

**Accreditation of Study Programmes
AAB College 2016**

Evaluation Report

by the team of experts,
assessing twelve study programmes of AAB College

May 16th, 2016

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction.....	4
1.1.	Preparation	4
1.2.	Experts and assigned study programmes.....	4
1.3.	On-site visit	4
1.4.	Meeting with institutional management	5
2.	Management and Informatics (MA, re-accreditation).....	6
2.1.	Academic programmes and student management.....	6
2.2.	Staff, research and international cooperation	8
2.3.	Finances and Infrastructure / Space and Equipment.....	8
3.	Banking and Finance (MA, reaccreditation)	9
3.1.	Academic programme and student management.....	9
3.2.	Staff, research and internationalization.....	10
3.3.	Finances and Infrastructure / Space and Equipment	11
4.	Computer Science (BA, reaccreditation).....	11
4.1.	Academic Programmes and Student Management.....	11
4.2.	Staff	15
4.3.	Research and International Co-operation.....	15
4.4.	Finances and Infrastructure/Space and Equipment	16
4.5.	Quality Management	16
4.6.	Implementation of former recommendations.....	16
5.	Computer Science (MA, reaccreditation).....	17
5.1.	Academic Programmes and Student Management	17
5.2.	Staff.....	20
5.3.	Research and International Co-operation.....	20
5.4.	Finances and Infrastructure/Space and Equipment	20
5.5.	Quality Management	21
5.6.	Implementation of former recommendations.....	21
6.	General observations to Arts and Applied Arts Study Programmes	22
7.	Musicology (BA, reaccreditation)	23
8.	Interior Design (BA, reaccreditation)	24
9.	Painting and Visual Arts (BA, reaccreditation).....	25
10.	Graphic Design (MA, accreditation)	26
10.1.	Academic programmes and student management.....	26
10.2.	Research International Co-operation.....	27
10.3.	Finance and infrastructure / Space and Equipment.....	27
10.4.	Quality management.....	27
11.	Mass Communication and Journalism (BA and MA programmes)	28
11.1.	The general characterization of the programmes.....	28
11.2.	Mass communication (BA, re-accreditation).....	28
11.4.	Conclusion.....	30

12.	English Language (BA and MA, reaccreditation)	30
12.1.	Academic Programmes and Student Management.....	31
12.2.	Staff	34
12.3.	Research and International Co-operation	35
12.4.	Finances and Infrastructure/Space and Equipment	35
13.	Proposal for the decision on accreditation and reaccreditation	36

1. Introduction

The present document contains the final evaluation report 2016 on AAB College, Kosovo (*college*). It is the result of the collegial work of an international team of experts (ET) appointed by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) to evaluate twelve study programmes. The report bases on the self evaluation report (SER) of the college, the visit of the expert group in the college on 16th of May 2016 and further information of the college, asked by the expert group.

1.1. Preparation

The college submitted a detailed SER as the central document for the accreditation of the study programmes. The report has 617 pages and contains a brief description of the institution's history, study programmes under evaluation, staff, students, quality assurance, infrastructure, research, financing, plan for the implementation recommendations from the last recommendation and six appendices. The SER and other documents were made available to the expert team on 5.05.2016.

1.2. Experts and assigned study programmes

- Prof. Dr. Miha Škerlavaj/ Norwegian Business School (NO): Management and informatics/MA and Banking and Finances/MA.
- Prof. Dr. Peeter Normak/ Tallinn University (EE): Computer Science and Software Engineering/BA and Computer Science/MA.
- Prof. Dr. Thomas Bauer/ University of Vienna (AT): Mass Communication and Journalism/BA and MA.
- Prof. Alan Brickwood/ Higher Education Consultant (UK) and Mr. Stroud Cornock/ Higher Education Consultant (UK): 1) Musicology/BA 2) Painting and Visual Arts/BA, 3) Interior Design/BA, 4) Graphic Design/MA.
- Assoc. Prof. Dr. Karmen Pižorn, University of Ljubljana (SI): English Language/BA and English Language/MA.

1.3. On-site visit

On May 15th, the five experts gathered in the evening for a preliminary working dinner together with three members of the KAA:

- Ms Furtuna Mehmeti, Acting Director of KAA
- Mr Fisnik Gashi, Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring
- Mr. Shkelzen Gerxhaliu, Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring

They talked about their first impressions of the SER and the programme for the on-site visit (OSV) at the following day.

The OSV took place as planned. The scheduled OSV started in the morning of 16th with a meeting with the management of the institution from 9.00-9.30 (see below), followed with the meetings with the responsible persons for the study programmes (9.30-11.30),

visit to facilities (11.30-12.30), lunch and discussions of ET and participating KAA members (12.30-14.00), meeting with academic staff (14.00-15.00) and with students (15.00-16.00).

The visit ended with short consultations of ET and KAA (16.00-16.15) and a final meeting with the management of the institution (16.15-16.25).

1.4. Meeting with institutional management

It was noted that the Law on higher education in Kosovo has been amended to enable the institution to appoint staff to the rank of full professor, which will overcome problems of high turnover associated with restrictions that have applied to date.

AAB senior management identified priority for subject development within the institution's strategic framework as: Mass Communication and Journalism, Computer Science, Nursing and the research centres.

The ET was pleased to learn of further structural developments resulting in the delegation of further responsibility to Faculties for Academic Programmes and Student Management, Staff, Research and International Cooperation, Finances and Infrastructure/Space and Equipment and, in particular, Quality Management. Changes had produced significant improvements but, from the documentation provided prior to the visit, the ET remained of the view that the implementation of those developments remained patchy.

It was reported that the institution had reviewed scope for distributing and sharing of course-related information and research papers among academic staff, students and the administration and that it had been decided to develop an in-house system that would facilitate use of the Albanian language and the exchange of information with an Albanian diaspora.

There was discussion of maintaining contact with alumni so as to form a bridge between academic and commercial interests.

It was reported that there are good employment opportunities for translators with high-level English skills.

With regard to quality assurance, the institution reported that institutional oversight had been strengthened since 2013 through the harmonisation of components such as the specification of learning outcomes, but it was acknowledged that there is scope for further improvement.

The institution agreed to provide details of the financial components of its strategic plan going forward.

The ET is indebted to AAB for facilitating the site visit. The discussions and the opportunity to see examples of student work, studio and facilities was particularly valuable. The ET would like to thank the College for its hospitality.

In addition, the experts warmly thank the KAA and its representatives for their outstanding support and cooperation before, during and after the visit.

2. Management and Informatics (MA, re-accreditation)

Management and informatics (hereafter M&I) is a two-year, 120 ECTS programme at the MA level. The programme has been accredited before on four occasions and the expert team (ET) is reasonably satisfied with the way suggestions are taken under consideration. However, it is also one of the most frequently offered programmes in the context of Kosovar higher educational system. Hence, it is among the most competitive programmes 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 significantly dropping (207 in year 2014/15 to 132 in 2015/16). At the same time, the programme is still one of the largest programmes offered at AAB at the master level.

2.1. Academic programmes and student management

The M&I programme is considered important, but is not identified in the short-list of strategic priorities of AAB (which are Mass communication, Computer studies, and Nursing). Regardless, the programme responsible should build upon the unique mix of identities and specialties nurtured at AAB in order to strengthen the M&I programme.

It is ET belief that programme responsible need to carefully study the profile of graduates and reconsider its offer. From the conversations with Faculty of Economics staff it became evident that 43% of employed graduates work both as managers within the broader domain of IT and equal part also as specialists. Based on the subsample of students present at the site visit, there is also a significant part of students whose work does not necessarily match the studies chosen and also those that expect to grow into the roles of teachers at AAB. Hence, ET is under impression that part of the declining value proposition of the programme is also to be contributed to its unclear profile. Here, the programme responsible are in the fortunate position of being part of the larger AAB institutional profile where several synergies with other parts of the institution could increase the attractiveness of the programme and reverse the declining number of students. Several urgent and profound changes would be needed.

