Final Report

submitted to the Kosovo Accreditation Agency on a site visit to inspect

Evolucion Academy (2017-2020)

with its Study programme

"Media Arts" (BA)

11th June 2017

Expert Team:

Bettina Henkel (Vienna, Austria)

Doris Carstensen (Salzburg, Austria)

Kosovo Accreditation Agency

The expert team (ET) was impressed with the vitality of the representatives of AKADEMIA EVOLUCION with whom they met: Besnik Shatri and Lorik Muçaj representing the management, Fatos Bytyci, Valter Lucaj, Shprese Mulliqi acting as responsibles for the study programme course team, teaching staff and students.

The ET was impressed by the wide range of study programmes at AKADEMIA EVOLUCION (AE) and their accreditation history.

We are indebted to all members who attended the site visit. The discussions offered several interesting aspects about the teaching and learning practice, the institution and its current state.

Also, we want to thank Kosovo Accreditation Agency and its office for support, and for engaging us as experts and their expressed trust.

Additionally, the experts received further documents on request on May 31st:

- Additional Syllabi
- Recent market research for the media arts programme
- Media art statistics on students and staff, male and female
- Report and proof of the implementation of recommendations expert report 2014

AE sent comments on the draft report on 9th June 2017 which the ET has considered.

2. ACADEMIC PROGRAMME AND STUDENT MANAGEMENT

2.1. Mission of the Programme

The programme Media Arts is characterised by AE as an academic, artistic and vocational programme. It enables students to acquire artistic and academic practice and to focus on professional practices using film and TV production techniques (SER).

It reveals to be a study programme, which is highly and practically oriented on journalism, communication and production in the context of television, digital media and online portals as well as film. Discussions during the site visit reveal it to be "Video Editing and TV-Journalism" which is the internal working title or subtitle of the programme. It is a modern education for skilled media producers, that stresses the importance of practical video and journalistic working skills, and work field techniques like cooperation in teams, division of task, or otherwise one-man-operations.

The ET was informed, that an early programme concept referred to British study programmes on Media Arts. The ET could not comprehend this reasoning by the actual composition of courses, teaching content and learning foci of students, which are primarily related to TV practice but not to artistic creation through and in media. In general media arts are characterized by complex challenges technically, referentially and artistically, and an increasing input from a quickly developing variety of media. Basically, Media Arts refer to contemporary art

production and mostly is based on conceptual art. Both elements are marginalized represented in the study programme. Fine art itself, and media art as part of contemporary art, are not part of the curriculum neither theoretically nor practically. An interdisciplinary and artistic approach (SER 2.6) is hard to see in academic and practical teaching.

The following report addresses relevant elements of the study programme necessary to provide an education in "Video Editing and TV-Journalism".

Recommendation: Naming the programme "Video/Film production and TV-journalism" as discussed with the management. It might be better to call a spade a spade then to stick to former concepts, which have become outdated by the recent adjustments in the curriculum to ensure coverage of practical topics in the field of TV and new media.

2.2. Market Research

The first market research provided in the actual SER is basically identical to the previous report from 2014.

On request AE promised a more recent market research. This text provides the known text passages and additionally a short overview of Media Landscape in KOSOVO (without date), and an introduction. There the author of the market research stated, that

"During the processing of data, information and after sharing the joint experience and thought, it was concluded that:

- Media landscape in Kosovo is changing;
- Media Arts programme Learning Outcomes fulfil the need on the traditional and new media companies' active in the market;
- Students shall be equipped with more technical skills, so that they can be active in several processes of media communication;
- The profession of Media Artist must be promoted nationally and in the region;
- Students must be more active in practicing the profession on their last year of studies;" (add. document "Market research")

The market research indicates the need for change in the curriculum and adaption of more practical journalistic skills for news and other formats and to consider digital innovations and working conditions in the media market. It was done in cooperation with institutional partner RTV 21, and two advertisement and media agencies.

The ET seriously doubt, that AE still has the aim to "transform students into professional artists" and be an experimental centre for promoting artistic values (SER 2.5.) because the market research shows no awareness of artistic approaches, and individual development which might enable students to transform in a different way than being a skilled production professional in media companies.

