

Final Report

**“Report on the Site Visit for the Accreditation and Re-
Accreditation Procedure
of Academic Programs of the
AAB College in Pristina, Kosovo”**

Site visit on Friday, May 26, 2017

At the College site

Experts Team (ET):

- Prof. Dr. Ulrike Webersberger/ University of Innsbruck (AT)
- Prof. Dr. Markus Paulmichl/ Austrian Institute of Technology (AT)
- Prof. Dr. Dietmar Paier/ University of Applied Sciences BFI Vienna (AT)
- Prof. Bruce Brown/ The Royal College of Art London (UK)
- Dr. Adrian Stan/ European Students Union (EU)

Coordinators of KAA (CKAA):

- Prof. Dr. Blerim Rexha - State Quality Council - KAA
- Ms. Furtuna Mehmeti - Acting Director - Expert for Evaluation and Accreditation - KAA
- Mr. Shkelzen Gerxhaliu - Senior Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring - KAA
- Mr. Fisnik Gashi - Senior Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring - KAA
- Mr. Sokol Daka - Senior System Administrator - KAA

The Task:

AAB College in Pristina is applying for accreditation of the following programs: *Pharmacy, Dentistry, Radiology* and re-accreditation for the programs: *Sectoral Management, Graphic Design and Visual Arts, Fashion Design*.

The site visit was on the 26th of May 2017 at the College site and organized as follows:

- Meeting with management of AAB College
- Meeting with responsible persons for the study programs (curriculum, teaching and research)
- Visiting the facilities and infrastructure
- Meeting with the teaching staff
- Meeting with the students
- Expert team (ET) consultation, KAA consultation
- Closing meeting with management of the institution

Procedure:

AAB College applied for accreditation (A) and re-accreditation (R) of the following programs of studies:

1. Graphic Design and Visual Arts (BA) - 120 students per year (R)
2. Fashion Design (BA) - 120 students per year (R)
3. Pharmacy (MSc) - 80-200 students per year (A)
4. Radiology (BSc) - 80-200 students per year (A)
5. Dentistry (Integrated Basic Studies - Doctor of Dentistry) - 80-200 students per year (A)
6. Sectoral Management (MSc) - 100 students per year (R)

The report is based on:

- Self-evaluation report 2017
- Meeting with the Management of the AAB College and discussion between the members of the institution, the expert team, and representatives of KAA
- The Code of good practice and guidelines for site visit, provided by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency
- Site visit of the facilities
- Verification of the compliance with the recommendations provided by the KAA
- Additional documents provided

General Remarks:

Overall, the documentation for accreditation of the different programs was in place. However, there was information lacking regarding the topics of the thesis work the students will be offered. The responsible persons explained that the topics of the theses will be given in due time, however, the institution should have an idea what can be offered, which will of course depend on the research infrastructure in place (see below) and the financial and research support that can be provided.

The documentation for accreditation of the Dentistry program was, at the time of the site-visit, in place, and almost sufficient. Only the number of planned students doesn't allow a clear statement. In the SER page 74 the number of seats is stated with 200 seats. During discussions with the management it was revealed that they plan to take 80 to 200 students per study year.

In the future, it would be advisable to prepare the SER more diligently in order to avoid disturbing generalities and omissions.

The upfront work done by the members of the KAA in cross-checking the HR requirements for the different applied courses according to Kosovar law was tremendously helpful. By this means the ET would like to thank the KAA team for their assistance and support throughout the evaluation process and for their valuable input.

Radiology:

(1) Academic Program and Student Management

The management of AAB Institution envisions the admission of 80 to 200 students per year to the program.

After carefully examining the infrastructure, staff personnel and financial recourses, the ET suggests the admittance of NO MORE than 30 students in the first year.

The allocation of ECTS points to the different classes are reasonable, however, in order to fulfill European standards also elective courses should be offered. The ECTSs for anatomy seemed high, however, the team of the institution was able to give a solid explanation why they did it as summarizes in the SER.

A setback is the fact that no ECTSs are foreseen for the Thesis work.

The diploma thesis workload should be provided in form of minimum of 10 ECTS!

A strategy will be put in place (new quality control system) in order to allow constant improvement of the teaching. The curriculum and the respective syllabi should be regularly (yearly) visited and the management should keep track of the implemented changes. This would also allow the ET – in the future - to track the development of the curriculum.

A concern is the development of the research activity. The Institution is advised to constantly improve the laboratory facilities in terms of infrastructure, equipment as well as the access to consumables.

(2) Personnel

The ET appreciates the effort to assemble a professional team of teachers. The total staff is comprised of 23 full time teachers. 6 currently hold a PhDs (4 in radiology and 2 in physics). It is important to note that 2 PhDs in radiology are from Sarajevo and therefore the Accreditation agency needs to check whether or not they qualify as full time staff as suggested by the administration of AAB. Furthermore, it is important to mention that 3 people from the teaching staff are enrolled in a PhD program and will eventually join the full time staff of Radiology, as communicated by the officials.

(3) International and National Cooperation's

AAB Institution should seek to constantly increase the institutionalized international and national collaborations at the level of staff and student education. This would increase the sustainability of building a competitive education at the local Institution. Regarding the national collaborations there are multiple contracts in place, however, all the contracts can be terminated unilaterally within 1-12 month. If the time for termination is shorter than a year this will NOT guarantee a sustained education for a three year program! Also, there is no information on how much AAB needs to pay the institutions for the effort they are willing to put in to the different programs.

