

Report to the Kosovo Accreditation Agency
on a site visit to undertake an institutional and programme evaluation at

THE KOSOVO ART ACADEMY

on Tuesday 2 May 2017

Programmes:

Bachelor of Arts in Design
Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Design Multimedia
Bachelor of Arts in Photography

International Expert Team:

Professor Alan Brickwood
Professor Bruce Brown

INTRODUCTION

1. This report is of a site visit that took place to evaluate an application by the Kosovo Art Academy (hereafter referred to as the 'Academy') for initial institutional accreditation and for the accreditation of three new bachelor programmes.

| | | |
|---------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Design 180 ECTS, EQF 6 | Graphic Design Multimedia 180 ECTS, EQF 6 | Photography 180 ECTS, EQF 6 |
|---------------------------|--|--------------------------------|

The site visit took place on Tuesday 2 May 2017.

2. The Expert Team (ET) comprised:
 - Professor Alan Brickwood, MDes(RCA), DipAD, Research and Higher Education Consultant, Alan Brickwood & Associates.
 - Professor Bruce Brown, MA(RCA), BA(Hons), Visiting Professor, The Royal College of Art, London.
3. Support for the ET was provided by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) and, in particular, by Ms Furtuna Mehmeti, Acting Director of KAA and a colleague of hers to both of whom the ET wish to record their gratitude.

BASIS OF THE EVALUATIONS

4. This being an initial evaluation, the Academy did not formally exist. The ET were shown a building to accommodate the Academy, where most of the discussions took place, but there were no students and no work to examine. The ET therefore based its evaluation upon a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and other documentation submitted by the Academy and the outcome of discussions carried out during the visit. All documentation was supplied in advance of the visit.
5. The documentation included, amongst other items, a formal statement by the Libera Accademia di Bella Arti (LABA) of its legal commitment to provide *'technical and academic assistance for development and enhancement of academic quality and teaching and learning programmes that are proposed for accreditation ...'*. Effectively this formal letter and other commitments recorded in the SER constituted an underwriting by LABA of financial, academic, technical and managerial support to the Academy for a period of three years following approval by KAA.

No additional documentation was requested.

SITE VISIT

6. During the visit, the ET met with two key groups of persons critical to the leadership, management and academic delivery of programmes at the Academy.
 - Director and founder of LABA and future President of the Academy, Professor Roberto Dorzanelli.
 - Academy Director
 - Director of Administration

- Eight members of the three programme teaching teams including the three programme leaders.
7. A meeting was held at the conclusion of visit with the President and senior managers of the Academy.

INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION

LIBERA ACCADEMIA di BELLA ARTI AND THE KOSOVO ART ACADEMY

8. There had been a previous evaluation of both institutional and similar programme applications in 2016 conducted by an earlier ET appointed by KAA. The report on that previous visit did not recommend approvals.
9. The 2016 ET were unsure then of the relationship between LABA and the Academy and were also concerned that the proposals seemed more appropriate to those of an 'applied arts college' at level 5 (HNC/HND). This they felt was due to an apparent emphasis on work-based skills - not upon the intellectual development of students. The latter being an essential ingredient for level 6 higher education.
10. The 2016 ET had reported that LABA was accredited as a higher education institution by the Italian Ministry, law nr.508 from 21.12.1999 and that it belongs to the group of 'Accademie di Belle Arti Legalmente Riconosciute'¹. They had similarly pointed to the homepage of ANABIN of the German Cultural Ministry Conference – Central Office for Foreign Education where the status of LABA is classified as a higher education institution, having status H+. This means that degrees from this institution could be proved by a German institution to be equal to higher education.
11. At the initial meeting with the President and leadership of the Academy, the ET probed these earlier queries in detail. In particular, the ET questioned the level of work conducted at LABA in Brescia, Italy and received a clear response from the President that the proposal was for the Academy to deliver programmes of higher education and that LABA was unquestionably

¹ AFAM <http://www.afam.miur.it/argomenti/istituzioni/accademie-di-belle-arti-legalmente-riconosciute.aspx>

competent and qualified to support those intentions. He described how LABA had been operating for some 20 years, was highly respected in Italy and had other established satellite institutions in a number of other countries outside Italy². In response to a specific question he confirmed that LABA currently had around 2,000 students of which 100% were registered on higher education programmes at level 6 and higher.