2.3. Curriculum

The curriculum under review covers three years of study. The first year provides basic introductions of practical techniques in filming (concept/script, directing, production, editing) and general professional knowledge in TV or Media journalism. Additionally, photography is taught. The only references on media art is made during the first year in the subject "media art and communication". This subject is taught by a journalist – not by an artist or art historian or theoretician.

The second year emphasises TV studio production, TV journalism, and narratology. Film history and photography are taught as well. The first-mentioned appears only once in the curriculum. A differentiation between genres, which was in place in the previous curriculum, disappeared.

The third year mainly consist of practical work and students' media projects.

The subjects are mostly oriented on TV/film production and journalistic needs for TV. Although applicable skills and knowledge to produce common TV/film format are stressed in the learning outcomes it might be possible to give more attention to different techniques in camera work, DOP, audio-recording and audio-editing, lighting, story boarding to achieve the qualification needs. Courses in latest media technologies e.g. 3D, internet streaming platforms might should be taken into consideration soon.

Creativity enhancing input (e.g. story board drawing) are not represented in the subjects but might be part of the lessons. The curriculum consists of only five obligatory and a single (!) elective course each semester.

Without the additionally submitted detailed syllabi a consecutive course covering two semesters seem to be identically each semester. The general course description in the SER neglected progress and differentiations about the content, learning outcomes, methods of teaching and course literature. The ET was astonished about this little informative value of the course descriptions, which should provide guidance for the students as well.

During the discussion with the management it turned out as a "copy&pastemistake", that the programme integrates three different qualification levels (4,5 and 6) and was designed in modules. Factual the programme aims to be on qualification level 6 and the curriculum consists of courses, out of them some are consecutive.

Recommendation: Due to the complexity of the discipline video/film editing and journalism more subjects should be taught. The subjects should differentiate and examine theory and practise. Relevant topics in specific techniques of filming should be offered to achieve the documented learning outcomes. Theoretical subjects in the disciplines (film history, media history, media theory and the responsibility of journalists) should supplement the curriculum, because there is a severe need for a theoretical basis to be a reflective practitioner in Kosovo media production and journalism.

2.4. Academic Profile

The study programme consists of approximately 20% academic studies and 80% practical subjects. The programme is vocational oriented and includes a large proportion of practical work as described in the SER and in the syllabi. Academic

subjects are rare in quantity. Only one theoretical course is offered per year, some of them are electives. Compared with a regular BA programme in applied sciences and the European standards the academic profile is low.

The courses itself cover a wide range variety of issues. All courses are intertwining practise and theory whether it makes sense or not. Whether this strategy might cause a dilution of academic and theoretical input was also addressed during the site visit. With the insights of the students it became obvious that they do not work out the minimal theoretical background represented in the reading list. They preferred to obtain short summaries by the teachers but are not willing to read relevant key literature in Albanian or English.

A subject like art history of the 20th century is already offered at AE in other programmes and might be a valuable supplement regarding the general knowledge.

A more academic approach will be consistently achieved with courses in media theory in context of socio-political context, gender studies, post-war and postcolonial studies. Aspects of future of television and its disruptive development in times of internet should be reflected in the programme as well.

The elective course "language culture" aims inter alia to be able to write neatly Albanian and demonstrate knowledge on principles of writing and communication. This course is not a substitute for academic writing, which was part in the previous programme.

Recommendation: The course team should strengthen the theoretical and academic approach of the programme and integrate basic theoretical, historical knowledge and actual theoretical and socio-political discourses. The existing theoretical courses should be strengthened in their academic approach to give more scientific input with examinations. These courses enable students to transfer knowledge into practice.

2.5. Academic Freedom

During the site visit the management and course team could convince the ET of academic freedom in the course. The interrelation with powerful partners from the media industry causes an appreciation of values and careful balancing between the actual needs of the working field and lasting qualification needs of highly skilled and educated graduates.

2.5.1. Self-Studies

The study programme consists of approximately 50% direct input and guided practical exercises in the institution. 50% is left for self-studies with homework, preparation, and practical projects mostly in a TV studio. During the site visit the students reported a great emphasis on guided project work throughout the programme and teachers from practice. The ET gain the impression that the self-study time in other subjects is less structured.

During the meeting with the students it turned out, that only one course per day from 5 pm onwards is taught. Some students do not attend all courses, although there are sanctions. In the third year of study the students vary their attendance of courses and narrow down their subjects in favour of their practical works.

