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AAB College

Professional Bachelor (BSc) in Cyber Security

RE/ACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

May 2022



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: 11th May 2022

Expert Team (ET) members:

- *Prof. Dr. Sc. Josip Balen – Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Computer Science and Information Technology, Osijek, Croatia*
- *Ms. Laura Palac*

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- *Arianit Krsniqi, KAA Officer*
- *Ilijane Ademaj Ahmeti, KAA Officer*

Sources of information for the Report:

- *The Self-Evaluation Report (including four Annexes), Bachelor (BSc) in Computer Science and Engineering (SER)*
- *Syllabi of the subjects.*
- *CVs of the academic staff*
- *Evaluation Report 2016*
- *List of activities of the Faculty of Computer Sciences*
- *List of cooperation agreements*
- *List of voluntary work of students*
- *Report on recently employed students*
- *Online interviews with stakeholders (site visit)*
- *AAB College website*

Additional documents

- *Regulation-for-Bachelors-Studies*
- *Code-of-Ethics*



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- *Work plan 2021-2022 for the Center for Professional Development and Training (CPDI)*
- *Annual plan for teaching staff development and the annual report*
- *Templates of the questionnaires for different stakeholder groups - students, graduates, academic staff, employers*
- *List of the partnership agreements and few templates of the agreement*
- *List of workshops that was organised for the teaching staff in the last 2 years*
- *Regulation on Selection Procedures for Appointment and reappointment of Academic Staff*
- *Regulation of internships (internship work document and any other document regulating the process of internship for the study programme)*
- *Screenshots of several courses on the E-service platform (where information regarding the courses are shown, syllabuses, assessment methods, learning outcomes, etc.)*
- *Screenshots of the platform E-Student*
- *Administrative Regulation*
- *Property Evidence from the Prishtina Municipality*
- *Authorisation from the Municipality to build the AAB Campus*
- *Financial plan at the level of the study programme for the next three years*
- *Information about the number of classrooms and seats*
- *Table with a number of all scientific publications of all teachers in the last three years*
- *Template for the assessment of the teaching staff by the Dean*
- *Example of one student assessment for the teaching staff*
- *Questionnaires with the academic staff conducted once per year*
- *Questionnaire with academic staff 2022*
- *Application admission rates for each study programme in the last 5 years*
- *Statistics on the dropout rate*
- *Examples of progress reports compiled per semester*
- *Information on student transfer procedures (incoming and outgoing) that have taken place for the programme in the last 5 years*
- *List of teaching materials (titles) available at the AAB library that are intended for the use of this study programme*
- *List of teaching materials found at AAB College Library*



Criteria used for program evaluation:

- *Standards & performance indicators for external evaluation according to the Accreditation Manual of Kosovo Accreditation Agency, 2021*

1.2. Site visit schedule

Time	Meeting	Participants
09:00 – 09:45	Meeting with the management of the faculty where the program is integrated	- Shemsedin Vehapi, Vice Rector for Teaching - Jusuf Qarkaxhija, Dean of the Faculty
09.50 – 10.35	Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff	- Ersan Hamdiu, QA Coordinator of the Faculty - Nusret Bilallaj, Head of IT Office - Zija Rexhepi, Head of Administration
10:40 – 11:40	Meeting with the heads of the study program:	- Engin Melekoglu - Rahmil Limani (Online) - Ersan Hamdiu - Edon Bublaku - Fjolla Tafa
11:45 – 12.30	Meeting with teaching staff	- Blerta Prevalla - Lauresha Ramadani (Online) - Krenar Kepuska - Leron Berisha - Samir Jakupi - Shpend Lutfiu
13:15 – 14:05	Meeting with students	- Adriatik Mehmeti - Kastriot Gjoka - Valdrin Dragobuzhda - Arjanit Shala - Arbër Qelaj - Enkel Hoxha
14:10 – 15:00	Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders	- Xheladin Grajçevci - Albion Bikliqi - Genc Jakupi - Ardian Alaj - Mentor Hoxhaj - Leutrina Bajrami



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15:05 – 15:10	Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts	
15:10 – 15:20	Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and program	

1.3. A brief overview of the institution and program under evaluation

AAB College was established in 2002 and is currently one of the largest non-public higher education institutions in Kosovo. It currently provides bachelor's and master's degree programs in Economics, Law, Mass Communication, Arts, Social Sciences, English Language, Computer Science, Information Technology, and Physical Education in 14 faculties. The main campus is in Prishtina, but there are also branches in Gjakova and Ferizaj that are KAA-accredited and MEST-licensed. AAB College features a number of administrative offices that students and academic staff can use, including the Software Development Office, Central Administration Office, Career Office, Transfer Office, and Return Office. AAB is a well-known university in the region for taking an innovative approach to higher education, science, and technology. According to the College vision, AAB is a pioneer in the field of higher education in Kosovo and the region, as well as a member of the most important networks of higher education institutions in Europe and beyond. AAB is a proponent of economic and sociological development as well as a pioneer in the country's European integration procedures. The AAB College's mission is to advance education and scientific research, to be accessible to all on the basis of merit and without ethnic discrimination, to play a leading role in Kosovo's educational, scientific, cultural, social, and economic development, to develop programs with an international and European focus, and to assist in the process of civic democracy elevation.

AAB College's Faculty of Computer Science was initially accredited with a bachelor's degree in 2010 and a master's degree in 2013. The Faculty prepares students for professions in society centred on industry through its study programs, which combine an interdisciplinary core with specialised studies in the profile chosen for each program. BSc Computer Science, professional BA Programming, professional BA Cyber Security, and MSc Computer Science are the four study programs available. The Faculty of Computer Science and Information



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Technology strives to offer students with all of the necessary theoretical and practical expertise in all fields of computer science and information technology on a constant basis.

