AAB:

- Similarity across all economic study BA / BSc programmes suggests that AAB in fact offers one BA programme in Business Administration with three distinct specializations. Given that the number of BA students in economics / business programmes is declining, AAB should consider integrating all three programmes with several specialisation tracks.

- Reconsider allocation of ECTS and number of contact hours. More time devoted to tutorials (exercises) would increase level of skills and competencies of students and thus contribute to their employability.

Student management.

Students at AAB are involved in a number of evaluative processes and see themselves in the centre of the institutions activities. Some measures have been taken to keep the drop-out rates low. However, as the total number of undergraduate students at AAB measures is declining, this trend may affect Marketing and Business Administration programme, which has been relatively stable, as well. Taking in account the social dimension in higher education, by providing support to student groups at risk could reduce drop out numbers and attract new target groups.

Students are involved in AAB at many levels, but are not an active part of the institutional management. The student union is not an active partner at all levels, participating in decisions. This impression was supported by the fact, that no representative of the student union was part of the study visit. Moreover, student representatives need a specific grade average to run for student union. This is a limitation to the students' democratic rights.

Recommendations to AAB:

- Work-based learning: Support and expand learning opportunities in real or semi-real work situations. E.g., by more internships and more projects as the training-bank.
- Student representation in management: Include students in university, institutional and programme management by providing the students union an active role in democratic processes. Do not limit the opportunities to become a student representative by regulations.
- Learning opportunities in smaller groups could be improved, e.g. by extending exercises.
- Transversal skills: More opportunities to gain transversal skills could foster students' employability. This is especially the case for ICT skills, but also languages and entrepreneurship education.
- Employability: Develop a system of measuring and following students 6 and 12 months post completion of each program to see the effect of the program on employability of students. Make distinction between those employed (and changing jobs and growing in ranks) and those that got job after completing the program.

4.2. Staff

Most Faculty of Economics staff seems to be engaged in several BA and MA programmes offered by the school. There is a small core faculty located at branches in Ferizaj and Gjakova.

Although 37 full-time faculty members are listed (which is a lot in comparison to other private higher education institutions), the ratio between full-time and part-time staff is still not satisfactory. Most of the full-time staff works under short-term contracts. In addition,

majority (21) are Ph.D. candidates with uncertain job prospects.

For each course several teachers/assistants are listed, with at least one professor per course. While staffing at courses that are included in all BA / BSc programmes is quite satisfactory, this is not so for marketing specialisation courses. Several marketing courses list the programme director as instructor (five courses in MBA programme, in addition to teaching in four other programmes). This seems to constitute a very heavy teaching load that goes beyond the total workload stated in the list if academic staff (in additional materials supplied by AAB after the site visit). Most of the marketing courses are held by part-time faculty. This would be understandable if marketing was only one of the specialisations in a single Business Administration programme, but it is insufficient for a specialised programme.

Faculty promotion constitutes a special challenge. AAB has invested in developing teaching capacities of the staff (through off-site trainings), and seems to provide a supportive environment to those faculty members who are pursuing Ph.D. degrees. These efforts seem to be at odds with job uncertainty and lack of long-term career planning for junior faculty. Judging from an interview with faculty, many of them do not seem to be well acquainted with habilitation rules, which should provide guidance for developing long-term career at AAB.

Recommendations to AAB:

- Given that two programmes in Marketing are offered (at BA as well as MA level), AAB should employ more faculty with marketing specialisation under the full-time contract.
- School management should consider ways how to plan longer-term career paths of faculty members who are pursuing Ph.D. degrees, and thus incentivize them to stay at AAB.

4.3. Research and International Co-operation

While teaching seems to be at the forefront of AAB efforts, some attention has been directed towards raising faculty's research profile. Research fund was set up, to cover expenses for conference presentations and also to support new research projects. AAB publishes its own research journal, and requires from PhD students to publish four publications with ISSN prior to PhD completion.

Management also actively pursues internationalisation strategy by gradually increasing the number of foreign partners. While the AAB proved some strategic efforts towards internationalisation at the strategic level, this could be further developed at the program level. Students wish for more mobility opportunities, which could be supported by measures at institutional but also program level.

Recommendations to AAB:

- Teacher/researcher mobility: AAB's efforts and financial resources should be directed to increase teacher/researcher mobility. In modern academic world, networking is of a paramount importance. Research and teaching visits could importantly enhance faculty's capabilities and further improve AAB's position on the market. AAB should openly communicate habilitation requirements for their faculty and before ministry approval present them as a set of expectations AAB has from their faculty beyond excellence in teaching.
- Student mobility: Students should be actively supported in abroad mobility at all levels, including short-time mobility and internships. Moreover curricula could be revised to include mobility windows.

4.4. Finances and Infrastructure / Space and Equipment

The financial background seems to be sufficient, as it is provided in the SER. The institution has the financial possibilities to develop facilities and staff, as well as supporting measures for students. While the tuition fees are relatively high, students seem satisfied with opportunities to reduce fees because of good grades or individual background. Scholarships scheme is instituted through scholarship regulations. The scheme includes a variety of discounts, including 100% fee waiver for outstanding students and students who require social status-based assistance.