Recommendation: Increase contact hours in academic/scientific subjects and enhance the guidance for self-studies in this part of the programme. Enable students to have more choices in their independent organisation of the studies with broadening the variety of electives.

2.6. Electives

Subjects marked as electives are one per semester, that means no selection can be made. The ET from the 2014 Evaluation pointed out in their Final Report that a minimum of 10~% of subjects should be elective. This recommendation isn't fulfilled.

Elective courses are under review with the intention that they should be improved clearly in quantity and quality. One consideration is that elective studies increase the relevance of the program to the needs of European standards. The expert team noted this and distinguished between:

- Electives that would broaden the scope of a student's studies (e.g. through consideration of a topic such as discursive theories like Gender Studies, sociology, media theory); and
- Electives that would offer the opportunity for greater depth and specialism practically and academically (e.g. 3D animation, internet broadcasting, audio recording, audio editing).
- Electives should be offered several times and not be consecutive only.
- Electives could be shared with the other programmes at the EA.

The open access policy at AE to attend courses in other study programmes as electives neither was documented or told nor was reported by the students to be a common practice.

Recommendation: The course team should consider broadening the offer of elective studies. Each semester a minimum of 10% by ETCS of subjects should be electives, the quantity should be increased and accessible of all study years/semesters. The institution could work out a body of subjects for all programmes at the EA like art history, critical theory (gender studies, postcolonial studies etc., as well as economical entrepreneurial courses).

2.7. Didactic Concept

The overarching phrase of 70 % practise 30 % theory and intertwining both in the syllabi might be too simplistic and suits not every subject. Critically rethinking and differentiation of the theory-practise-ratio should be taken into consideration.

During the meeting with the responsible persons for the programme it became clear that the strength of the programme is its overarching didactic concept in practise: Each semester the teaching staff coordinates their teaching activities and react on topics and learning steps in different courses. A student gets input from different perspectives, techniques and realisations according to a practical topic. This is possible because of the small group of teachers and students as well as the highly motivated and collaborative characters in the teaching staff. In the SER it was not described and reflected as such in detail, but the syllabi are having a reference to the interlocking process. More than this, it is a living culture in teaching staff.

Because the teacher/student ratio is good and teachers are highly dedicated, personal guidance of students is on top level. In the first semester, a personal student's supervisor will be appointed. The teachers' commitment is to be commended, they provide several opportunities to experience and show practical approaches. A distinct level of oversight and supervision by the responsible teachers for the internship and practical work in the last year of study is established.

Video/film editing, TV journalism and production is a field in which it is important that all concerned should be able to work effectively as either members or leaders of project teams. The students lively reported their experience and gave evidence that they regularly encounter the need to practice these skills from the first year of study.

Recommendation: The course team should document the didactic concepts in practise and integrate it into the curriculum systematically to ensure the quality of the programme and spirit of the teaching staff and students for next generations.

2.8. Teaching Process and Examinations

The Syllabi are of different quality. Some of them show a weak understanding of methodology, prerequisites and assessment. In some cases, e-learning-tools are in use. An overall culture of stimulating students on independent thinking and asking questions is to be commended.

Unfortunately, teaching methods are not yet reflected and the use of e-learning and blended learning tools does not play a role within the general approach of the institution.

There were teacher trainings in previous years. This staff development should be integrated in the institutional policy.

AE describes examination and re-examination in case of failing the examination seriously. Students confirm the practice. Students are expected to participate actively in class and therefore, must always be in attendance, which is recorded. Sanctions for breaking the engagements are in place.

The examination of the final project (BA thesis) is carried out properly.

Recommendation: Ongoing further training and support in reflecting and adaption of teaching methods according to European standards would improve teaching systematically. The institution should support e-learning infrastructure and development in this field.

2.9. ETCS and Teaching Hours

It turned out as a "copy & pasted-mistake", that the SER documented three different misconceptions of calculating the ETCS.