12. The President also added that, of those 2,000 students, the completion rate was 90% with 70% entering employment upon graduation.
13. In response to further questions, he also made clear that the proposition before KAA was not for any franchise arrangement. It was for a self-standing new Academy that would itself be entirely responsible to the KAA for quality, standards and its delegated authority to award degrees. The Academy would have the additional benefit of initial resourcing, marketing, branding and general support provided by LABA whose interest was for growing the LABA model of higher education internationally.
14. The ET acknowledged LABA's financial interest in the Academy. LABA was making a substantial investment in the Academy and would expect a return on its investment, in due course.

THE KOSOVO ART ACADEMY

Mission Statement

15. The ET received clarification of an array of statements in the SER on Mission and Vision. From meetings with both the leadership and with the programme's teaching teams it became clear that the overall driving Mission was that more commonly associated with what might loosely be described as the 'beaux arts' approach. This is more common to countries such as Italy and France where 'a passion for aesthetics and creativity' of a fairly loose nature dominates, often with less practical underpinning than what might be found on most industrial or craft orientated design programmes in other parts of the world. The latter, for example, more typically born out of the early 20thC German Bauhaus movement or from a Scandinavian passion for natural materials.
16. The ET were entirely satisfied with this style of approach and especially by the engagement with it from the teaching teams.

Academic Freedom, Programmes and Student Management

17. The previous 2016 ET report expressed concerns that curriculum material had been simply transferred wholesale from LABA without any involvement of the local Kososvo teaching teams. Those concerns, and others of a similar kind, formed by that earlier ET about academic freedom, content and student management being compromised by LABA, were allayed.

² Including Vietnam, China and The Cameroons.

18. It was clear from discussions at all levels, and referred to above, that what was being proposed for the Academy in terms of academic direction and content would not be a slavish mirroring of, or imposition by, LABA. Certainly, a substantial amount of the curriculum and syllabuses had been taken from LABA's programmes elsewhere but during discussions with the teaching team it was made very clear to the ET that the material would be 'translated' and implemented appropriately for local conditions.

Staff and Research

19. Consistent with the findings of the 2016 evaluation, the ET was impressed with both the staff it met and by the official listing of both full and part time members of the teaching team provided to them.

International Cooperation

20. The ET were favourably impressed by the range of opportunities that would be readily available to students and staff for international cooperation via the Academy's relationship with LABA. This is an important matter for any higher institution but one that would normally be difficult to achieve at present in Kosovo.
21. The ET were informed of arrangements typically in place between LABA and its associated higher education institutions outside Italy and how those arrangements would be extended automatically to the Academy. Student and staff exchanges and visits would be the norm including internships for supervised student work experience and collaboration in projects. Formal commitments to the Academy by LABA already included a reference to the supply of four senior and experienced staff from LABA each year.

Organisation, Management and Planning

22. Basic components to ensure the Academy would have appropriate mechanisms in place to not only maintain but also continually improve the standard of the educational experience for students were evident in the SER. It will be for the Academy to develop these over time from its experience of how best to do things appropriate to local circumstances and constraints, whilst adhering to the requirements of KAA, and especially effective annual monitoring.
23. The ET commended the inclusion of organigrams to describe structures and procedures but formed an impression that more could be done, in due course, to sharpen the distinction between policy / strategic planning and management. The ET also felt the Academy might find it appropriate to streamline what seemed to them to be structures and procedures for both academic and non-academic matters that might otherwise become disproportionately laborious for a small institution.

Finance and Resourcing

24. Two formal 'Letters of Reference' from LABA were provided in advance of the visit and made available to the ET. The first being a more general letter

of support for academic development, the second a financial commitment. Together these guarantee collaboration and support for academic operations, development and enhancement and financial support for staff and all students for a period of three years from when the Academy gets accreditation from KAA.

Development Planning

25. The current proposal is for an annual intake of 30 students for each of the three programmes amounting overall to 270 students - without taking any attrition into account. This, the ET believed to be a reasonable number providing staffing and other resources keep apace.
26. The SER also refers to there being a review within the first three years of the Academy's operation with a view to further developments, including MA provision.