(4) Finances and Infrastructure

The site visit was overshadowed by serious worries that INSUFFICIENT funds will be available for laboratory and clinical-based 'research' work. If substantiated, this would seriously hamper the quality of the education, as well as the continuous education of the staff!

However, the institution told the ET that for the program a total of 190-260€ are allocated, i.e. 155K for salaries and euro 20K-40K for equipment and consumables. The leading team of the Radiology program also told the ET that a new echo-machine should be acquired, however, the ET wonders how that would be possible if only 20K-40K are allocated to equipment and consumables! In order to guarantee a successful development, substantially more funds need to be allocated to the program.

The laboratory available for the radiology training of the students is equipped with well-used equipment, however, as mentioned above, new equipment will be purchased.

The shortage of space and the available equipment for the laboratory, would, at the moment, only allow the education of up to 30 students. The ET appreciates the existence of the mentioned laboratory, however these alone will be insufficient for the training of more than 30 students, as well as the continuous research by the staff as required for a competitive Institution at the current European level.

Recommendation by the Expert Panel:

The 'Radiology' program can be conditionally accredited, and this only if the number of admitted students is limited to 30. The conditional accreditation

should be limited to one year. The ET is aware that the accreditation period should be 3 years, however, since this one year period is critical for the implementation of important new additions to the curriculum and infrastructure it is advised to subject the program to re-accreditation in one year!

Dentistry Program:

(1) Academic Program and Student Management

The Dentistry Program is planned as a 6 year-study-program leading to

The Doctor of Dentistry (Dr. Dent.).

The written admission test will cover the topics English, Chemistry and Biology. During discussions with the teachers it became clear, that good knowledge of the English language is import for the future students at AAB College, because dental literature and content of some subjects will be told in English language. The results attained in this way of admission procedure can guarantee the college that the future students are able to follow the English content of the subjects.

The dental students will start with practical lab courses in the Dental Laboratory at AAB College (SER page 79) in the second study year, this allows the students to check the manual dexterity they get self-awareness of their skills for dental work and in case of infeasibility it is not too late to quit the program (especially from a financial point of view). These technical courses are followed by preclinical dental courses where students do dental treatment in phantom heads. In the 4th year of study the students start with the clinical treatment of patients in the Dental Clinic that planned to be installed in the AAB College building.

For the practical courses all students will be separated in smaller groups up to 8 students per teacher.

A detailed Excel sheet with the minimum requirements for all the preclinical and clinical courses was presented in the additional documents. The workload numbers look reasonable and manageable.

In terms of treatments costs for the patients, they will only have to pay the materials used to attract more patients.

Bearing in mind that AAB College is no official dental clinic yet the fulfillment of the requirements for all planned 80 to 200 students can't be guaranteed. Patients are not a renewable resource-therefore the study program at this point should be limited to 25 students per year.

A diploma thesis is mentioned in the Study program plan (page 85) in the 12th semester with 10 ECTS. To fulfill international standards the ECTS should be raised to approx. 20-30 ECTS in order to be compatible with similar programs in the

European Community and the students should have the chance to start at an earlier stage with their research project for the diploma thesis.

(2) Personal

At the moment 10 full time and 9 part-time academic lecturers (Dentistry, Medicine, Pharmacy, Medical Informatics) are engaged for the Dentistry program.

The core disciplines in dentistry are as follows:

- Restorative Dentistry (including Endodontics, Preventive Dentistry, Periodontics, Pediatric Dentistry, Oral Health)
- Prosthodontics
- Orthodontics and
- Oral Surgery/Maxillofacial Surgery

At the moment, the prosthodontic and orthodontic disciplines are not covered by a full-time specialist at AAB College (see Table 1).

Teachers	Discipline		full-time	part-time
Astrit Kici	Restorative-Endodontics		x	
Avdyl Shoshi	Surgery-Maxillofacial		x	
Blerta Bruçi	RestorativePeriodontics	PhD cand	x	
Enis Ahmedi	Prosthodontics	PhD cand		x
Jehona Ahmedi	Surgery-Oral	PhD cand		x
Milaim Sejdini	Orthodontics			x
Rrezarta Bajrami Halili	Restorative	PhD cand		x
Rushit Jashari	General Dentist		x	
Teuta Kutllovci	Restorative-Pedodontic, Public Health		x	
Zana Dalipi	RestorativePeriodontics			x

Table 1: Academic staff for the Dentistry program (only dental subjects)

Every dental discipline must be covered by a full-time dentist not later when the students start working in the preclinical and clinical courses. The Teacher has to be present the whole time during dental clinic treatment for supervisory responsibilities. During discussions with the teachers it was mentioned, that they have a lot of dentists on a waiting list who haven't signed a working contract yet, because the study program is at this time not accredited. This might change after the program is accredited.

Some staff members have already went abroad to participate in some research projects and a few have already earned an international PhD.

A training program for lecturers and teaching assistants, to improve the quality of teaching and research environment for the AAB Academic staff by enhancing their knowledge and pedagogical skills was presented in the additional documents requested.

The ET suggests having a maximum number of 25 student admissions per year in the dental department due to the number of teachers and supervision expenditures in clinic and research in the dentistry program.