Recommendations:

- *First, we suggest AAB to conduct a profound analysis of student employment profiles and use it as a basis for programme redefinition in order to increase the attractiveness and relevance of the programme to employers.*
- *Second, we also suggest forming a focus group with alumni and potential employers in order to identify the missing parts within the programme relevant to current organizational reality and future trends.*
- *Third, consider the courses, lectures, and other activities available in tangential faculties at AAB that can contribute to the quality of the programme. Synergies with computer science, media, as well as the psychology should be systematically nurtured and capitalized upon. Topics like big data, social media, intercultural communication and diversity should be more strongly represented. Modes of doing that include both modular forms as well as full courses offered.*

There are several restructuring suggestions that ET would like to offer. We think

that the following changes would contribute to the relevance of the programme design:

- Organizational behavior management should be an obligatory course in semester three.
- IT business analyst should be obligatory course in semester three as well.
- Marketing strategies management and Advance finance management should be elective.
- Add or even co-develop at least one elective course from Computer science (such as big data) and one from Communications (social media) and offer them as elective courses in the M&I programme.
- Scientific research methodology course needs more emphasis in terms of academic writing as well as using modern tools for referencing (e.g. Mendeley) and qualitative methodology (N'VIVO). Based on SER as well as sample of students' master theses, the use of referencing standards is not fully in place. In addition to training in software, applying and controlling for technical standards of academic writing, we also suggest introducing quality controls for both technical adequacy as well as plagiarism (using e.g. the Turnitin platform).

Having said this, we do think that existing programme 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 MA. Programme structure and contents are reasonable and have been pre-accredited. Suggestions for improvement have been readily adopted and implemented to a large extent.

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 students is dropping during the last year. At the same time passing rate is increasing (from 66% in 2013/14 to 88% to 2014/15) and is the highest among masters programmes offered at AAB. The explanation suggested by the faculty was that the quality of the incoming students is increasing by years. As we have no factual proof of the following, ET would like to warn against of the peril of reducing the standards in order to sustain the programme. Compared to other programmes at the school, ET was under the impression that the ease of communication in English has been the lowest for this programme, both among significant part of the faculty as well as among students.

Recommendations:

- *ET suggests using cohort analysis graphs, where group of students are followed from the admission (reporting percentage of rejected, and their test achievement), throughout the programme, as well as their careers several years after the programme completion.*
- *Significant efforts to increase the international component of the programme are warranted via the provision of exchange opportunities, regional and international collaborations, as well as attracting exchange faculty and other adequate measures.*

2.2. Staff, research and international cooperation

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 and student centeredness AAB is striving and diligently working towards. Since the last visit, AAB has made a significant step forward in terms of pulling and pushing faculty to do research and to publish. There is requirement of one publication per year as well as financial support to attend conferences. At the current stage, the most of the output is visible through the conference publications. The strategic direction is towards indexed publications and towards generally accepted criteria at the central public university. Promotion criteria are much clearer to faculty as they have been on previous visits.

Recommendations:

- *We suggest AAB to introduce regular internal research seminars (for start each month or fortnight one), where faculty can present, discuss and contribute to the ongoing research projects.*
- *AAB should invite experienced researchers and editors from international and regional indexed journals of interest to train faculty on how to publish in their respective journals.*
- *AAB should invest funding into proof editing services.*
- *AAB should hire faculty with English (as lingua franca of the management and informatics field) language competences and encourage existing to use it to a greater extent.*

AAB is still 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 all faculty to publish at least one publication each year. 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 programme M&I.

2.3. 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. The infrastructure at the AAB observed during the site visit seems to be impressive, in particular within the new building. Computers are available for students, as well as WiFi and a cafeteria with affordable food. 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 to support social learning methods and only little space is provided for students to meet in groups to work on their projects.

Recommendations:

- *Space for creative and social learning: Seminar rooms should enable social learning methods, e.g., by the possibility to remove and relocate 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 ensure that they can use the learning space.*
- *Projectors in smaller classrooms: All the classrooms need to be equipped with fixed projectors.*

3. Banking and Finance (MA, reaccreditation)

Banking and finance and accounting (hereafter BF) is a two-year, 120 ECTS programme at the MA level. It has been accredited for the first time in 2013, and has replaced MA in financial markets and banks with it more micro-level focus. It is one of the most frequently offered programmes in the context of Kosovar higher educational system. Hence, it is also one of the most competitive programmes in Kosovo HEI market. Despite this, the number of students is steadily increasing (from 83 in 2013/14, to 91 in 2014/15, to current 93 in 2015/16), which ET considers to be an accomplishment and is a combination of several factors, including a well-designed and delivered programme.

Recommendation:

- *ET suggests using cohort analysis graphs, where group of students are followed from the admission (reporting percentage of rejected, and their test achievement), throughout the programme, as well as their careers several years after the programme completion. This will allow for even more informed decisions supporting career placement services.*

3.1. Academic programme and student management

The overall structure, design and delivery of the BFA programme is reasonable and adequate to the learning goals set and profile of the students. Since last visit, programme responsible have developed a learning goal matrix that has the potential of becoming a useful tool in programme management.

Recommendations:

- *ET suggest the AAB to 'close the loop' by measuring attainment of learning goals for programme by cohort of students, create steering committees and address the findings by introducing internal processes of improving the quality. The overall goals should be to increase employability of the students.*
- *SER p. 427 there is a factual mistake in the passing rate of students that accounts for 106%. Please make sure that the basis for calculation in time lagged and that cohorts are followed.*

The programme responsible should not be completely satisfied with the percentage of employed students (38%) that does not exceed the general employment level. The site visit revealed three segments of potential employers: 1) macro financial institutions, e.g.

central bank (in transition and of limited scope), 2) commercial banks (with growing opportunities related to new financial products and services as well as rigorous entrance tests where AAB provides support in mathematical trainings to their students), and 3) accounting and auditing organizations. Banking and financial sector around the globe, and to some extent also in Kosovo is subject to dramatic changes predominantly through digital transformations. This means dramatically restructuring the type of jobs and competencies needed in the sector. Emphasis is on service designers, product development, and fintech innovations. At the same time, Kosovo has some catching up to do in terms of introducing some of the standard financial services known in developed financial markets (such as securities and mortgages). This all has implications for the BF programme.

Recommendation:

- *Further measures to increase employability of graduates are needed. Equally important is to continue with ongoing activities such as internships.*

3.2. Staff, research and internationalization

It is also evident within the field of banking and finance that AAB has competent staff with a mix of teaching and professional experience, and to a lesser extent research. It is obvious from the SER and site-visit that there is a strong culture of teaching quality and student centeredness AAB is striving and diligently working towards. Since the last visit, AAB has taken a significant step forward in terms of pulling and pushing faculty to research and publish. There is a requirement of one publication per year as well as financial support to attend conferences. At the current stage, the most of the output is visible through conference publications. The strategic direction is towards indexed publications and towards generally accepted criteria at the central public university. Promotion criteria are much clearer to faculty than they have been on previous visits.

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component. Most of them overlap with the suggestion how to further develop staff capacity (through research and internationalization) related to the programme Banking and finance.

3.3. 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. The infrastructure at the AAB observed during the site visit seems to be impressive, in particular within the new building. Computers are available for students, as well as WiFi and a cafeteria with affordable food. 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:

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- *Projectors in smaller classrooms: All the classrooms need to be equipped with fixed projectors.*

4. Computer Science (BA, reaccreditation)

This programme was presented for reaccreditation. Previously it got a three-year accreditation in 2013.

The following bases on the documents presented to the expert team, on the site visit and on discussion with some staff members including these coordinating the preparation of the Self-Evaluation Report (SER): Ermir Rogova, Salem Lepaja, Florida Imeri, Arianit Maraj, Mentor Hamiti, Veland Ramadani.

4.1. Academic Programmes and Student Management

The mission statement does not specify any subject area of the college. The administration of the college named computer science, media and mass-communication as priority areas of academic activities. Therefore, although not explicitly stated, the programme would certainly correspond to the mission statement of the college.