Recommendations

27. ***Without any actual evidence of students or student work the ET had to base its evaluation entirely upon the SER, other documentation submitted by the Academy and the outcome of discussions carried out during the visit. The ET therefore had an important set of questions to which it needed to obtain satisfactory answers:***
 - ***Whether that written and oral evidence satisfied the concerns raised previously by an ET in 2016?***
 - ***Whether the evidence it had gained was sufficient to give confidence that this new institution could meet the minimum threshold standards to survive and prosper as an institution of higher education?***
28. ***The ET did gain that confidence. It believed previous concerns had been addressed satisfactorily and that there is sufficient evidence for it to recommend the proposed Kosovo Art Academy be Accredited for an initial period of one year.***

PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION

ALL PROGRAMMES

Academic Programmes and Student Management

29. The ET was able to discuss in detail with the teaching teams a range of issues across all the programmes concerning entry requirements; aims, objectives and learning outcomes; actual content of the curriculum and syllabuses; and assessment.
30. The ET sought to clarify various parts of the SER as it seemed to them that, whilst the material was evident, it was not always as clear as it might be.

- There has to be a clear articulation of what **entrance requirements** there ought to be to ensure appropriate students are recruited. What academic ability is required for a student to be able to benefit from a demanding study programme and successfully develop themselves intellectually? How can they demonstrate potential creative ability? How can they demonstrate motivation and how is all this going to be managed?
 - There has to be a clear articulation of the **aims and objectives of the programme** with some fair description of scale and limits. What the course is setting out to achieve in terms of outcomes overall - not just the learning outcomes of individual modules. What a typical Academy graduate might be like.
 - Specificity of the **programme of study** students will follow is important so that a student with appropriate abilities on entry will be able to achieve the expected outcomes. There has to be a balance in the curriculum and a distinction between main components of study, supporting parts and electives so that a student can have some choice in determining their own pathway. The teaching and learning process needs to be clearly laid out in terms of methods of delivery, analysis and synthesis and especially the positioning of coursework vis a vis other methods of delivery. The learning and student intellectual development has to be progressive with 'building blocks'. The content has to be vital and progressive and 'stretch' the students.
 - Students need to know what is expected of them in terms of **assessment**. How is that to happen – purpose, frequency and manner? There has to be a clear understanding of the difference between assessment for monitoring and feedback to students and staff; for progression; and for award. Only then can more detailed regulations and procedures on matters such as 'complaint' and 'appeal' be laid down clearly for students to understand.
31. What became obvious to the ET from discussions on these topics was that the lack of clarity was exacerbated partly by translation (there are three languages involved) but also from an over-dependence by the Academy on KAA regulations and formats alone in compiling the SER and other documentation.
32. In many of the examples examined, the ET was told that specific additional information had not been included in the documentation because it was thought to be generally acknowledged in art and design higher education communities to be obvious and that, strictly, it was not required by KAA regulations and templates.
33. KAA regulations are by their very nature general because they need to be applicable to all programmes. Compliance with the regulations referred to above is important and non-negotiable but what the ET believed could have been better was the further descriptive material that would clarify and confirm

the shape and character of these practice-based art and design programmes, however obvious it might seem to those responsible.

34. That additional interpretation and detail was provided readily and highly convincingly during discussions with the teaching teams. For example:
- In response to a query about the absence of any explicit entrance requirements for applicants to demonstrate 'potential creativity ability' and 'motivation', in addition to academic ability, the ET was assured these would be an essential requirement for entry.
 - Towards the latter parts of the programme (semesters 5 & 6), coursework would include some 'major project' to demonstrate students' ability to both analyse their research and information gathering and to synthesise this into a holistic outcome. This would be an outcome that would reflect the overall outcomes of their achievements in accordance with the programmes' aims and objectives.
 - The ratio between the practical and theoretical parts of the programmes would be around 70% to 30% respectively and not the 50/50 mistakenly referred to in some parts of the SER.
35. Without evidence of students or of student work, examination of the proposals by the ET was inevitably theoretical and in most instances ranged across all of the three proposed programmes in Design, in Graphic Design Multimedia, and in Photography. As a consequence, the recording of that examination and findings (below) for each of the programmes is unavoidably similar.

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN DESIGN

Academic Programmes and Student Management

36. The aims and objectives of the programme are consistent with the Academy's Mission Statement and principles of operation.
37. The shape, content and balance of the programme are appropriate to the award of an academic degree.
38. The programme is sound and is understood by the teaching team.
39. The programme is of international standard.
40. The 'beaux art' culture of the Academy and resulting structure of the programme should give full opportunities for independent study, reflection and analysis by students.
41. The allocation of ECTS is appropriate and justified.
42. The intended workload is reasonable and should be manageable for students.