(3) International Cooperation's and Research

International collaborations to the following universities exist:

- Faculty of Medicine in Tirana, Albania
- Aldent College in Tirana, Albania
- Dental Clinic in Graz, Austria

Detailed list of publications (peer reviewed journals, textbooks, conference proceedings, abstracts) of the teaching staff for regional and international were provided in the CVs. As mentioned in (2) Personal, some staff members have already went abroad to participate in some research projects and a few have already earned an international PhD. The meeting with the teachers revealed, that there is a tight connection with the Dental Clinic of the Medical University in Graz, Austria, especially with Prof. Walther Wegscheider and one Kosovarion PhD candidat in his department, which will enable future international co-operations.

(4) Finances and Infrastructure

Lecture and seminar rooms are present, as well as the study program management infrastructure with student office.

For the practical part of the Dentistry study program, it is planned to perform preclinical and clinical subjects at the AAB College building. Therefore a Dental Laboratory and a staffed Dental Clinic have to be installed. During site visit it was present that the AAB building structure allows these planned projects, and in case of higher space requirement in the future a new building is constructed at this time in closed proximity.

At the moment at the dental clinic space only two dental chairs were visible and some dental equipment were visible, but a contract with the Company Dentsply Sirona was presented where the following equipment:

- 25 Sirona Treatment Centers
- 25 Phantom Heads
- 50 simulation mouths
- 50 phantoms for endodontic treatment
- 50 surgical phantoms

will be bought and in place if the study program is accredited. A panoramic x-ray machine is already in place. A cone beam (Galileos, Sirona) is planned.

The device is digital and state of the art to educate students with digital radiology techniques and treat patients with reduced radiation exposure.

Dental Laboratory equipment was visible, but at the moment the Laboratory is not run.

The planned number of chairs and phantom heads is now suitable for 25 students, if the students number should be raised much more investments concerning infrastructure (space, chairs) must be performed.

(5) Quality management

A Central Quality Insurance Office (CQAO) and Quality Assurance Committee is installed since 2005. For every study program a Quality Assurance Coordinator is appointed (SER pages 351-367).

Recommendation by the Expert Panel:

The Dentistry program can only be accredited with certain restrictions. The number of students in the study program must be limited to 25.

The accreditation should be limited for one year. The ET is aware that the accreditation period should be 3 years, however, since this one year period is critical for the implementation of important new additions and changes to the curriculum and infrastructure (dental chairs, phantom devices, diploma thesis with 20-30 ECTS), it is advised to subject the program to re-accreditation in one year!

Sectoral Management

Academic Program and Student Management:

The mission of AAB College is to create an “academically friendly environment”, to contribute actively to social and economic development and to implement quality programs of international cooperation in higher education and scientific research (SER, p. 4). The intention of the program is very ambitious, i.e. to provide knowledge, skills and values which are useful for professional management tasks in four sectors: education, health care, culture, and sports.

On the occasion of reaccreditation, AAB restructured the program by dividing it into two stages: (1) a professional master path with 60 ECTS conferring to graduates the title “Professional Master in Sectoral Management” after successful completion of the first year, and (2) conferring the title “Master of Science in Sectoral Management” to students who successfully completed the entire program (two years) with 120 ECTS. For both groups of students, subjects, assessments, workload and ECTS are the same in the first year.

As was explained at the site visit, main emphasis in semesters one and two is on operational management institutional management, while in semesters three and four, the focus is on the “systems view” on management and research. In the curriculum, there are three main types of courses: (1) courses which impart knowledge and skills in general management, (2) courses which integrate sector-specific exercises, and (3) courses which are completely sector-specific which is also indicated in the titles of the courses concerned.

The program corresponds to AAB’s mission partially. It meets the colleges’ objectives to support lifelong learning by providing further education for part-time students. However, the program does not fully correspond to the institutions’ mission in some respects. For instance, there are no international cooperation activities directly linked to the program. References to international study programs are made only vaguely and do not provide reliable or useful information. Thus, it is not possible to assess the correspondence of the program to the institutions’ mission positively with regard to international cooperation.

The rationale of the program is not fully convincing. It claims to have four main emphases, but there is no evidence that four main emphases are really needed. This becomes clear when taking a look at the figures on past student numbers. Since

2014/15, there were only 5 students in the specialization fields of sports and 1 in culture. In 2016/17, there are no students in sports and culture at all. However, the forecast on student numbers until 2019/20 expects a sudden rise of students in sports and culture up the level of 30 students in each branch every year, beginning 2017/18. Taking into account the past development, this forecast does not seem realistic, since one can hardly expect that the demand for specializations in sports and culture will explode within one year.

With regard to the labor market prospects of the graduates, the college is highly recommended to check its figures on the employment rates of graduates. In the SER (p. 342), it says that 64% of the graduates from 2014/15 were unemployed, and 55% of the graduates from 2015/16. Hopefully, these figures are wrong, since this would mean that there is no need for the program.

The curriculum as it is described in the SER has some weaknesses, too. It became apparent that no overarching didactic concept does exist in writing so far. The general didactic concept seems to be developed largely informal. Once a year, teachers have to submit the syllabi for their courses to the faculty council which then assesses the syllabi. However, it remained unclear which didactic principles are applied in examining the syllabi. In the curriculum, there is not much differentiation between course types. In the education-branch of the curriculum, the only course type for students is lectures, whereas in the three other branches a combination of lectures and exercises is the case (SER, p. 39ff.).

In the course descriptions, no exercises are mentioned as distinct course type at all although there in several courses exercises are being claimed as the “main part of the work”. During the site visit, these discrepancies were explained that the program follows an “integrated approach”. However, this can also be understood as a lack of elaboration and differentiation of the didactic concept. With regard to detaching methods, approaches such as case study and methods of adult education were mentioned as examples.