The programme has three specialization profiles: 1) *Software Engineering* 2) Telecommunication and Computer Networks and 3) *Mechatronics*. First two years are identical, and the third year is devoted to the specializations. All courses have 6 ECTS, except the Project/Internship (10 ECTS) and Dissertation (16 ECTS). All courses are compulsory except 3rd and 4th semester where there are two options in both from which one should be selected. The titles of the courses are sometimes confusing. Some examples: 1) the study programme contains a course *Project/Internship* (pages 83, 86, 89, 90 of SER), but corresponding course description (p 122 of SER) has the title *Project/Practical application*. 2) the study programme contains a course *Research Methods and Operational Research* (pages 82, 88), corresponding course description (p 104) has the title *Research Methods*, 3) the study programme contains a course *Sensors and Interfaces*, but its course description is completely missing in the SER, 4) the study programme contains a course *Dissertation* (14 ECTS), the corresponding course description (page 122) has the title *Bachelor Thesis* which had 18 ECTS in its content description!).

There is a common list of expected learning outcomes (“Expected Results of Learning”, page 85 of SER, ten learning outcomes in total). These include all competences that are supposed to be developed in specialization profiles as well. It is not adequate, because the students specializing, for example, on software engineering, will for sure not have competences in mechatronics and robotics. Some learning outcomes are formulated in very general terms and do not describe the factual competences of graduates. Examples: “students will be able to: 1) be competitive in the industrial and technological life, becoming part of the economic development of the country and abroad; 2) compete in global markets as individuals or as part of the organization (It was explained that it basically means low unemployment rate of the graduates). No specific learning outcome is formulated for specialization profiles.

Without having a clear understanding of the objectives and the expected learning outcomes, it is not possible to adequately decide about the relevance of each particular course. For example, the relevance of the courses *Electrotechnics Fundamentals*, *Sensors and Interfaces* and *Digital Circuits* can be questioned in the common part (years 1 and 2) while some important topics (for example, *virtualization* and *Internet of Things*) are missing. Discussions about software development methodologies seem to be completely missing. Even the classical waterfall model is only indirectly considered (*Advanced Software Engineering*, page 108). This is also the only course description where *testing* is mentioned.

Recommendations:

- *Revise the list of expected learning outcomes of the programme taking into account that learning outcomes should be: 1) verifiable and 2) applicable to **every** graduate of the programme.*
- *Formulate the expected learning outcomes also for each specialization, and revise the learning outcomes of the courses and their content accordingly.*
- *Research methods course should be compulsory.*

SER does not describe any overarching didactic concept. The assessment is described in the most formal way – the methods of assessment are described for all the courses

identically consisting of: participation on classes (normally 10%), tests/colloquium (normally 60%), practical work and seminars (normally 30%). In the case a student will not pass the test, (s)he should pass the exam.

On the other hand, discussions with the academic staff members allow concluding that academic activities are nevertheless based on sound didactic principles. For example, the teachers explained during the meeting that the college has an individual approach to the students using heavily the electronic platform for supporting e-learning.

The fundamental principles of the design of the programme are not revealed: the programme offers students a variety of different courses without a clear focus. Although the SER claims (page 84) that the study programme is aligned with study plans of different foreign universities (Kingston University, Vienna University of Technology and some others), a closer look at these programmes do not reveal significant similarities. For example, the Computer Science study programme of Kingston University consists of 12 relatively big courses all in software engineering while this of AAB College consists of 28 smaller courses from different areas of computer science. Moreover, the ACM/IEEE curricula recommendations for first cycle computer science programmes are also to a certain degree not followed (although an opposite is claimed on page 577 of SER). The SER group explained that by alignment they had the general principles of composing curricula in mind, not so much the content of study programmes. Nevertheless, the degree corresponds to international standards.

An average course has four hours weekly learning in the classes (in total $15 \times 4 = 60$ hours). Taking into account the fact that the courses have 6 credits, the number of hours for independent work of the students during a course should be 90. It means that supervision and support of independent work of students has important role. The students confirmed that they get sufficient support from the teachers. Therefore, the programme gives sufficient opportunity for independent study, reflection and analysis. Although the guiding principles of composing the programme were not clear neither satisfactory explained, the principle that the programme does not contain courses that have less than 6 ECTS is in general appropriate.

The college uses identical pattern for a course structure – 2 hours lectures and 2 hours exercises a week, and this equally for bachelor and master courses, not depending on the type – theoretical or practical – and objectives of the courses. For example, the *IT Skills* module should basically contain exercises. Bachelor students normally have not developed necessary skills and habits of independent work, and therefore should spend more hours in classes. As to the independent work, the course descriptions do not specify it, having identical formulation for all courses: "Students will be expected to spend a total of 150 hours for the module including independent study". Moreover, big part of the course literature is not available in the college's library. The details about organization, supervision and assessment of independent work were also not given.

Recommendations:

- *Organization, supervision and assessment of independent work should explicitly be described in the course descriptions.*
- *Compose the literature lists in course descriptions from those sources only that are available to the students.*

It is not possible to answer this question at programme level because the programme goals and outcomes are described in very general terms. As to the separate courses, the time for discussing the content of all courses thoroughly enough was far too limited. However, the descriptions of the courses have some room for improvement. For example, as for Materialization tools/IT, a standard sentence "Computer lab, relevant software" is used, without any specification. We will explain the problems more thoroughly on the example of two courses.

- *Mathematics I* (page 91 of SER):
 - i. As this is the only course in mathematics, its content should thoroughly be selected.
 - ii. Graphs are completely missing in this course (the word "graph" does not occur in the course descriptions).
 - iii. Topics of number theory that is necessary for cryptography is not covered.
 - iv. From proof methods, only mathematical induction is mentioned in the course description.
 - v. The description of the course is full of weird notions like "logical mathematics", "clues to the function as values", "function derivates" etc.
- *Advanced Software Engineering* (page 108 of SER):
 - i. This course belongs to Software Engineering specialization only. It is natural to expect that after passing this course, the students are able to plan and conduct the full software development cycle.
 - ii. The aims and expected outcomes are extremely restricted consisting basically in configuring and using software development tools.
 - iii. One of the learning outcomes of the programme is "develop a culture of working in a team, working in software and hardware labs". However, teamwork is not mentioned in the description of this course nor in no other course that deals with software development.

There is no other division into parts of the curriculum as division to semesters and specializations. Concerning the content of the programme the question arose: *To what extent are the modules related to each other, ensuring that the programme can be considered as a compact whole and not as a list of separate courses?* Currently the courses are not explicitly related to each other – *Programming Fundamentals* is the only course that is explicitly stated as a prerequisite to other courses. Although there are some minor repetitions (for example, Ohm's Law in *Electronics Fundamentals* and *Electronics*), different courses do not have significant overlapping. Criteria and documents for admission of new students are:

1. The completion of secondary education (grade certificate and diploma of completion of the graduation exam required as proof)
2. The completed application forms,
3. Birth certificate,
4. Copy of ID,
5. Two photos for the Student Notebook.
6. Maturity test (In the SER: "Candidates also undergo an entrance examination").

This is similar to what is used in many universities internationally.

There will be about 300 students and 28 teachers (16 full-time and 12 part-time teachers) on the programme (currently there are about 200 students and 17 teachers involved). Formally, the ratio of academic staff to students is acceptable if the programme is considered separately from the master programme and other employments of the teaching staff. However, taking into account the fact that most of the staff members that are listed as having full time employment are employed also somewhere else, the academic staff/student ratio becomes much less favourable.

4.2. Staff

The proportion of permanent staff is currently relatively high – 13 out of 17 academic staff members listed in the Programme Overview (section 3.4.13 of SER) have full time employment. It is supposed to be in the future somehow lower: 16 out of 28. However, the interpretation of the term *permanent staff* (in the terminology of AAB College – full-time staff) seems to be very different from those used normally. Although the Academic Staff Employment Contract (Appendix 2 to SER) states a 8 hours work day, in practice it is not followed because the staff is normally employed by 2 or 3 institutions. For example, only 5 out of 13 full time staff members have indicated AAB College as their employer in LinkedIn.

59% of teachers have doctoral degrees. The courses they offer harmonizes to a great extent with their competences.

4.3. Research and International Co-operation

The teaching staff is involved in research. Every academic member of staff should have two mandatory scientific papers ~~to be~~ published each year. The college has issued regularly the proceedings "Thesis". However, there are no regular research seminars conducted in the college; the research is mostly conducted outside the AAB College – the staff has indicated in the most cases other institutions as their affiliation in their scientific publications. Taking into account that the AAB College has spent only about 4% of their budget to R&D (page 547 of SER) and that no R&D project has been conducted in ICT (pages 543-544 of SER), one can conclude that research in ICT has not, in fact, been a priority in the college. On the other hand, the college foresees research and science as one out of five areas of intervention in his Strategic Plan for years 2013-2018.