43. Teaching methods and delivery intentions are satisfactory for successful achievement of the programme's aims, objectives and intended outcomes.
44. The academic content is progressive with different elements acting as 'building blocks'.

Staff

45. The ET was impressed with both the staff it met and by the official listing of both full and part time members of the teaching team provided to them. All had postgraduate qualifications. All had significant professional work experience and it was clear from the CVs provided, and from discussions, that many had experience of teaching at higher education level.
46. Arrangements are planned to maintain the effectiveness of the teaching teams through appropriate research, practice and general development.

Research and International Cooperation

47. The ET were very favourably impressed by the range of opportunities that would be readily available to students and staff for international cooperation via the Academy's relationship with LABA.

Finances and Infrastructure/Space and Equipment

48. It was acknowledged that the accommodation and equipment currently in place would need to grow proportionate to the planned growth in numbers and that there may need to be some practical limitations in ambition and the scope of student practical projects during the early start-up stages of the Academy.
49. Examples of how those limitations might materialise were discussed and included whole groups of students (30) on the programme making scale models of a building's interior, and needing to store these prior to assessment and of a student wanting to build a full-size mock-up of a seat made from glass fibre reinforced resin. It was agreed that cooperative arrangements with local organisations and businesses could be invaluable in this context. So too could be access to nearby low grade storage.
50. Much the same can be said of the need for library resources to be increased.

Quality Assurance

51. Intended quality assurance measures are satisfactory and would benefit from refinement and a degree of streamlining over time.

Recommendation

52. ***The ET were confident that previous concerns had been addressed satisfactorily and found sufficient evidence to recommend that the proposed Bachelor Programme in Design be Accredited for an initial period of one year coterminous with the Institutional Accreditation.***

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN GRAPHIC DESIGN MULTIMEDIA

Academic Programmes and Student Management

53. The aims and objectives of the programme are consistent with the Academy's Mission Statement and principles of operation.
54. The shape, content and balance of the programme are appropriate to the award of an academic degree.
55. The programme is sound and is understood by the teaching team.
56. The programme is of international standard.
57. The 'beaux art' culture of the Academy and resulting structure of the programme should give full opportunities for independent study, reflection and analysis by students.
58. The allocation of ECTS is appropriate and justified.
59. The intended workload is reasonable and manageable for students.
60. Teaching methods and delivery intentions are satisfactory for successful achievement of the programme's aims, objectives and intended outcomes.
61. The academic content is progressive with different elements acting as 'building blocks'.

Staff

62. The ET was impressed with both the staff it met and by the official listing of both full and part time members of the teaching team provided to them. All had postgraduate qualifications. All had significant professional work experience and it was clear from the CVs provided, and from discussions, that many had experience of teaching at higher education level.
63. Arrangements are planned to maintain the effectiveness of the teaching team through appropriate research, practice and general development.

Research and International Cooperation

64. The ET were very favourably impressed by the range of opportunities that would be readily available to students and staff for international cooperation via the Academy's relationship with LABA.

Finances and Infrastructure/Space and Equipment

65. It was acknowledged that the accommodation and equipment currently in place would need to grow proportionate to the planned growth in numbers and that there may need to be some practical limitations in ambition and the scope of student practical projects during the early start-up stages of the

Academy. Examples of how those limitations might materialise were discussed and included whole groups of students (30) developing a light show for a theatrical stage production.

66. It was agreed that cooperative arrangements with local organisations and businesses could be invaluable in this context.
67. Much the same can be said of the need for library resources to be increased.

Quality Assurance

68. Intended quality assurance measures are satisfactory and would benefit from refinement and a degree of streamlining over time.