The curriculum could profit very much from a systematic distinction between lectures and other types of courses, particularly exercises and project-based courses where theoretical and methodical knowledge and skills are applied to practice-oriented problems and situations. In the next step, the particular teaching methods could be elaborated with regard to different course types.

Course descriptions need improvement in general. There are several courses with good definitions of learning objectives, but, unfortunately, there are few courses which are entirely well-defined, in terms of elaboration of all parts (learning objectives, contents, teaching methods and forms of assessment including literature) at a high level. Some courses lack of well-defined learning objectives; instead, formulations such as making students “familiar” with a subject or similar formulations can be found. Other formulations are not learning objectives as understood in the didactics of higher education. In some courses, contents do not seem to correspond to the course title, such as the course on Communication and Conflict Management in Organizations. Here, one could assume that – following the institutions aim to provide practice-oriented skills - students would learn practical methods of conflict management. However, following the description if the course content, this is not the case, since students learn about society and processes of social developments, which is a theoretical foundation, but not the methods of conflict management. Other courses, which are supposed to impart skills for all branches, contain only short and vague formulations on teaching contents. Again, in other course descriptions information on literature is missing.

Another feature of the curriculum is the continuous emphasis on research done by students in most of the courses. During the site visit, it turned out that “research” as a term is used in its broadest meaning including different forms of investigation and inquiry, too. Regarding the imparting of research skills, there is a structural fault in the curriculum: In the first semester, there is a course on “Data Analysis for Institutional Development”, which is a very specialized topic that requires basic knowledge in research methodology. However, the introductory course on “Scientific Research Methods” is only later in semester two. Here, the structure of the curriculum should follow the idea of increasing complexity in the course of the study. This would mean to reverse the sequence of these courses.

In the SER, there is no explanation of how ECTS are calculated and the calculation scheme could not be explained during the site visit, too. During the site visit, responsible persons did not explain plausibly, how they calculate the workload. An inconsistent premise was made that 1 ECTS may vary from 25 to 30 hours, which was explained by the students’ different needs and the professors’ personal estimation how much the students would have to invest in order to reach the learning outcomes. As a result, parts of the students could be assigned more workload than

others to ensure that they achieve the same learning outcomes. However, it is difficult to understand, why this should be reasonable since ECTS calculations are supposed to be maximum provisions anyway. If some groups of students need more support to achieve learning objectives, it would be reasonable to provide support courses for these particular groups of students. In general, the same standardized scheme for ECTS calculation must be used for all courses and students.

It is also interesting that in the curriculum matrixes of the SER (p. 39ff.), the maximum number of ECTS per course is 6 (with usually two lectures/exercises per course), while in the course descriptions usually 8 ECTS are attributed to a course (with 2 lectures/exercises per course, too). These contradictions in the calculation of ECTS add to the general impression that the curriculum did not went through all stages of professional quality review accurately.

In the student meeting, the expert received the information that the practical organization of study life is divided into three groups: (1) the “regular” group which attends courses from Monday to Friday during office hours, (2) the “irregular” group which attends courses from Monday to Friday after 4.00 pm, and (3) the “Saturday” group which attends courses only on Saturday. It was very helpful to learn about this mode of organization of study from the students, since this was not mentioned in the SER.

For students, it can be assumed that the program gives sufficient opportunity for independent study, reflection and analysis. This was much appreciated by students. Since the attribution of ECTS to courses is quite generous, it appears to be plausible that there were no complaints about the workload. AAB College provides solid e-services to teachers and professors, which is an important measure to support students pursuing a college degree while working and to support independent study. Also, the teacher/student ratio is fair.

The admission criteria follow the general criteria which are used for enrolment in master studies.

Recommendations:

- Develop an elaborated overarching didactic concept of the program on the basis of significant learning outcomes for all courses in writing.
- Integrate a greater variety of course types to improve coherence of teaching methods and course descriptions.
- Improve course descriptions rigidly and systematically.

- Apply one standardized, transparent ECTS calculation scheme to all courses.
- Rearrange the sequence of the courses mentioned.
- Revise the rationale and the main emphases of the program based on realistic forecasts and realistic labor market needs.

Staff:

With respect to the number of students in the program, the proportion of permanent and external staff seems sufficient.

In the meeting with professors of AAB, one regular staff member and two external teachers were present. Without doubt, professors are highly motivated. Yet, it must be emphasized that the external teachers did not seem to be fully integrated in the teaching organization and therefore it was difficult for them to provide information on teaching and research skills.

During the site visit, persons responsible for the program described the activities of academic staff development to be based on the institutions strategy, on labor market needs and on the results of student evaluations. However, no concrete explanations on the contents of workshops for teachers and the coverage of these workshops were given. Therefore, the training plan was requested by the expert as an additional document to get an idea about the main topics of academic staff development. Actually, what was submitted was a plan for future trainings on several topics relevant to didactics.

From the CVs of teaching staff, which were requested as additional documents, it can be learned that several teachers have teaching experiences at universities and members of the academic staff have experiences at foreign universities, too. Unfortunately, the CVs submitted are not complete and for several teachers assigned to courses in the SER no CVs were provided. Overall, one can assume that the academic staff has a solid level of teaching experience, however, due to the incomplete list of CVs no complete assessment can be made.