Recommendation:

- *Research in ICT in the college is not clearly visible. It is suggested that the college determines itself in the national and international research landscape (focusing on applied research for supporting innovation in a locally important sector of the economy).*

There is no evidence presented about participation in international research projects.

The college has recently signed some cooperation agreements with some industrial partners on some joint activities where students are supposed to take part as well. The students are heavily involved on activities that are organized inside the college – AAB days, a day for people with disabilities etc. Nevertheless, the students expressed a wish

for expanding extra-curricular activities – joint activities with other colleges, summer schools etc.

4.4. Finances and Infrastructure/Space and Equipment

No detailed budget was provided. SER had a separate section “9. Financing” that contained income statement for years 2012 – 2014 as well the projected income and expenses for years 2015 – 2017. Concerning the income and expenses, the following comments can be made:

- 1) Income from the student fees form more than 95% of the budget.
- 2) Income has risen from 5,748M€ in 2012 to 9,119M€ in 2014.
- 3) The income and profit are expected to stabilize in coming few years (page 551 of SER).
- 4) The college has modern buildings and has assigned considerable resources for buildings and equipment also for coming years.

The buildings are extraordinary good. However, the technical infrastructure for conducting classes in robotics and mechatronics is just on the minimal level. The students also complained that the college does not have dormitories.

4.5. Quality Management

The college has an Office for Quality Assurance and Regulations on Quality Assurance. The main quality instruments of the studies seem to be reports from the teachers and students. There are developed questionnaires for graduated and stakeholders but the expert team was not provided with analyses.

4.6. Implementation of former recommendations

- **Recommendation:** Initiate a new structure of the programme specializations and a moderate increase in the number of students and do not plan for immediate increase of this number.
Comment: The number of specializations has been reduced from four to three. However, only four students have selected mechatronics specialization during 2012-2014. This raises the question about the purpose of offering mechatronics specialization. Therefore, the problem of deciding on reasonable specializations is still acute.
- **Recommendation:** Maintain compliance with ACM/IEEE type programmes and maintain the practice of standardization with selected international institutions.
Comment: It seems that the academic staff has followed the principles of common practice of development of study programmes.
- **Recommendation:** We encourage the implementation of combined e-learning through Moodle system.
Comment: An instance of Moodle in set up and heavily used.

- **Recommendation:** Have adequate recruitment for the planned increase (*increase of staff*).
Comment: the student/teacher ratio is adequate. Recruitment seems currently not to be a big problem.
- **Recommendation:** Consider the possibility of entering into partnerships with technology partners to provide the latest technology (Microsoft, Oracle, Siemens, Festo).
Comment: clear evidences were provided that the partnership with the companies is on a satisfactory level.
- **Recommendation:** Must formalize international cooperation with institutions abroad. There are many demands by students, and the current staff and has a good network of international connections.
Comment: actions in this direction were started just few weeks before the experts' visit – the SER that was submitted in July 2015 did not contain any information about that, but by the time of the visit already some cooperation agreements were signed.
- **Recommendation:** Tempus projects should be considered as a platform for international cooperation in scientific research.
Comment: the academic staff completely agreed with that, although Tempus projects do not support scientific activities.
- **Recommendation:** Complete IT investments.
Comment: 3 computer labs have been set up with 80 computers, 30 Arduino kits etc.
- **Recommendation:** Complete investment in the required teaching tools such as network switches, student network server, robot kit, and electronic development tools.
Comment: the teaching staff was satisfied with the level of investments. Further investments are planned for coming years.

5. Computer Science (MA, reaccreditation)

This programme was accredited in 2013. The following bases on the documents presented to the expert team, on the site visit and on discussion with some staff members including these coordinating the preparation of SER: Ermir Rogova, Salem Lepaja, Florinda Imeri, Arianit Maraj, Mentor Hamiti, Veland Ramadani.

5.1. Academic Programmes and Student Management

The mission statement does not specify any subject area of the college. The administration of the college named computer science, media and mass-communication as priority areas of academic activities. Therefore, although not explicitly stated, the programme would certainly correspond to the mission statement of the college.

The programme does not have specialization profiles. Every student has 14 modules (including *Project/Internship* and *Master Thesis*) that all are compulsory. The expected learning outcomes state competences in computer science.

The SER states the objective of the programme mainly as develop competences in computer science. However, the vast majority of modules deal with software engineering. The purpose and profile of the study programme (section 3.5.6) explicitly states the focus on software development. Therefore, the programme could also be named "Software engineering".

It is claimed that the programme is aligned with similar curricula of Kingston University, Vienna University of Technology, Munich University of Technology, and others. In doing so, references are provided to the bachelor programmes of these universities. In the case of Munich University of Technology, the list of its centers of competences is cited to!

Despite of some minor problems, the programme's quality, range and academic aims are appropriate to the academic degree.

SER does not describe any overarching didactic concept (in fact, the SER does not contain the word "didactic" at all). The assessment is described in the most formal way – the methods of assessment are described for all the courses identically consisting of: participation on classes (normally 10%), tests/colloquium (normally 60%), practical work and seminars (normally 30%). In the case a student will not pass the test, (s)he should pass the exam.

On the other hand, discussions with the academic staff members allow concluding that academic activities are nevertheless based on sound didactic principles. For example, the teachers explained during the meeting that the college has an individual approach to the students using heavily the electronic platform for supporting e-learning.

The study programme consists of compulsory courses only – no electives! This raises a number of questions that were not touched in the SER neither were satisfactory explained during the meeting with the academic staff:

1. What if a student already had some course during the bachelor studies (for example, TCP/IP networking)?
2. Master students are normally employed. What if a student has some specific learning needs not covered in the programme?
3. One of the learning outcomes of the study programme is: "Identify ways of improving the performance of the group in particular their contribution to the group. Working as part of a multi-professional team within a business environment." How these competences are supposed to be developed (there is no course on group processes)?

Recommendation:

- *Increase flexibility of the programme either by introducing electives or by foreseeing a possibility to compose an individual study plan (by replacing one or more courses with individual ones).*

An average course would have four hours learning weekly in the classes (in total 15x4 = 60 hours). Taking into account the fact that the courses have 6 credits, the number of

hours for independent work of the students during a course should be 90. Therefore, supervision and support of independent work of students has an important role. The students confirmed that they get sufficient support from the teachers. Therefore, the programme gives sufficient opportunity for independent study, reflection and analysis.

Although the guiding principles of composing the programme were neither clearly or satisfactory explained, the principle that the programme does not contain courses that have less than 6 ECTS is in general appropriate.

The number of hours spent in classes is adequate. As to the independent work, the course descriptions do not specify it. Moreover, most of the course literature is not available in the college' library.

Recommendations:

- *Organization, supervision and assessment of independent work should explicitly be described in the course descriptions.*
- *Compose the literature lists in course descriptions from those sources only that are available to the students.*

If "computer science" is understood as "software engineering" then the learning outcomes can be achieved. Otherwise the expected learning outcomes "identify current issues in the field of computer science" and "demonstrate a detailed understanding of the principles of computer science" will certainly not be achieved.

There is no other division into parts of the curriculum as division into semesters. There also seems to be no significant overlapping between the courses. Concerning the content of the programme following questions arose:

- 1) How the programme can be adapted to the prior competences of students? For example, courses on software engineering (SE) are equally compulsory for graduates who already had courses on SE during their bachelor studies and who have not.
- 2) To what extent the courses are related to each other, ensuring that the programme can be considered as a compact whole and not as a list of separate courses. The Project seems to be the only course where students can practically go through all the cycles of software development process. Therefore it is recommended to consider the possibility to move this course from 2nd to 3rd semester. Then the students would have possibility to apply bigger amount of knowledge and skills in their project.

The admission is document based: only those students who have not completed computer science bachelor programme need to undertake a qualifications/acceptance exam. The purpose and the content of the qualifications/acceptance exam (consisting in three subjects) is not described in SER. Although this type of admission is practiced in some countries, using letters of motivation and interviews are more effective for determining individual needs and for selecting elective courses.