The infrastructure at the AAB observed during the site visit seems to be adequate and up to date. Computers are available for students, as well as WiFi and a cafeteria with affordable food. Compared with other universities, the library has a limited number of titles, and some books which are used during courses are not available in multiple copies. However, the library staff seems to be very motivated to enhance the quality of the library, including the use of online resources and journals.

Students are supported in their learning by a functioning online platform, where lecturers also provide needed literature and learning materials. The buildings of AAB are adequate, seminar rooms and rooms for lecturers are available and the number seems suitable for the number of students. However, rooms do not seem to be equipped well to use them for social learning methods and only little space is provided for students to meet in groups to work on their projects.

Recommendations to AAB:

- Library: Books, often used by courses should be provided in an adequate number. For some courses, only one copy of the textbook which is a required reading is available. This issue is accentuated by the fact that on-line retailers typically do not supply Kosovo market.
- Space for creative and social learning: Seminar rooms should enable social learning methods, e.g. by the possibility to remove tables. Free space at the university could be used to provide tables and seats for group learning activities. This could be developed together with students, to make sure, the learning space will be used by them.

4.5. Quality Management

AAB has quality assurance office which is responsible for internal quality assurance. Most procedures are regulated, prescribed and implemented at the school level, and are uniform across the programmes. They pertain to programme and course design and assure the feedback loops.

However, more attention seems to be placed on the course level than the programme level. For example, the rationale for the programme, target groups, international benchmarks, and teaching approach stated in SER are identical for all three bachelor degree programmes in School of Economics undergoing evaluation in 2014/2015. This begs the question of programme differentiation. There is a significant overlap between various bachelor programs, where the first year is uniform across the programmes, and only a few of core courses are distinction in the third and the second year. This is a hybrid model that is in essence closer to idea of specializations than it is to a program. Hence, AAB should pay special attention to the program as the key level of analysis of attainment of learning goals and outcomes.

AAB employs Bloom's taxonomy in developing learning outcomes where the emphasis is on cognitive domain, while skill-oriented learning outcomes are neglected. A competence-oriented approach in teaching and learning processes has not been developed yet.

Recommendations to AAB:

- Program level assurance of learning: ET advises AAB College to measure learning goals in accordance to AACSB assurance of learning methodology, as well as apply a matrix tool that shows which learning goals are met at which courses using which assessment methods. Both of these are power diagnostic to show the level of correspondence among planned learning goals and outcomes vis-a-vis actual program delivery.
- AAB should consider increasing programme differentiation, both in terms of AAB programmes as well as market competition.

4.6. Overall recommendation

Based on the above analysis and evaluation, expert team **does recommend BA program in Marketing and Business Administration to be reaccredited.**

5. Marketing and Business Management (MA, re-accreditation)

Marketing and Business Management programme is a two-year bologna-type programme with 120 ECTS. The programme has been offered since 2012 as a full-time programme only. In the first generation, 182 students enrolled into the programme (with 104 progressing to the second year), and in the second generation 103 students enrolled (with 70 progressing). We can thus observe a decline in number of students, but improvement in progression rates. SER indicates that a high share of graduates from the programmes found employment in 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 (p. 380), however it is not clear how can this be possible for programme that has just started in 2012.

5.1. Academic programs and student management

Academic programme.

The programme lasts four semesters, each accounting for 30 ECTS. Each of the first three semesters includes 3 required courses and 1 elective course (chosen by a student from two courses offered). The students with GPA below 7.5 have to take qualifying exam prior to enrolling into the programme. During the interview with programme director it was reported, that students with BA education outside economics / business domain also have to pass qualifying exams. This is appropriate at the master degree level as it assures that all students are familiar with marketing concepts at basic level, hence no repetition of basic content is needed.

About half of the offered courses have predominant marketing content. Overall, teaching and learning methods are appropriate for the master degree programme, and so is the required literature. However, upon inspecting initially submitted programme and related course syllabi it could be observed that three courses: Marketing Management (1. semester), Marketing Strategy (2. semester), and Management of Marketing Mix ("Management of mix-it marketing"; 3. semester) have similar course objectives and content, although they use different literature and are taught by two different instructors. Similar issue arises for Advanced International Business (2. semester) and International Marketing (3. semester). Despite a limited number of marketing specific courses, there seems to be a lot of repetition of content. After the evaluators pointed out in the draft report that this presented a rather serious issue which should be remedied, AAB somewhat changed the programme structure, moved some courses between the semesters, altered the type of some courses (some required courses became elective and vice versa), and, most importantly, exchanged two courses in the original programme with two new courses:

- the course Leadership and Managerial Skills (required course) in Semester 1 was moved to Semester 2 and was substituted by Business to Business Marketing. The former course replaced in Semester 2 the course Management of Organizational Behaviour, which became an elective course in Semester 3, replacing course Market Research. In experts' opinion, the later swap (in Semester 3) does not increase the quality of a master degree programme specialising in Marketing. Market research is important topic in marketing master degree programme, and AAB should reconsider its decision to remove it from the programme.