The ECTS, teaching hours as well some other information in the overview differ from the submitted syllabi:

	Overview	,		Syllabus				
Course	Lectures Exercises		ECTS	Lectures Exercises		ECTS		

Directing & Pro- duction I	1	3	6	6		6	
Narratology 1	1	2	5	1	2	5 ≠workload 145	
Narratology 2	1	2	6	3	1	6 ≠workload 155	
TV Studio production 1	1	3	6	1 (*)	3	6 ≠workload 112	
TV Studio Production 2	1	3	6	1	3	8 ≠workload 112	
Scriptwriting 1	2	2	5	2	2	5 ≠workload 145	
Scriptwriting 2	2	2	5	2	2	5 ≠workload 145 or 161?	
Television Journa- lism 1	2	2	6	2	2	6 ≠workload 156 or 154?	
Television Journa- lism 2	2	2	6	2	2	6 ≠workload 156 or 154?	
TV Journalism practice 1	1	3	6	1(*)	3	6 ≠workload 156 or 154?	
TV Journalism practice 2	1	3	8	2 (**)	2	8 ≠workload 181 or 154?	
Production of live programmes	1	3	5	1	3	5 ≠workload 160 or 112?	
Realisation of TV programme 1	1	2	5	3		5 ≠workload 148	

Realisation of TV programme 2	1	3	6	3		5 ≠workload 148	
Law&Ethics	1	1	5	2 2		5	
Professional practice	2	6	10	(***)		10 ≠workload 150	
Final project	3	9	15	(***)		15 = wor- kload 375	

- (*) The course is in the third semester
- (**) The course is in the fourth semester
- (***) There are lectures and meetings with the students according to the syllabus

Table 1 ECTS comparison SER and Syllabi

The ETCS in the last semester must be calculated without the professional practice, which might be correctly classified "internship".

Only one scheme for the five compulsory courses is a high amount of 4-6 ETCS with only 1-2 lecture hours and up to three practical exercise hours is in place. For example, the single "elective" course per semester covers 2-5 ETCS, which means 50 up to 125 hours of workload.

In general, the allocation of credits and the workload in the courses need to be reviewed carefully. Additionally, the imbalanced workload indicates enough space in the curriculum to implement more subjects and elective courses with realistic workloads.

Recommendation: Clear inconsistencies and check every workload in every subject. 25-30 hours of workload are valid 1 ECTS. By implementing additional courses and subjects the balancing of workloads should be more appropriate and the ETCS should be awarded realistically. The ratio of contact hours and self-studies must be restructured according to the topic of the course. Consulting the European ECTS Guidelines might be recommended.

2.10. Admission Criteria

The admission procedure isn't described extensively.

Recommendation: Gain transparency about application procedures, develop standards, entry requirements and criteria. This will enhance the credibility of the programme.

3.1. Staffing

The staff is partly new recruited because of the recent legal regulations and changes in the course content and purpose of the study programme. The academic profile and background of the staff provides an informative overview. Journalism, film and social science made up of 88% of lecturers.

Recently some changes were necessary because of personal reasons as well, e.g. the former head of the study programme is temporarily seconded to the ministry for education and one member will finish her PhD.

In the SER description of staff members distinguish between teaching staff in full time (3) and part time staff (5). The responsible team for the programme are full time staff members. Out of them two members are PhD candidates.

There are slight differences concerning the fulltime engagement between the staff list of AE and the official list of KAA.

Engagement	Name	Surname	Gender	Academic Degree	Field of Study
Linguagement	rvanic	Sarrianic	Genaci	Degree	Tield of Study
Full Time	Fatos	Bytyci	Male	Master	Diplomacy and Media
Full Time	Majlinda	Hoxha	Female	Master	Fine Arts
Full Time	Valter	Lucaj	Male	Master	Film Screenplay
Full Time	Shprese	Mulliqi	Female	Master	Mass Communication
Full Time	Arber	Vllahiu	Male	Bachelor	Philology
Full Time	Agron	Vula	Male	Master	Montage
Part Time	Musli	Bozhdaraj	Male	Master	English Language
Part Time	Faton	Ismajli	Male	Master	Journalism and Public Relations

Table 2 KAA official staff list AE Media Arts

A differentiation because of academic and professional qualification nor an academic career development seemed not to be in place. AE plans to support staff members in their individual and academic development with individual agreements. The awareness of academic progress is to be commended.

CVs submitted document staff members with outstanding qualification profile, five journalists with academic backgrounds, three staff members are working in the field of TV and film, one artist in engaged – many of them with international and highly professional qualifications.