There will be about 150 students and 28 teachers (16 full-time and 12 part-time teachers) on the programme (currently there are about 40 students and 9 teachers involved). Formally, the ratio of academic staff to students is acceptable if the programme is considered separately from the bachelor programme and other

employments of the teaching staff. However, taking into account the fact that most of the staff members that are listed as having full time employment are employed also somewhere else (mainly in University of Pristine and in South-East European University), the academic staff/student ratio becomes much less favourable. It is remarkable that only two teachers (out of 9) have indicated AAB College as his/her employer on his/her LinkedIn page.

5.2. Staff

The proportion of permanent (full-time) staff is currently relatively low – 4 (out of 9). This could be bigger, especially because most of the staff is also teaching on the bachelor programme.

All teachers have doctoral degrees. The courses they offer harmonize to certain extent with their competences (as much it was possible to understand because some CV-s were in the Albanian language).

5.3. Research and International Co-operation

The teaching staff is involved in research. Every academic staff should have two mandatory scientific papers to be published each year. The college has regularly issued proceedings "Thesis". However, there are no regular research seminars conducted in the college; the research is mostly conducted outside the AAB College – the staff has indicated in the most cases other institutions as their affiliation in their scientific publications. Taking into account that the AAB College has spent only about 4% of their budget to R&D (page 547 of SER) and that there has not been conducted any R&D project in ICT (pages 543-544 of SER), one can conclude that research in ICT has in fact not been a priority in the college. On the other hand, the college foresees research and science as one out of five areas of intervention in his Strategic Plan for years 2013-2018.

Recommendation:

- *Research in ICT in the college is currently absolutely not visible. It is suggested that the college determines itself in the national and international research landscape (focusing on applied research for supporting innovation in a locally important sector of the economy).*

There are no evidences presented about participation in international research projects.

The college has recently signed some cooperation agreements with some industrial partners on some joint activities where students are supposed to take part as well. The students are heavily involved on activities that are organized inside the college – AAB days, a day for people with disabilities etc.

5.4. Finances and Infrastructure/Space and Equipment

No detailed budget was provided. SER had a separate section "9. Financing" that contained income statement for years 2012 – 2014 as well the projected income and expenses for years 2015 – 2017. Concerning the income and expenses, the

following comments can be made:

- 1) Income from the student fees form more than 95% of the budget.
- 2) Income has risen from 5,748M€ in 2012 to 9,119M€ in 2014.
- 3) The income and profit is expected to be stabilized in coming few years (page 551 of SER).
- 4) The college has modern buildings and has assigned considerable resources for buildings and equipment also for coming years.

The buildings are extraordinary good. Computer labs satisfy the needs of the programme.

5.5. Quality Management

The college has a Office for Quality Assurance and Regulations on Quality Assurance. The main quality instruments of the studies seem to be reports from the teachers and students. As the first students graduated in 2015 only, there is no systematic feedback from the graduates and employers collected yet.

5.6. Implementation of former recommendations

- a. **Recommendation.** Have a reasonable goal for accepting students for the coming years.
Comment: the goal has been set to 150, but the actual practice is not promising (the college is currently far from this goal).
- b. **Recommendation.** Place all the teaching materials in an interactive program platform like Moodle.
Comment: the college has developed and is using a e-learning fill-service platform.
- c. **Recommendation.** The recruitment process to be completed before the start of the program.
Comment: this recommendation is not relevant in 2016.
- d. **Recommendation.** Have goals for research and international publications staff engaged in the Master's level and monitor these activities for the current staff and new.
Comment: there are goals set in the Strategic Plan for 2013-2018.
- e. **Recommendation.** Time and resources needed to be allocated for scientific research. There should be goals and measurement tools for research.
Comment: The time for research is formally allocated in the work contracts. The resources for research are not specified in the budget. There are goals and measurement tools set in the Strategic Plan for 2013-2018.
- f. **Recommendation.** There should be a list of publications and international conferences as platforms for scientific papers and publications for academic staff. It should organize training for new staff under consideration in connection

with international and master's level staff should be part of them.

Comment: No list of international conferences was provided. There is a training plan for new staff.

- g. Recommendation.** To complete the planned investments in BSc. (*New computers and equipment*)

Comment: The planned investments have been done.

- h. Recommendation.** Monitoring of scientific research and activities with foreign companies and institutions should be part of the essential performance indicators to monitor quality.

Comment: no evidences were provided on this type of performance indicators.

6. General observations to Arts and Applied Arts Study Programmes

The following observations are applicable to the four programmes put forward for consideration within the Arts and Applied Arts Study Faculty.

The experts received the Self-Evaluation Report, Part II, dated April 2016 and programme-related staff CVs.

The expert team was most impressed with the commitment and enthusiasm of the students and course teams.

During a site visit to the Faculty in 2013 the ET welcomed news that the institution's central Office of Programme Quality and Learning was developing a more systematic overview of the preparation of documentation and a new framework for student assessment.

The ET believes that there were still instances of inconsistency where the documentation had given the ET an unfortunate impression of the content and operation of programmes. For example, on the generally uncontroversial topic of admission requirements for creative studies, neither the BA Interior Design nor BA Painting and the Visual Arts Programmes include any explicit reference to a need for evidence of 'potential creative ability' or 'motivation'.

Discussions with programme leaders, other academic staff and students, together with an opportunity to see some of the facilities and student work, were impressive and allayed many, though not all of the concerns the ET had formed from their reading of the documentation. While it would be unreasonable to expect instant improvements, the ET remains of the opinion that more clarity of purpose is required in the design of programmes and in the manner in which operational matters are reported and actions taken at Faculty level.

The ET repeated continuing concern over the effectiveness of formal quality assurance practices at Faculty level. During meetings with academic staff and students it became evident that neither group had read ET reports and only a minority had been involved in

the compilation of Self Evaluation Reviews (SERs) and there remains an absence of information.

However, students were generally complimentary about the sensitivity of staff in dealing with student feedback and about the willingness of the College to bring about change as a result.

The ET was reassured to learn that there is good access to professional journals and magazines, and also that professional case studies, lifestyle, fashion and cultural topics are accessible online.

The ET met with core teams of lecturers responsible for each programme, and also with members of wider course teams. It was reported that regular meetings are held both of the core and wider staff teams. An impression was gained of a generally positive and convivial working environment. The ET gained the impression that the staff with whom they spoke were unaware of any budget against which they might bid for staff development opportunities. Those same staff were nevertheless appreciative of the flexibility of the College in enabling staff to cope with their professional and academic schedules.

In general, it was observed that, while the College's report is rich in facts, it identifies few issues, offers few judgements and does not report many actions taken or evaluations of the effectiveness of those actions.

There was some confusion with regard to the identification of modules. While members of the teams were a little uncertain about the assignment of a unique code to each module, the Office of Quality Assurance confirmed unequivocally that such codes are assigned and that modules specifications can accordingly be tracked by the administration. As the process of authorising amendment to module specification becomes more familiar, this will enable courses to be adjusted. Periodic attention to academic development at module level will thereby contribute to the quality and relevance of programmes.

Recommendations:

Staff development resources should be identified to enable Faculty to develop skills essential to the drafting of course documents so that such features as learning opportunities, learning outcomes and assessment strategies are clearly specified together with the collation of data not merely to satisfy external scrutiny but to facilitate effective quality management. Simple comparisons of data over time of, for example, student progression (pass, referrals, failures) and of enrolments compared to admissions can provide valuable indicators of performance upon which action can be taken and monitored.

7. Musicology (BA, reaccreditation)

Course aims and vocational objectives are clear. The course is broad in approach and content, despite being a 4 year programme, as befits the situation in Kosovo now and into the foreseeable future. The teaching methods identified and indicative group sizes appear to be generally appropriate, and much effort is put by staff into external

collaboration with the music industry, its professionals, events and in the organisation and exploitation of internship opportunities for students.

The relationship between pedagogy and learning methodology, as described in the documentation, was unclear to the ET. See, for example, the Pedagogy modules in Year 3 (page 284).

No changes had been made to Musicology module specifications, but the Musicology course team reported that it was alert to change and development in practice and theory in the field of musicology and to student feedback, and adjusted course delivery accordingly. It was anticipated that it would be necessary to discuss amendment to module specifications, going forward.