Research and International Cooperation:

Neither in the SER, nor in in the meeting with professors ongoing international cooperation in research related to the program has been reported.

From the meetings with the responsible persons of the program and the meeting with the teaching staff, it can be concluded that there is no regular research program and

no regular scheme for internal funding of research projects of staff members. This corresponds to the highly practice-oriented approach of the study program, however, in this case it must be doubted how the program keeps up with the “high standards of academic and research life” as is claimed in the SER (p. 4).

Although the SER (p. 385ff.) contains a section on the activities of the college to establish research centers, no concrete examples were given how the teaching staff is involved in research projects.

The program integrates the research dimension at the course level, which means that the students are supposed to develop the research skills, but no targeted activities were mentioned with regard to the involvement of teachers in research projects and/or the further training of teachers in scientific methodology.

As was pointed out above, students are encouraged to practice various types of investigation and research in several courses, which also represents an important the approach of the program in terms of independent study.

Recommendations:

- Develop a research plan to integrate full-time teaching staff.
- Make research an obligation for full-time teaching staff.
- Set up quality criteria for research with a focus on international publication.
- Set up an internal funding scheme for program-related research activities.
- Develop an internal scheme for training teaching staff in research methodologies and integrate part-time teaching staff through activities of knowledge transfer.
- Start hiring PhD students and assign them tasks in teaching and research.

Finances and Infrastructure/Space and Equipment:

The infrastructure of AAB College meets the requirements for the program to a very large extent. Buildings, seminar rooms and teaching facilities such as computer labs are in very good condition.

The only exception is the poor library stock on economic, business and management literature. There is strong need to invest in up-to-date books and digital resources (e-books, e-journals, scientific databases).

Recommendations:

- Invest in up-to-date literature and digital resources.

Quality Management:

The process of program review was explained during the site visit and the procedures practically correspond to the description in the SER. Program review is done at an annual basis managed by the Quality Assurance office. The dean of the faculty sends a list of questions to “about 20 to 30 people” to collect information on needs for improvement and the syllabi. Then the dean of the faculty examines the syllabi and the curriculum and forwards this information to the Quality Assurance Committee which has the task to analyze students’ workload, ECTS calculations, methods of examination and compliance with the principles of the college.

Students confirmed that regular evaluation of courses is done and students’ opinions are appreciated in general. In the student meeting, it was also reported that currently a new student initiative is being founded that aims at contributing to the further development of the program by creating new ideas for improvement. Experts highly acknowledge this ambitious initiative.

Recommendations:

- Continue improvement of procedures for program review on an annual basis systematically in order to improve the structure, the contents, and the descriptions of the program.
- In general, the quality of future SERs should be improvement significantly.

Summary and final recommendation:

There are many serious deficiencies in the study program, which was submitted for re-accreditation in a revised version. The comments the institution gave on the draft report could not dissolve the discrepancies and shortcomings of the SER and the information received in the site visit. The Master Program “Sectoral Management” cannot be recommended for re-accreditation. AAB College is recommended to take time for a systematic and consistent revision of the program.

Graphic and Visual Design

Introduction

The external expert, Professor Bruce Brown, received a full set of documentation before the site visit and would like to thank colleagues at AAB for the care and attention they gave to the preparation of this material as well as to arrangements made for the site visit. This included a very comprehensive exhibition of student work that was most helpful to see. This gave the formal documentation a strong sense of reality as well as providing worked examples of student assessment. The team of experts received a full briefing from the senior management of AAB that proved to be very helpful in setting out the strategic ambitions for the university. As a relatively young institution with a strong upward trajectory, and clear ambitions, it may be an appropriate moment for the institution to reflect upon its frameworks for quality assurance and enhancement, as they impact at programme level, simply to ensure the best student experience during a period of growth.

1. Academic Programmes and Student Management

- The Graphic and Visual Design BA academic programme corresponds to the institution's mission statement and principles of operation. It is specifically aimed at helping to promote the local creative industries in Kosovo and to bring these to the attention of an international audience.
- The programme's quality, range and academic aims seek to provide each student with the requisite skills to secure employment upon graduation. Against this is the need to ensure that students acquire the lifelong learning skills that will equip them to continually adapt to media industries in a state of continuous change. This is a difficult balance to get right between the skills needed for first destination jobs and the intellectual flexibility to sustain lifelong careers. The programme staff are aware of this tension and intend to develop both the curriculum and assessment regime accordingly as the programme matures.
- The programme documentation has been well produced to meet the needs of accreditation. However, just from reading the documentation, it was difficult to discern a clear mission for the programme that made it distinctive in the sector, both locally and nationally. In this respect the documentation by itself had little academic character — though this is often the nature of such material. This said, in discussion

with the staff team during the site-visit meetings made it clear that there was an ambition for the course that had not found its way into the documentation provided for accreditation.