Recommendation

69. ***The ET were confident that previous concerns had been addressed satisfactorily and found sufficient evidence to recommend that the proposed Bachelor Programme in Graphic Design Multimedia be Accredited for an initial period of one year coterminous with the Institutional Accreditation.***

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN PHOTOGRAPHY

Academic Programmes and Student Management

70. The aims and objectives of the programme are consistent with the Academy's Mission Statement and principles of operation.
71. The shape, content and balance of the programme are appropriate to the award of an academic degree.
72. The programme is sound and is understood by the teaching team.
73. The programme is of international standard.
74. The 'beaux art' culture of the Academy and resulting structure of the programme should give full opportunities for independent study, reflection and analysis by students.
75. The allocation of ECTS is appropriate and justified.
76. The intended workload is reasonable and manageable for students.
77. Teaching methods and delivery intentions are satisfactory for successful achievement of the programme's aims, objectives and intended outcomes.
78. The academic content is progressive with different elements acting as 'building blocks'.

Staff

79. The ET was impressed with both the staff it met and by the official listing of both full and part time members of the teaching team provided to them. All had postgraduate qualifications. All had significant professional work experience and it was clear from the CVs provided, and from discussions, that many had experience of teaching at higher education level.
80. Arrangements are planned to maintain the effectiveness of the teaching team through appropriate research, practice and general development.

Research and International Cooperation

81. The ET were very favourably impressed by the range of opportunities that would be readily available to students and staff for international cooperation via the Academy's relationship with LABA.

Finances and Infrastructure/Space and Equipment

82. It was acknowledged that the accommodation and equipment currently in place would need to grow proportionate to the planned growth in numbers and that there may need to be some practical limitations in ambition and the scope of student practical projects during the early start-up stages of the Academy.
83. Examples of how those limitations might materialise were discussed and included whole groups of students (30) engaging with the public using photography as a medium for social interaction, comment and record. It was agreed that cooperative arrangements with local organisations could be invaluable in this context.
84. Much the same can be said of the need for library resources to be increased.

Quality Assurance

85. Intended quality assurance measures are satisfactory and would benefit from refinement and a degree of streamlining over time.

Recommendation

86. ***The ET were confident that previous concerns had been addressed satisfactorily and found sufficient evidence to recommend that the proposed Bachelor Programme in Photography be Accredited for an initial period of one year coterminous with the Institutional Accreditation.***

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

87. The proposition the ET was asked to examine was unusual, interesting and a potentially very significant development for higher education in Kosovo.

88. With a fresh start-up, it is always difficult to be absolutely certain but there are some very big and significant 'positives':
- The core teaching team are very experienced as both professionals and as teachers. They are also highly motivated.
 - The arrangement with LABA means the Academy will not have to start afresh. It will be able to enjoy many benefits in areas such as marketing, branding and a network of relationships not just with another institution of higher education but also, through LABA, with professional practice in another European country. Students of the Academy have been promised opportunities for exchanges with Italian students and for participation in internships facilitated by LABA and its existing network of collaborators. Teaching staff will also be able to participate in exchange arrangements.

All of this would otherwise be difficult and probably very slow to achieve under normal circumstances for a start-up institution.

- The Academy will be significantly advantaged from a guaranteed commitment of funding for staffing and other resources over the first three years of its operations.
 - A need in Kosovo for the kind of people the Academy could produce – graduate young professionals that can contribute to the country's competitiveness in high value industries. The ET were informed that, in anticipation of approval to proceed last year, they received enquiries from a full number of people wishing to enrol.
89. During the course of the visit, the ET received further information and were able to allay the concerns previously identified by the 2016 ET. Those that remained are judged by the ET to have resulted from poor communications and translation, pose no risk to quality and should be easy to rectify during the normal course of operations. As a consequence, the ET is pleased to be able to make the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

90. ***The Kosovo Art Academy be Accredited for an initial period of one year.***
91. ***The Bachelor of Arts Programme in Design be Accredited for an initial period of one year coterminous with the Institutional Accreditation***
92. ***The Bachelor of Arts Programme in Graphic Design Multimedia be Accredited for an initial period of one year coterminous with the Institutional Accreditation.***

93. ***The Bachelor of Arts Programme in Photography be Accredited for an initial period of one year coterminous with the Institutional Accreditation.***

Additionally -

94. *During this initial year, the Academy give high priority to fine tuning programme content and delivery, proven at LABA, for local Kosovo conditions.*
95. *Caution be exercised by the Academy against expectations of securing rapid further development until such time that there can be evidence of success from a first cohort of students.*
96. *The Academy keeps its operational protocols and procedures under regular review with the prospect of simplification more appropriate to a small institution.*
97. *Information provided to students at the commencement of their studies should contain a clear description of the character and operation of the programmes and what is required of them.*