The ET welcomed the fact that the team's future priorities included increased public performance, publication and collaboration internationally.

It was noted that there had been a growth in student registrations for the period 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15, but a significant drop in 2015-16. This, attributed by the team to 'a change of generations', remained rather unclear.

Recommendation:

In preparing its self-evaluation reports the College should identify significant changes or developments, note where action has been taken and report on the effectiveness of such action.

8. Interior Design (BA, reaccreditation)

The programme identifies a vision for the way in which graduates from this broad-based programme should be able to contribute to the developing national economy; this is sound and appropriate. The quality of debate with the teaching team and evidence seen during a brief tour of facilities gave a good impression, as did the satisfaction expressed by students with their learning experience. However, many aspects of the programme in the course documentation were poorly described. Examples given by the ET included:

- apart from a brief reference in 'lighting', no mention of the teaching of human factors – anthropometry, ergonomics, applied psychology;
- no specific reference to connections with architecture;
- no articulation of the importance to interior design of mass, batch and craft production;
- the management and formal positioning of opportunities for students to participate in a variety of forms of external collaboration – projects, internships.

Discussion around why a seemingly narrow subject such as the 'design and technology of wood' had been included revealed a more compelling and appropriate intention that this module dealt in fact with sustainability, and a much wider range of recyclable materials. Similarly, the examples given of 'cupboard, table kitchen, etc' in 'Practice – S3 – Studio' were inappropriately narrow, prosaic and unrepresentative of what actually happened. The ET also pointed to several instances where there was a lack of clarity in

the relationship between seemingly similar subjects, as in 'AutoCad', 'Computer Media and Communications Strategies', 'Computer Media in Interior Design' and '3D Max' and between 'creativity' and 'innovation'.

The ET welcomed the mix of theoretical and practical approaches taken to the topic of 'creativity'. It was noted that this is broadly aligned with the UK tradition, which looks at models of creativity (convergent and divergent thinking, non-verbal consciousness, etc.) and proceeds to immersion in the manipulation of forms, tools, materials, etc.

Students confirmed that they had been alerted to the opportunity to undertake elective modules, reported that they had done so, and found electives valuable.

An important benefit arising from the College's modular course structure is that it will facilitate access by one programme to modules developed within another. Such modules could then be made available to students as electives.

Within the Interior Design curriculum attention is given to sustainability. In this context it was anticipated that the Faculty of Economics may well have a module dealing with the 'circular economy'; such a module might be highly relevant to Interior Design as a potential elective. As such it could offer a useful example of the potential benefit that could arise from the sharing of electives across faculties.

Recommendation:

The Interior Design course team (and others within the Faculty) should explore opportunities for cross-Faculty access to, and use of, modules with potential relevance to the programme.

9. Painting and Visual Arts (BA, reaccreditation)

The team reported that it was able to delivery painting and visual arts as a programme open to a wide range of artistic forms and media, including some sculptural activities that do not require the full range of studio facilities discussed in 2013. There is a focus on fundamental artistic activities, including conceptual development, rather than on training students for a specialist practice.

There had been a steady growth in student numbers through to the third cohort.

Students confirmed that they had regular opportunities to provide anonymous online feedback, and felt confident that they were given a full hearing when they voiced their views. The enthusiasm and energy of the teaching team had communicated itself to students, who were highly appreciative of their study experience.

The quality of the drawing and painting seen in the studios is modest. One thing to say about this is the importance of setting ambitious standards for progression from level (year) one to levels two and three. A second is to provide students with access to powerful examples of high-level contemporary practice in painting and drawing. This presents a significant challenge. Pristina has an excellent art gallery, but probably lacks the funding to attract exhibitions of examples of the works of such artists as, for example, Gerhard Richter, Howard Hodgkin or Jim Dine.

Then again, this programme puts a premium on the conceptual development of its students within the realm of contemporary art practice, and on introducing them to a wide range of media. This is facilitated by the provision of access to, for example, electronic image capture and editing suites. Here bringing examples forward may be less problematic than in the case of painting and drawing.

A third aspect of the problem faced is the need to participate in the wider debate that informs the international art world. While it is interesting for students with good English skills to gain access to art journals, it would be particularly valuable if they were able to use online communication facilities to engage in focussed discourse with art students in art schools in other countries. (Partnership with industry presents a challenge in this field, but efforts are being made to encourage real-world experience. It is the aim of the team to look for ways of mounting or participating in an increased number of exhibition opportunities for students in coming years. In a meeting with the (rather small) group of students assembled, the Painting and Visual Arts students voiced their enthusiasm for visits to galleries, studios, etc.)

There has been no construction of sculpture studio facilities, but the course team has a number of quite spacious studios and access to specialist facilities on a shared basis that is consistent with the aims of the programme.

The ET was surprised to see reports of 100% pass rates for 2014 and 2015, but it was acknowledged that the number of candidates in each case was still small.

Recommendation:

The course team should seek the support of College management and of other organisations in Pristina to press for resources and opportunities to make possible contemporary art exhibitions and debate on contemporary art practice.

10. Graphic Design (MA, accreditation)

10.1. Academic programmes and student management

The proposal was put forward with vigour and conviction on the basis of an analysis of the aspirations of graduates and market research on the needs of advertisers in both print and broadcast media in Kosovo. It was also justified with reference to established contact with around 100 advertising and graphics agencies, which has enabled the team to tune its proposal to current market requirements in Kosovo.

The course was described as being appropriately broad but with an opportunity to study some areas in depth. The proposal was well presented by a convincing and competent course team. However, as with other programmes in the Faculty, the documentation was less convincing. It offered assumptions without always providing evidence, and failed to address some important topics.

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, the specification of learning outcomes suggested the need for particular attention to effective ways of going about this task. In this case the proposal referred to 'four main LOs', but presented a confusing array of headings, sub-headings and bullets on the topic. If a learning outcome is to be used as

a tool it needs be specified clearly at the appropriate level so as to be able to serve useful tasks.

The ET drew the programme team's attention to the need for greater attention to the ways in which topics - such as applied psychology, design management, business administration and marketing - are to be taught to achieve programme objectives.

The ET felt that the team could have done more to profile the target student population in terms of age, education, experience and career plans. The admissions criteria are appropriately thorough and flexible.

Students reported themselves very satisfied with the facilities provided for Graphics studies, and access to those facilities to enable them not only to undertake paid work where necessary, and to pursue project work.

10.2. Research International Co-operation

The ET welcomed ambitious plans for cooperation with professional partners in the region, including intelligence on the employment destinations of AAB graduates.

The graphics team has been able to enrich its access to periodicals over the period over the last three years.

It was confirmed that the three-month internship described in the proposal forms part of the assessed programme, and that agreements with industry partners involved the maintenance of regular contact and the assignment to agencies of some supervisory and assessment responsibilities.

10.3. Finance and infrastructure / Space and Equipment

The ET felt that the College is able to support the team in developing the facilities to cope with the increase in graphics student numbers presaged by this proposal.

10.4. Quality management

The teaching team should attend to the need, expressed throughout this report, for active participation with other programmes in contributing to Faculty efforts to raise the quality and practical value of quality management.

Well-specified course documentation and effective quality assurance are the foundations of a continuing process that lays down an audit trail not merely to satisfy external scrutiny, but to enable the College to advance incrementally.

Recommendations

The ET recommends urgent attention be given to errors and omissions in the documentation so that the continuing good efforts of the staff, student achievement and reputation of the programmes can be more appropriately, and positively, portrayed and understood. Examples include the absence of consistent and clear admissions criteria, a sharper distinction between 'aims' and 'objectives' in the use of 'learning outcomes', more accurate descriptions of the actual content of subjects and the absence of data that would

facilitate more effective quality management by providing indicators of performance that can be monitored and on which action can be taken.

11. Mass Communication and Journalism (BA and MA programmes)

In case of the Mass Communication and Journalism programmes the case was to improve the conditions and the achievements after the accreditation process 2013. The following academic staff members were present explaining and interpreting the past years' work at the faculty concerning teaching quality, research activities, internationalization, students service and didactic support and – last not least – the programme itself, its challenges of possible enrichments and enlargements: Aurora Ndrio, Rame Buja, Hasan Saliu, Rahman Pacarrizi, Naile Demiri, Arber Geci, Arsim Sinani, Ilire Zajmi, Mimoza Doko, Belina Jano, Adriatik Kelmendi, Burbuqe Berisha, Bujar Tafa.