- It is fair to say that the programme in Graphic and Visual Design is both well-established and still maturing. It is also the case that the programme is staffed by highly-qualified and ambitious academics who are well aware of international standards. In this respect the programme is aimed at meeting, if not exceeding, international standards for such a programme.
- The structure of the programme is largely project based so providing time for independent study and critical reflection within the majority of the modules. There is also space for students to propose a major project. This said the learning outcomes for each assignment are not sufficiently refined to (i) make clear what is expected of the student (ii) be used as a learning tool to assist the process of critical reflection.
- The allocation of ECTS is appropriate and justified.
- The external expert had a meeting with a wide selection of students drawn from across the programme and including recent graduates. The students were very supportive of the quality of their experience on the programme and of the contribution made by academic staff to this. Not only did the students confirm that they found the workload required for the academic programme to be manageable but suggested that they would have preferred more lessons to have been made available.
- The academic programme in Graphic and Visual Design is geared towards delivering the skills required by the professions and in assisting students to secure a first destination job. In this respect the teaching methods and course content are appropriate. However, if the academic programme also aspires to provide each student with the intellectual skills and competencies to sustain a lifelong career in a changing world then there may be further work to be done on the teaching methods, learning outcomes and assessment criteria.
- The teaching and delivery methods are largely project based. In this respect the curriculum incorporates all of those elements one would expect to see in an academic programme of this kind. Their presentation is lucid and accessible.
- The admission criteria and admission procedures are typical of what once might expect of an academic programme of this kind within an international context.

2. Staff

- The ratio of academic/artistic staff to students is appropriate as is the balance of full-time to part-time staff.
- The academic programme in Graphic and Visual Design is fortunate to have a group of highly talented academic staff. They are well experienced in their respective professional domains and conversant with international practices. Because academic programmes of this nature have a highly vocational element it is important that the institution continues to provide support with the development of learning and teaching strategies and with academic research undertaken by staff.

3. Research and International Cooperation

- AAB provides a reasonable infrastructure to support staff research. This said, a more strategic approach that will support staff in developing their own publications strategies may help to stimulate production. There are many thematic areas for research that are intrinsic to local conditions in Kosova and relevant to an international audience.
- It is evident, as in most other institutions, that academic staff will prioritise their responsibilities to students at the expense of their own research. In this respect it may be helpful for the institution to give staff some expectation of what they should produce/publish, the timescales for this and an agreed plan of work.
- There is an institutional gain in providing such support for staff research. As academics begin to publish papers in international journals, or mount exhibitions, then so does the reputation and standing of the institution gain an international presence in academic circles. Many institutions now help staff to get their papers published given the reputation this gives the home institution.
- In the creative arts research is also part of the undergraduate student experience given that the pedagogic approach is one of knowledge construction (rather than knowledge transmission). The development of arts students as reflective practitioners with enquiring minds is the modus operandi. In this case the more active are the academic staff then so does the student experience benefit through this. In this respect more could be done at AAB in coming years to stimulate quality staff research and its translation back into the student experience.
- The academic staff are aware of international standards and many of them do

have strong international networks. Many have returned to Kosova after periods spent either studying or teaching in prestigious international institutions. This is a valuable asset that helps to give work in AAB an international currency alongside a distinctive regional character. This said, the formal links for academics and students to benefit from international co-operations are limited (possibly through visa restrictions and funding). I'm not sure that I can make recommendations in this respect other than to say that any formal arrangements that would help to further develop international co-operation would be beneficial.

- As mentioned above students would benefit from more opportunity involved in research and cooperation projects.

4. Finances and Infrastructure/Space and Equipment

- The institution has an adequate budget plan for current levels of operation. The nature of future investments, however, were not entirely clear where the growth in student numbers will impact upon workshop facilities. This includes specialist IT packages for visual imaging and fabrication spaces for, for example, animation, textiles production (both print, sew and knit), fashion cutting and basic model making.

- The institution is fortunate to have a good physical infrastructure in which to house its programmes and the capacity for future development as the student population grows. The need for future strategic planning of physical workshop and lab spaces in the creative arts is essential. Often such investment is eclipsed by the need to fund 'big' science facilities. In this context under investment in arts workshops is typical and to be avoided if the highest standards of excellence are to be achieved.

5. Quality Management

- The institution's programmes are assessed regularly within the context of internal evaluation processes.
- However, the institution is clearly going through a period of growth and change. As the infrastructure grows and the academic community increases in size it is likely that new approaches to quality assurance and enhancement will be needed if the highest standards of excellence are to be sustained. Without continuous refinement to the quality assurance infrastructure it is likely that standards will either

be static or drop as the population continues to grow.

- Moreover, the quality assurance and enhancement procedures should feed back into the continuous refinement of programme documentation that is the official contract with students. At the moment the programme documentation appears to have been responsibly written but a bureaucratic exercise solely intended to meet accreditation requirements. It was clear from talking to the academic team that more ideas and approaches were evident but that these had not found their way into the quality assurance process and formal documentation.

6. Summary and recommendations

During the site visit, meetings were held with senior management and the programme team. An exhibition of student work had also been arranged with a comprehensive range of projects on show. This allowed the external expert to test a range of assessment grades with the programme staff looking at high, middle and low grades. From this sampling the external expert was entirely satisfied with the quality of the assessment process and its operation by the programme staff. Meetings with the programme team were also helpful in establishing a high degree of confidence in their operation of the programme and ambitions for the future. Meetings with students further confirmed this confidence and their vocal support for their experience on the programme. The students were particularly appreciative of the support received from academic staff and their dedication to the programme.

In view of the outcomes from this site visit it is recommended that the academic programme in Graphic and Visual Design BA continue in accreditation for a further period of three years with a total student population of 150 fte.

The following further recommendations are included as an outcome of the site visit and discussions with colleagues at AAB:

- Formal documentation for the academic programme should be developed to include:

- A clear statement of mission and values for the programme that set out its distinctive character, both locally and internationally, along with the pedagogic principles that will help students to acquire the competencies through which to sustain lifelong careers.