- the course Management of Marketing Strategies in Semester 2 was substituted with Supply Chain Management. It could be a more prudent decision to substitute the course Management of Marketing Mix with Supply Chain Management, instead of omitting Management of Marketing Strategies (instructor for both of the originally proposed courses is the same). Marketing Management (offered in Semester 1), and Marketing Strategies are two typical courses in master degree marketing programmes.

The course instructor for Supply Chain Management is a part-time lecturer, while course instructor for B2B marketing (dr. Petrit Balia) could not be found on any of the faculty lists submitted prior and after the site visit. Course syllabi for both new courses are appropriate.

The fourth semester is devoted to master thesis. Detailed instructions regarding the structure of the thesis, formatting and citing are provided by AAB. The topics presented in SER (p. 182) indicate that theses combine theoretical knowledge with empirical research.

Recommendations to AAB:

- While decision to introduce two new courses (B2B Marketing and Supply Chain Management) enriches the programme, the experts recommend AAB to re-evaluate which courses to swap.
- Recruit companies and institutions that could provide real-life business challenges and include research projects in the course work.

Student management

Schools capability to offer students research experience is an important part of master degree education. SER states that students are involved in student research projects, however, among the interviewed students no one had such experience

Students at AAB are involved in a number of evaluative processes and see themselves in the centre of the institutions activities. Some measures have been taken to keep the drop-out rates low. Taking in account the social dimension in higher education, by providing support to student groups at risk could reduce drop out numbers and attract new target groups.

Students are involved in AAB at many levels, but are not an active part of the institutional management. The student union is not an active partner at all levels, participating in decisions. This impression was supported by the fact, that no representative of the student union was part of the study visit. Moreover, student representatives need a specific grade average to run for student union. This is a limitation to the students' democratic rights.

Recommendations to AAB:

- Work-based learning: Support and expand learning opportunities in real or semi-real work situations, E.g., by more internships and by providing real-life research projects as a part of the course obligations.
- Student representation in management: Include students in university, institutional

and programme management by providing the students union an active role in democratic processes. Do not limit the opportunities to become a student representative by regulations.

- Learning opportunities in smaller groups could be improved, e.g. by extending exercises.
- Transversal skills: More opportunities to gain transversal skills could foster students' employability. This is especially the case for ICT skills, but also languages and entrepreneurship education.
- Employability: Develop a system of measuring and following students 6 and 12 months post completion of each program to see the effect of the program on employability of students. Make distinction between those employed (and changing jobs and growing in ranks) and those that got job after completing the program.

5.2. Staff

All instructors hold appropriate degrees and habilitation titles. Their research record includes mostly conference papers, although some professors have published in international peer-review journals. Participation in research projects can create intrinsic knowledge that can be transferred to the course work and provide motivation to the students for their research projects.

Only about one half of the courses in the programme are held by full-time professors. Furthermore, out of 7 marketing-specific courses, only two (held by the same instructor) are thought by full-time faculty. This, again, causes concern, and is even more worrying than situation in the BA programme. In the response to ET draft report, AAB indicated that some of the Ph.D. candidates are preparing their theses in the field of marketing, and that institution plans to publish a call for academic staff that gained their PhD degrees in Marketing and related topics in May-June 2015, and that it signed new pre-contracts for two of our current part time academic staff to become full time lecturers of Consumer Behaviour and International Marketing. Future evaluations of the programme should closely inspect this issue.

Recommendations to AAB:

- Make sure that sufficient number of full-time marketing professors are employed in marketing programmes.
- Support faculty members (by (co-)financing research projects, financing participation at major international conferences, etc.) to build-up their research record and publish in international peer-reviewed journals. This would raise institutional research profile of AAB.

5.3. Research and International Co-operation

While teaching seems to be at the forefront of AAB efforts, some attention has been directed towards raising faculty's research profile. Research fund was set up, to cover expenses for

conference presentations and also to support new research projects. AAB publishes its own research journal, and requires from PhD students to publish four publications with ISSN prior to PhD completion.

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- AAB should consider increasing programme differentiation, both in terms of AAB programmes as well as market competition.

5.6. Overall recommendation

Based on the above analysis and evaluation, expert team **does recommend MA program in Marketing and Business Management to be reaccredited.**

6. Proposal for the decision on re-accreditation

The team of experts **proposes re-accreditation** (with conditions specified in the specific program reports above all related to increasing number of permanent staff) of all four programs from the field of Economics submitted for reaccreditation by AAB College:

- Banking, finance and accounting (BSc, reaccreditation)
- Management and informatics (BA, reaccreditation)
- Marketing and business administration (BA, reaccreditation)
- Marketing and business management (MA, reaccreditation).

Annex: List of additional documents provided post on-site visit

- KAA approved list of staff in all nine economic programs by location in number of hours per week, separate for full time and part time faculty.
- List of visiting professors in spring semester 2015.
- Updated list of internationalization activities
- Strategic plan 2013-2018
- UNET mobility agreement
- Regulation on staff promotion and habilitation
- Regulation on bachelor thesis
- Regulations and statute of student union