Throughout the entire meeting the staff was highly committed to the College as well as to the faculty programme and its goals of quality. The meeting nevertheless discussed limitations to be overcome.

11.1. The general characterization of the programmes

The Mass Communication and Journalism Programme has been the first programme to be established (2002) at AAB College. It was meant to correspond with media and communication training and education to the country's needs of self-constitution and its societal development. So the college could play soon a meaningful role to the market. Since the faculty college-internally counts somehow as a key department for the reputation of AAB College it has been benefiting all over the times from kind attention of the college management.

According to what I could notice - The faculty counts around 400 students responding to a media market that is structured by 75 TV stations, 83 radio stations, 8 newspapers. The market still needs journalists to be well-trained and educated in media and communication skills. Both curricular aims and the quality of teaching and training are oriented to ability, capacity, morality and responsibility. That demands to be well-equipped with teaching methodologies and to make students professionally well-equipped with knowledge, critical reflection and creative know-how practice.

There are two programmes offered: A bachelor programme and a Masters programme, each with two branches: Journalism and Production. As well related to new models of media management.

11.2. Mass communication (BA, re-accreditation)

IT seems to be the key programme, by which most of the students complete their studies in order to catch as fast as possible a job in media branch. In conservative terms the market is satisfied, but since the fluctuation is high in between of media companies

and the media technology, as well as the communication market, continuously opens new perspectives for more or less regular jobs, there are still good reasons to get educationally as broad as possible prepared for a professional career in media and communication market landscape. At the time there are 85 students enrolled for the journalism programme and 54 for the production programme. The faculty staff stated that it had been done a lot in order to fulfil the recommendation from last accreditation, explaining the enrichment of the programme by courses, workshops and conferences to:

- journalism specialization: more theoretical reflection, EU politics, ethics, history of arts, media and society, multimedia;
- production specialization: AAB radio studio, news agency lab, TV studio (checked during the walk-about).

11.3. *Mass communication and journalism (MA, accreditation)*

The study programme is mostly related to journalism, focused on theoretical knowledge, including the observation of Kosovo-, Albania- and Serbia- media landscape, following the Bologna System (even with not so much conviction of its consequences), and its enrichments in theoretical and reflective depth, enhancing its social studies perspective, internationalization, conference activities – all this has been characterized especially by:

- developing new focuses, e.g. online, multimedia, investigative journalism, citizen journalism, PR-factors in journalism;
- a pronounced orientation in developing and qualifying media professions for the fields of journalism and media production;
- equipment and facilities so far: TV studio, news agency, movie and artistic documentary production, multimedia and online application – also done in order to go public and to get advertised;
- orientation an internationally well reputed school directions (named: W. Lippmann, P. Lazarsfeld, Livingstone, at master level especially: J. Habermas, Constructivism, Cultural Studies etc.) ;
- international cooperation (Ecole Superieur de Paris, State University of Tirana, State University of Tetovo);
- developing new courses in accordance with University of Neuchatel and London School of Economics;
- encouraging students to participate in research and as well for presentation of results at conferences and scientific journals;
- realizing conferences with ABB-participation in Florence, Paris, Tirana (European University) and others;
- scientific activities in Skoda and Tetovo related to media history in Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia;

- enlarging the teaching course by more social media related topics: online journalism, citizen journalism, mobile journalism (assuming and demanding to be the leader among the journalism-education H.E. institutions in Southern European HE institutions);
- engaging well trained and well prepared teachers, often based in media practice, but also some visiting professors who are well-known for their theoretical knowledge and quality;
- internationalizing the research cooperation, even if it was always a difficult thing to be a valuable partner to European universities, but also being aware of the challenge of an own (local) way in public communication as the cultural infrastructure of democracy;
- publication of students journal "Colloquium" 4 times a year (10.000 copies delivered).

11.4. Conclusion

The journalism and media production programmes of AAB have done meaningful progress in all relevant aspects: teaching quality, research activities, study facilities, internationalization, students service, staff development, public appearance, facilities). The discussion concluded with developments of the programme in relation to the global media change. Understanding that media change mirrors the ontological change of the society, its communication and its mediality makes clear, that the communication- and media studies should not just focus on development of professional structures, but - for the future – much more on general development of communication competence and media literacy of the people in general. That means also to think more broadly in relation to professionalization of society, becoming more and more a society in the modus of media. So the two programmes (journalism and production) should enrich their teaching and their research by a trans-disciplinary perspective of media literacy studies. The faculty promised to widen its perspective and to develop a trans-disciplinary structured learning process in that direction (teaching, research, conferences, international visiting professors).

The institution will/shall be aware of the decreasing number of students in traditional paths in media-work and try harder to develop new professional structures mirroring the structural change and media change (social media) of societal communication.

Expecting this and assessing the reports in all relevant aspects of the on-site-evaluation there is no obstacle to become re-accredited for the programmes BA and MA in production and journalism at AAB College.

12. English Language (BA and MA, reaccreditation)

This expert report is written on the basis of a comprehensive self-evaluation report (April, 2016), findings collected during a site-visit to the main campus in Pristina and a two-hour discussion with the teaching staff of the English Language Programme and a longer discussion with the students of the same programme. I have also been provided with two sample MA theses.

12.1. *Academic Programmes and Student Management*

- *Does the academic programme correspond to the institution's mission statement and principles of operation?*

The mission of the study programme is available on the website of the faculty and is worded as follows: "This programme provides students with general English language competencies combined also with a strong module and skills in interpreting and translation. Currently Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia are at their final stages of the European integration process; as a result, more qualified interpreters are necessary to meet the needs of Kosovo institutions and organizations with high level of interpreting, translation and presentation skills. to provide the necessary expertise for the actual processes Kosovo and other countries in the region are going through. Therefore, this programme really prepares human resources for future, and is one of the most perspective and more attractive in the market."

We find the mission statement absolutely relevant and as such it does reflect the main goals of the programme. The ET would strongly recommend is to openly state the level of English language proficiency achieved by the students at the end of the Bachelor and Master programme. This, however, has to be evidence-based.

- *Are the programme's quality, range and academic aims appropriate to the academic degree?*

English Language, BA:

The programme consists of courses, which enable students to gain linguistic knowledge and language skills, pragmatic and discourse competences in both English and Albanian language. The students also focus on theories of language learning and translation and get an overview of Anglo-American literature and the history of English language. The structure of the study programme is designed in the way that graduates in English language should be able to develop the expected competences.

English Language, MA

The programme consists of 120-ECTS credit points, resulting in obtaining the title 'Master of English Language-Translation Programme.' This is a three-semester section of 30 ECTS each, with the remaining 30 ECTS credits coming from a master thesis.

I have been provided with two sample MA theses selected by the English Language Faculty and on this small sample we would like to point out some pros and cons of the final paper designed by two MA students:

The two theses mainly show that the students are aware of the international good practice guidelines on academic writing. The works are well-structured, the literature

reviews cover the main findings in the area of the research in question, the research questions are mostly clear and well-defined etc. However, there are still some areas for improvement in designing MA theses. Firstly, language accuracy needs to be improved in both texts. This can be achieved by peer-reading or a more rigorous process of proofreading. Another issue refers to the research topics discussed. As this is not a teacher-training programme, it is a question of relevance. In order to do research in classroom, one needs to master the main principles of learning and teaching processes. The students studying at AAB (English Language) are likely to be lacking knowledge in teaching and learning theories as well as foreign language teaching approaches. It is therefore not recommended that these students select topics from the area of education.

- *Is the programme based on an overarching didactic concept that has been adequately communicated to and adopted by the teaching staff?*

The programme is based on communicative language teaching approach and lectures/practical classes seem to be student-centred rather than teacher-centered. This was discovered in a face-to-face discussion with the teaching staff and with the students. In the students' own words: "very good cooperation between students and the teachers" and "we feel supported and encouraged".

This is an important feature of the programme and we can only congratulate the teaching team on achieving such good collaboration among teachers and students.