- A better articulation of learning outcomes so that students can see more clearly what is expected of them at assessment. Also, that the learning outcomes are sufficiently precise so to help guide the student learning experience (rather than being more generalized in nature).

- The overall quality assurance and enhancement process (both at institutional and its impact at programme level) would benefit from further reflection given the developing nature of the institution and planned growth in the student population. The annual quality assurance and enhancement process at programme level should be designed to feed into the formal planning process and the continuous refinement of programme documentation so that it is more than an administrative requirement and supports the student experience.

- There should be further consideration of strategic approaches to the development of staff research. The local context provides rich material that is distinctive. Academic staff are enthusiastic about such work but the environment is still maturing for such work. At this stage of development it may be helpful to give staff a clearer expectation of their publication/exhibition strategy along with support for this.

- Subsequent to the above, more systematic strategies to help embed the spirit of research, as a process of enquiry, into the undergraduate experience would help to further enrich it for students.

- Though visa restrictions may be inhibiting further opportunities for international student collaborations should be explored along with funding mechanisms to support this.

- Student loading should be reviewed. Without creating bottlenecks in the workload or assessment, students suggested that they would appreciate a greater number of classes.

- The future funding and development of workshops and labs in the arts and design is essential. These are often overlooked when set against the needs of science. As student numbers grow there will need to be a clear plan for specialist IT facilities using high level imaging software, fashion and textiles production facilities and general fabrication facilities for model making and laser cutting.

- A strategy could be developed to more visibly place AAB on the international map of arts education perhaps through placing staff research in important international research journals along with other approaches.

Fashion Design

Introduction

The external expert, Professor Bruce Brown, received a full set of documentation before the site visit and would like to thank colleagues at AAB for the care and attention they gave to the preparation of this material as well as to arrangements made for the site visit. This included a very comprehensive exhibition of student work that was most helpful to see. This gave the formal documentation a strong sense of reality as well as providing worked examples of student assessment. The team of experts received a full briefing from the senior management of AAB that proved to be very helpful in setting out the strategic ambitions for the university. As a relatively young institution with a strong upward trajectory, and clear ambitions, it may be an appropriate moment for the institution to reflect upon its frameworks for quality assurance and enhancement, as they impact at programme level, simply to ensure the best student experience during a period of growth.

1. Academic Programmes and Student Management

- The Graphic and Visual Design BA academic programme corresponds to the institution's mission statement and principles of operation. It is specifically aimed at helping to promote the local creative industries in Kosovo and to bring these to the attention of an international audience.
- The programme's quality, range and academic aims seek to provide each student with the requisite skills to secure employment upon graduation. Against this is the need to ensure that students acquire the lifelong learning skills that will equip them to continually adapt to media industries in a state of continuous change. This is a difficult balance to get right between the skills needed for first destination jobs and the intellectual flexibility to sustain lifelong careers. The programme staff are aware of this tension and intend to develop both the curriculum and assessment regime accordingly as the programme matures.
- The programme documentation has been well produced to meet the needs of accreditation. However, just from reading the documentation, it was difficult to discern a clear mission for the programme that made it distinctive in the sector, both locally and nationally. In this respect the documentation by itself had little academic character — though this is often the nature of such material. This said, in discussion

with the staff team during the site-visit meetings made it clear that there was an ambition for the course that had not found its way into the documentation provided for accreditation.

- It is fair to say that the programme in Graphic and Visual Design is both well-established and still maturing. It is also the case that the programme is staffed by highly-qualified and ambitious academics who are well aware of international standards. In this respect the programme is aimed at meeting, if not exceeding, international standards for such a programme.
- The structure of the programme is largely project based so providing time for independent study and critical reflection within the majority of the modules. There is also space for students to propose a major project. This said the learning outcomes for each assignment are not sufficiently refined to (i) make clear what is expected of the student (ii) be used as a learning tool to assist the process of critical reflection.
- The allocation of ECTS is appropriate and justified.
- The external expert had a meeting with a wide selection of students drawn from across the programme and including recent graduates. The students were very supportive of the quality of their experience on the programme and of the contribution made by academic staff to this. Not only did the students confirm that they found the workload required for the academic programme to be manageable but suggested that they would have preferred more lessons to have been made available.
- The academic programme in Graphic and Visual Design is geared towards delivering the skills required by the professions and in assisting students to secure a first destination job. In this respect the teaching methods and course content are appropriate. However, if the academic programme also aspires to provide each student with the intellectual skills and competencies to sustain a lifelong career in a changing world then there may be further work to be done on the teaching methods, learning outcomes and assessment criteria.
- The teaching and delivery methods are largely project based. In this respect the curriculum incorporates all of those elements one would expect to see in an academic programme of this kind. Their presentation is lucid and accessible.
- The admission criteria and admission procedures are typical of what once might expect of an academic programme of this kind within an international context.

2. Staff

- The ratio of academic/artistic staff to students is appropriate as is the balance of full-time to part-time staff.
- The academic programme in Graphic and Visual Design is fortunate to have a group of highly talented academic staff. They are well experienced in their respective professional domains and conversant with international practices. Because academic programmes of this nature have a highly vocational element it is important that the institution continues to provide support with the development of learning and teaching strategies and with academic research undertaken by staff.