3.2. Visiting / Guest Lecturer

Guest lectures are integrated in the courses. In the courses, guest lecturers are usually the additional human resources from professional fields, which is not documented in the staff list. Their engagement is voluntary and is highly appreciated by students and staff members.

3.3. Gender Imbalance

There is still a marked gender imbalance in the programme and mirrored in the institution. However, the female students gave a confident account of their ability to work as members of teams in leadership and contributing roles. It was noted that the staff team also has a significant male bias, though efforts are to be made to counter this in the AE staff recruitment strategy.

Staff statistics for Media Arts programme

Media Arts study pro- gramme	F	M	Total
Academic staff	3	6	9
in %	33,3	66,7	

Table 3 Staff in Media Arts

(source: AE)

Student statistics for Media Arts programme

Media Arts study pro- gramme	First year (2016/ 2017)		Second year (2015/2016)		Third year (2014/2015)							
	F	М	Total	F	М	Total	F	М	Total	F	М	Total
Students	6	10	16	2	14	16	5	19	24	13	43	56
in %	37,5	62,5		12,5	87,5		20,8	79,2		23,2	76,8	

Table 4 Students in Media Arts (source AE)

Recommendation: Because AE is able to play a leading role and to set the standards in the education of next media professionals' generations, more attention should be given to gender balance in the case of both students and staff.

4.1. Commitment

The ET must admit, that they never have met such a lively group of students, who are open and highly motivated. Also, most of them were speaking fluently English and translated if necessary for the colleagues. They demonstrated awareness of the importance of mutual reliance.

4.2. Employed and Professional Students

Most of the students are working part-time during the semester or semester break. They can combine their studies and working agreements because most of the courses are held after 5pm. It is not clearly stated how many students are professional students.

5. RESEARCH AND INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

5.1. Partnership with Industry

It is obvious that the close connection to the national private TV broadcaster RTV21 is concept of the programme. The dependency of the whole programme on RTV 21 is enormous. EA is using the relevant and sufficient equipment and space for production in the TV station once a week. Students gain insights into practice by practitioners from the TV station. RTV 21 was the first station giving the institution and its students access to professional working conditions. The management reported that this partnership is driven by loyalty and fairness.

The ET 2014 pointed out that they consider risk factors that might arise from a long-term reliance on an external partner with its own agenda (Final Report 2014 4.1.). In the actual SER there are neither reflections on that topic nor does AE show a tendency for a better risk minimizing infrastructural planning and development in their own facilities.

During the SV several options for additional media partnerships were mentioned. With the additional documents AE stated, that beside RVT 21 also collaborates with KTV, RTK and TV Dukagjini and other media institutions as gazetaex-press.com, zico TV, and vibe adv agency.

Recommendation: Broadening the strategic network partners for the study programme and its students should be institutionalized officially in mentoring, internships, and access to divers media infrastructure. Therefore, partner agreements and clearly stated out hours of student attendance are indispensable. This might be a strategy on risk minimalizing cooperation management.

5.2. Research

In the SER the institutional research strategy is documented. AE supports staff and students' activities with cofounding, publications. During the SV there was a rather vague understanding of research in general and applied research. The course team and teaching staff are to be commended on their rich and profound knowledge in their fields as experts. The ET is convinced, that applied research is possible, but the examples for research should be classified systematically. Not every project outside the institution in the professional field turns out to be research, not every student project is meant to be research. Publishing text- and working books might contribute to basic research in case they are under review.

The expert team welcomed the course team's individual research works. Unfortunately, the development of a research centre and associated funding, and establishment of an interactive chronicle or webzine is not in place. Even the publication of students work on the institutional website does not represent the current status nor the volume of practical works. Some of them were invited to festivals or competitions.

Recommendation: The ET noted a strong interest in regional TV journalism and media culture. The ET encourage a research and critical focus on the recent trends in "Freedom of Expression, Media and Information in Kosovo"

(http://www.cohu.org/repository/docs/Freedom of Expression, Media and Information in Kosovo 529396.pdf).

Knowledge transfer through training actions for students as well as research staff might be worth to establish more participation and integration of students.

6. FINANCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE/SPACE AND EQUIPMENT

6.1. Finance

AE has a strong market position and a very stable financial situation.