- *Does the academic degree correspond to international standards?*

The academic degree corresponds to international standards, which can be observed from the curriculum structure, which consists of courses covering the most important subject content needed for a competent translator. In my opinion, the only "non-relevant" subject, refers to the course entitled *Methods of teaching English* carrying 6 ECTS. The study programme namely does not train language teachers and this course might give students a false interpretation that they may be later allowed to teach. It would be wise to replace this course with a course which will focus on the development of English proficiency or prepare students to pass a CEFR-based examination, for example B2 or C1 level English language course in Year 3.

- *Does the structure of the programme give sufficient opportunity for independent study, reflection and analysis? (E.g. what is the proportion of independent study time compared to online/distance teaching and classroom units?)*

To our current knowledge, the proportion of independent study time compared to online/distance teaching has not been investigated yet. However, the AAB institution does offer online environment for teachers and students to use. In the near future, it would be worthwhile to investigate how this environment functions and to what extent the needs of students and teachers are met.

The students reported that they spend 14 to 35 hours of independent study a week.

- *Is the allocation of ECTS appropriate and justified?*

The allocation of ECTS is very difficult to measure, however, if there is a big discrepancy between the allocation of ECTS and the real time spent on studying, it may make the students feel overburdened but on the hand, they may feel under-challenged. From the discussion with the students and the teaching staff we may conclude that there are no burning issues related to the allocation of ECTS, however, we would recommend that they do a small-scale study (an evidence-based research) which will show a more objective picture of the ECTS allocation.

- *Is the workload required for the academic programme manageable for students?*

When discussing this issue with the students, they seem to be able to manage the requirements set by the programme. None of the students reported any problems.

- *Are the teaching methods and content of teaching units sufficient for the successful achievement of the programme's goals and outcomes (competences and qualifications, knowledge and skills)?*

From my reading the documents available to me and the on-site discussion with the teaching staff and the students of the English Language programmes (BA and MA), one may conclude that the teaching methods are appropriate and the students should be able to reach the set competences. What might be good to improve is the assessment processes and the instruments used in the assessment, esp. the ones measuring English language proficiency.

What may be worth considering is how the English language proficiency is assessed, that is what evidence can the teaching staff provide in order to claim that their students have reached a certain level of language proficiency. We strongly recommend that the curricula of the courses, which develop general English skills, incorporate the CEFR-based descriptors. Please see the website of the Council of Europe for more information: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1_en.asp

It would also be worthwhile to use the CEFR descriptors in the final assessment instruments (tests or portfolios), and slowly attempt to relate the assessment instruments to the CEFR levels. These will enable the students to compare their language skills (and knowledge acquired) across the border. There are many freely available resources, which may help the teaching staff to use the language descriptors in formative and summative assessment. They might consider the following resource as being especially helpful: *A Manual for Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* which is freely downloadable from http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Manuel1_EN.asp

If the staff needs expert help they may turn to the European Centre of Modern Languages in Graz (ECML): <http://www.ecml.at/>

- *Is the overlap of academic content between the various parts of the curriculum comprehensible and transparent?*

Considering the range of courses and their distribution among the years, both programmes (BA and MA) seem to ensure a comprehensible and transparent overlap of academic content. For example, at MA level, the following courses attempt to cover knowledge and skills related to English literature (Anglo-American History, Modern-

Contemporary Literature, Anglo-American Literature: Selected Authors), while Lexicology and Etymology, General Linguistics, English Idiomatics, and Cognitive Theories are meant to gain knowledge in linguistics (general and special issues). The other four relate to the acquisition of the competences needed in translation studies. This is a very sensible and expected distribution of courses (with their content/topics). The second year rightly focuses on courses which enable students to find out more about research methods and thesis drafting.

- *How do the admission criteria and admission procedures measure up to international standards?*

The ET has been provided with the data that students passing the external secondary school leaving examination may enter the English language programme. This measures up appropriately to the international standards, as most of the academic programmes in the developed educational systems require that students pass an external exam prior to entering the programme.

- *Is the ratio of academic/artistic staff to students appropriate?*

Appropriate.

12.2. Staff

- *Does the institution have an adequate proportion of permanent staff and appropriate proportions of permanent and external staff?*

According to the data provided, the two programmes evaluated (English Language, BA and English Language, MA) have the following structure

- 74.20 % of Academic staff is Full Time, (no. of staff is 23 from 31)
- 25.80 % of Academic staff is Part time, (no. of staff is 8 from 31)

The proportions above show that there are two thirds of full-time staff and one third of part-time staff. This is a good sign that most of the employees are full time employed by AAB, which gives most of the staff the feeling of belonging to the institution. They might also be more dedicated to their work and esp. to the students studying at AAB. The ET recommends that they continue with good practice.

- *Does the academic staff demonstrate proven ability at a high academic and didactic level and are their qualifications appropriate to the positions they hold within the institution according to the basic criteria?*

Most of the academic staff seem to be very dedicated to their work and they appear to use appropriate teaching methods, such as communicative language teaching approach. They also have a very good relation with the students as the latter have expressed a very positive perspective on the teaching process.

Regarding the qualifications of the staff employed we would urge them to finalise their PhD studies as soon as possible and begin investing more time and expertise into the research work. The ET would recommend that the academic staff start collaborating

with other professionals from other AAB faculties (esp. psychology, arts etc) in doing collaborative research projects and also involving MA students in small-scale research studies, which if designed properly may lead to publishable articles.

12.3. *Research and International Co-operation*

- *Is the teaching staff involved in research activities inside or outside the institution, and do these research activities feed back into teaching/course contents?*

As said above, the academic staff does attempt to carry out research within the country. They are active in publishing their work in their own scientific journals and this must be encouraged in the future, too. However, the teaching staff need to start to collaborate with the international research community more and set a plan to contribute their research findings to the international high-impact journals. This should be a long-term plan which may only become achievable if the staff are able to attend conferences abroad (not only in the neighbouring countries but in the countries with a long tradition in language research), do post-doc studies at established universities, collaborate in international projects etc.

- *Is the extent and the quality of international cooperation in research and teaching adequate?*

Studying the provided data and discussing a number of issues related to international cooperation and teaching process, it seems that teaching is at an adequate level. The staff know how to motivate students, how to make them become active learners, how to incorporate ICT in everyday life of the students etc. As far as teaching is concerned it appears to be at a high level of quality.

International cooperation of the research needs improvement, such as international project (across Europe and the world), and publications in journals, which are internationally recognised. It is unfortunately the case that this is difficult to achieve in the very near future due to the difficulties the citizens of Kosovo have in order to be able to travel and apply for projects.

- *Are students involved in research and cooperation projects?*

This is difficult to answer, as the data do not give enough evidence. The ET would recommend if this is not already the case that the teaching staff do involve students in carrying out the research, esp. via small-scale projects and MA theses.

12.4. *Finances and Infrastructure/Space and Equipment*

The buildings that the ET was able to visit are absolutely welcoming and the newness makes the teaching staff and the students feel motivated. This is very important for the classroom climate and the well being of teachers and students.

The ET would though urge the authorities of the AAB College to provide classrooms with computers and projectors. This is of vital importance in order for the teachers to use ICT appropriately in language classes.

Being able to observe the library, and the number of books on the shelves, the ET would urge the authorities to fill the library with more recent reference books on translation, language acquisition, lexicology, general linguistics etc.

13. Proposal for the decision on accreditation and reaccreditation

The team of experts **proposes (re)accreditation** (with conditions specified in the specific programme reports above) all programmes submitted for accreditation or reaccreditation by AAB College as follows:

1. Reaccredit BA programme in Musicology for 5 years.
2. Reaccredit BA programme in Computer Science for 5 years.
3. Reaccredit BA programme in Interior Design 5 years.
4. Reaccredit BA programme in Painting and Visual Arts for 5 years.
5. Reaccredit BA programme in Mass Communication for 5 years.
6. Reaccredit BA programme in English Language for 5 years.
7. Reaccredit MA programme in English Language for 5 years.
8. Reaccredit MA programme in Banking and finance for 5 years.
9. Reaccredit MA programme in Computer Science for 5 years.
10. Reaccredit MA programme in Mass Communication and Journalism for 5 years.
11. Reaccredit MA programme in Management and informatics for 3 years.
12. Accredited MA programme in Graphic Design for 3 years.