3. Research and International Cooperation

- AAB provides a reasonable infrastructure to support staff research. This said, a more strategic approach that will support staff in developing their own publications strategies may help to stimulate production. There are many thematic areas for research that are intrinsic to local conditions in Kosova and relevant to an international audience.
- It is evident, as in most other institutions, that academic staff will prioritise their responsibilities to students at the expense of their own research. In this respect it may be helpful for the institution to give staff some expectation of what they should produce/publish, the timescales for this and an agreed plan of work.
- There is an institutional gain in providing such support for staff research. As academics begin to publish papers in international journals, or mount exhibitions, then so does the reputation and standing of the institution gain an international presence in academic circles. Many institutions now help staff to get their papers published given the reputation this gives the home institution.
- In the creative arts research is also part of the undergraduate student experience given that the pedagogic approach is one of knowledge construction (rather than knowledge transmission). The development of arts students as reflective practitioners with enquiring minds is the modus operandi. In this case the more active are the academic staff then so does the student experience benefit through this. In this respect more could be done at AAB in coming years to stimulate quality staff research and its translation back into the student experience.
- The academic staff are aware of international standards and many of them do

have strong international networks. Many have returned to Kosova after periods spent either studying or teaching in prestigious international institutions. This is a valuable asset that helps to give work in AAB an international currency alongside a distinctive regional character. This said, the formal links for academics and students to benefit from international co-operations are limited (possibly through visa restrictions and funding). I'm not sure that I can make recommendations in this respect other than to say that any formal arrangements that would help to further develop international co-operation would be beneficial.

- As mentioned above students would benefit from more opportunity involved in research and cooperation projects.

4. Finances and Infrastructure/Space and Equipment

- The institution has an adequate budget plan for current levels of operation. The nature of future investments, however, were not entirely clear where the growth in student numbers will impact upon workshop facilities. This includes specialist IT packages for visual imaging and fabrication spaces for, for example, animation, textiles production (both print, sew and knit), fashion cutting and basic model making.

- The institution is fortunate to have a good physical infrastructure in which to house its programmes and the capacity for future development as the student population grows. The need for future strategic planning of physical workshop and lab spaces in the creative arts is essential. Often such investment is eclipsed by the need to fund 'big' science facilities. In this context under investment in arts workshops is typical and to be avoided if the highest standards of excellence are to be achieved.

5. Quality Management

- The institution's programmes are assessed regularly within the context of internal evaluation processes.

- However, the institution is clearly going through a period of growth and change. As the infrastructure grows and the academic community increases in size it is likely that new approaches to quality assurance and enhancement will be needed if the highest standards of excellence are to be sustained. Without continuous refinement to the quality assurance infrastructure it is likely that standards will either

be static or drop as the population continues to grow.

- Moreover, the quality assurance and enhancement procedures should feed back into the continuous refinement of programme documentation that is the official contract with students. At the moment the programme documentation appears to have been responsibly written but a bureaucratic exercise solely intended to meet accreditation requirements. It was clear from talking to the academic team that more ideas and approaches were evident but that these had not found their way into the quality assurance process and formal documentation.

6. Summary and recommendations

During the site visit, meetings were held with senior management and the programme team. An exhibition of student work had also been arranged with a comprehensive range of projects on show. This allowed the external expert to test a range of assessment grades with the programme staff looking at high, middle and low grades. From this sampling the external expert was entirely satisfied with the quality of the assessment process and its operation by the programme staff. Meetings with the programme team were also helpful in establishing a high degree of confidence in their operation of the programme and ambitions for the future. Meetings with students further confirmed this confidence and their vocal support for their experience on the programme. The students were particularly appreciative of the support received from academic staff and their dedication to the programme. In view of the outcomes from this site visit it is recommended that the academic programme in Fashion Design BA continue in accreditation for a further period of three years with a total student population of 120 fte.

The following further recommendations are included as an outcome of the site visit and discussions with colleagues at AAB:

- Formal documentation for the academic programme should be developed to include:
 - A clear statement of mission and values for the programme that set out its distinctive character, both locally and internationally, along with the pedagogic principles that will help students to acquire the competencies through which to sustain lifelong careers.

- A better articulation of learning outcomes so that students can see more clearly what is expected of them at assessment. Also, that the learning outcomes are sufficiently precise so to help guide the student learning experience (rather than being more generalized in nature).
- The overall quality assurance and enhancement process (both at institutional and its impact at programme level) would benefit from further reflection given the developing nature of the institution and planned growth in the student population. The annual quality assurance and enhancement process at programme level should be designed to feed into the formal planning process and the continuous refinement of programme documentation so that it is more than an administrative requirement and supports the student experience.
- There should be further consideration of strategic approaches to the development of staff research. The local context provides rich material that is distinctive. Academic staff are enthusiastic about such work but the environment is still maturing for such work. At this stage of development it may be helpful to give staff a clearer expectation of their publication/exhibition strategy along with support for this.
- Subsequent to the above, more systematic strategies to help embed the spirit of research, as a process of enquiry, into the undergraduate experience would help to further enrich it for students.
- Though visa restrictions may be inhibiting further opportunities for international student collaborations should be explored along with funding mechanisms to support this.
- Student loading should be reviewed. Without creating bottlenecks in the workload or assessment, students suggested that they would appreciate a greater number of classes.
- The future funding and development of workshops and labs in the arts and design is essential. These are often overlooked when set against the needs of science. As student numbers grow there will need to be a clear plan for specialist IT facilities using high level imaging software, fashion and textiles production facilities and general fabrication facilities for model making and laser cutting.
- A strategy could be developed to more visibly place AAB on the international map of arts education perhaps through placing staff research in important international research journals along with other approaches.