Unfortunately, the SER provided by mistake the financial planning of the study programme FASHION DESIGN.

The ET was informed on the correct share of the budget for the programme under review through the comments of the institution. It reveals to be 15 % of the total budget. This seems very good proportioned because the programme under review owes about 10% of the enrolled students, and is cost-intensively.

Besides the mistaken spreadsheet the outline of the costs and planed budget is informative and emphasizes the importance of supporting the academic units at AE in teaching and research with different measurements.

6.2. Space and Equipment

The cooperation with RTV 21 ensures equipment and space for the practical part of the study programme.

AE provides only one working station for editing and post production. In the editing studio, a second monitor as well as a preview monitor and sufficient speakers are missing. Most of the students are using their individual digital equipment and work at their private workplaces. Without these private investments, the study programme does not meet the usual sense of what can be studied and learnt. It nevertheless remains important to give priority to the provision of inhouse facilities: For example, for staging the recording of sound and vision and

enough post-production facilities to support the work of <u>several</u> teams of students.

Recommendation: AE should provide enough first-step-infrastructure preparing several student teams in video and media production. There is an urgent need for AE infrastructure investment planning. A separation of the studio and the editing room might be taken into consideration.

7. QUALITY MANAGEMENT

7.1. Accreditation History and Knowledge Management

AKADEMIA EVOLUCION has undergone several accreditation procedures since 2008. The programme under review is not attached to the institutional accreditation cycle where other operating study programmes are included. This causes extra effort to change-up and adapt the documents. The ET was astonished that after three accreditation procedures the SER have less to say than to copy important parts of the report (market research, target groups, financial plan from fashion design e.g.) and neglect relevant performance data (students, teachers) and annual programme reports or the handbook of studies. The KAA standard for the SER describes minimum requirements and any additional information and data giving evidence for a high quality in teaching and learning should be one's self-interest. The documents stood in contrast with the high-quality meetings during the site visit.

Several recommendations for quality enhancement and programme development were provided in the previous expert report. The documentation of implementation was provided by the Quality Assurance Office on demand. The importance of capturing the lessons of experience made during past accreditation procedures is obvious. It might be suitable to follow an oral tradition, but in written form it is documented and will become tangible and transparent knowledge.

7.2. Questionnaires and Feedback

A questionnaire evaluating the subject and students' satisfaction with the course and learning efforts is in place. The results will be reported to the Quality Assurance Committee.

The self-evaluation and questionnaire for academic staff as part of the ongoing quality assurance was not documented in the SER.

Other forms of monitoring and evaluation the institutional quality are a survey on administrative services and records of student attendance and activities.

The Quality Assurance Unit analysis the material and reports to the Quality Assurance Committee.

7.3. Organisation and coordination of Quality Assurance

The institutional regulations about examinations, ongoing student assessment, grading, students' teamwork and forms (e.g. diploma supplement) are in a good condition. The small administration unit supports the quality assurance systematically. AE has developed its own traceability software for teaching and learning management.

Quality assurance covers a broad task profile that includes the core task of coordinating the academic quality management with questionnaires and surveys, accreditation procedures and the review of study programmes.

The head of the departments are responsible for the adaption and modification of existing ones. The academic board will be involved and reports to the Board of directors.

During the site visit it was reported that the teaching team was not involved in writing the SER. Regularly the head of the study programme and the quality manager consults the staff members and consider the possibility of mistakes and inconsistencies in course descriptions and syllabi.

The quality assurance measurements are on a path to develop a regular quality enhancement.

Recommendation: Involve actively academic and non-academic staff members in accreditation procedures and self documentation to create more ownership and knowledge of the quality assurance requirements.

In future, there should be a revision tracking for each study programme. Minor and major changes in the curriculum must be documented by the institution. This recommendation addresses KAA and the institution under review.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The programme under evaluation is not an art programme on Media Art.

Due to the gap between the current title of the study programme "Media arts" and its purpose, objectives and course contents which reveals it to be the study on TV/film production with a strong focus on tv-journalism the ET cannot recommend an accreditation. The ET acknowledges AKADEMIA EVOLUCION' intention to provide this applied study programme, which already is internally referred "video/film editing and tv-journalism".

Besides this there are several formal mistakes and misconceptions, and the opening of additional subjects is indispensable for a higher academic quality.