The duties and responsibilities of the Faculty's management are outlined in the AAB College's Statute as well as the AAB College's Regulations, which apply to all other AAB faculties for staff and students. The management of the Faculty is organised as follows: The Scientific Teaching Council, the Dean, the Vice Dean for Teaching, the Quality Assurance Coordinator, and the Coordinator at the branch campus are all members of the Scientific Teaching Council. The Scientific Teaching Council of the Faculty is composed of all of the Faculty's regular academic staff, one member of the administration, and one student representative. The Scientific Teaching Council is the highest academic body and is responsible for a variety of decision-making and advising functions. AAB College has carried out a delegation and decentralisation of numerous responsibilities from the Rectorate to the Dean's Office. The Faculty enjoys academic freedom and independence of action, in terms of functioning, organising conferences, research work and other academic issues. This autonomy and independence is guaranteed by the Statute of AAB College as well as by other relevant policies governing the general areas of AAB. However, faculties are not independent budget units, and therefore the budget is managed by the central level.

The Faculty of Computer Science embraces the cyber security revolution in higher education, becoming a leading provider of cyber security services to the university community in Kosovo and beyond. The Professional Bachelor (BSc) in Cyber Security was accredited for the first time in 2019 and is now in the process of being re-accredited for the first time. The study program in Cyber Security aims to build a community of experts and improve the institutional competencies of users through cyber security education, training and awareness. The study program aims to activate and support a culture that values information security and works to reduce risk through the development and refinement of procedures that ensure that security operations and risk assessments are carried out in a consistent manner and in accordance with international standards. Therefore, the mission of the BA Professional study program in Cyber Security is to: “Prepare cyber security professionals in academic and industrial settings, through high quality program that focuses on the integration of scientific theories and practical training, who will have the necessary expertise to lead, design and develop projects in the field of different types of cyber security”.



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2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

2.1. Mission, objectives and administration

The mission of the BSc Professional study program in Cyber Security is to “*prepare cyber security professionals in academic and industrial settings, through high quality program that focuses on the integration of scientific theories and practical training, who will have the necessary expertise to lead, design and develop projects in the field of different types of cyber security*”. The Expert Team (ET) agrees that the mission of the study program is in compliance with the vision and mission statement of AAB College with the main objectives to provide student-centred and transformational learning enabling development of the full potential of the students, as well as staff, social and economic partners and the society.

The Faculty has appointed a working group which has been responsible for reviewing and updating the study program reflecting the proposals and recommendations of some important stakeholders such as current students, graduate students, employers and various companies with which AAB College has signed cooperation agreements. The working group has held several online and physical meetings with members of the cyber security community, in order to receive important input regarding the curriculum. During the meeting with the employers of the graduates it was confirmed that they discussed the study program with the dean and other staff of the Faculty, and that their suggestions were taken into account. In this regard, the main changes that have been made to the study program curriculum are such that they meet the ACM standards and therefore the majority of courses have been revised. External stakeholders are also included in surveys regarding satisfaction with the knowledge and skills of students from this program. Also, some teachers that are permanently employed come from the industry. Experts recommend including external stakeholders in the management bodies of the College (e.g. Advisory bodies and similar).

Regarding the didactic concept, the teaching methods in this study program include theoretical lectures, practical exercises, seminars, seminar papers and seminars, modular trainings, work in smaller groups, practical work inside AAB laboratories, practical work outside AAB, extracurricular lectures by guest lecturers, active participation in workshops, etc. The research concept is marginally present in the study program, however since this is a



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Professional Bachelor study program is it nor expected to have a high involvement of students in the research activities. Therefore, didactic and research concepts are adequate.

The most essential document regulating the study process at the AAB College is the Regulation on Studies. There is a separate regulation for bachelor level and master's level and both regulations are published on the AAB College website. There is also a Code of Ethics and the Code of Ethics in Scientific Research that are both published on the AAB College website and have been reviewed in 2021. In the additional information the AAB College stated that for the last years the Faculty of Computer Sciences has not had any case which has been discussed at the Ethics Council. Furthermore, after the meetings with management, heads of this study program and teachers, experts gained the impression that staff and students comply with all the internal regulations. In the SER, the AAB College confirms that the policies and regulations are reviewed at least every three years and that there are certain cases when the revision takes place, for example, following the changes in strategic documents, based on the results of internal evaluation, etc.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
Standard 1.1. The study program mission is in compliance with the overall mission statement of the institution.	X	
Standard 1.2. Relevant academic and professional advice is considered when defining the intended learning outcomes which are consistent with the National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.	X	
Standard 1.3. The study program has a well-defined overarching didactic and research concept.	X	
Standard 1.4. There are formal policies, guidelines and regulations dealing with recurring procedural or academic issues. These are made publicly available to all staff and students.	X	
Standard 1.5. All staff and students comply with the internal regulations relating to ethical conduct in research, teaching, and assessment in all academic and administrative activities.	X	



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Standard 1.6. All policies, regulations, terms of reference and statements of responsibility relating to the management and delivery of the program are reviewed at least once every two years and amended as required in the light of changing circumstances.	X	
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Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Include industry representatives in management bodies of the Faculty or College (e.g. Advisory body).*

2.2. Quality management

One of the most significant components of the AAB College's academic activities is quality assurance. The AAB College follows the Quality Assurance Regulation, which is available in both Albanian and English on the college's website. There is also a Quality Assurance Guideline but it has not been updated since 2015. A separate quality assurance coordinator for the Faculty of Computer Science works in conjunction with the institutional Quality Assurance Office. The College has introduced a number of other quality assurance mechanisms, including weekly meetings of the academic staff in the Dean's office, training of academic staff in teaching methodology and course development, semester reports at the end of each semester, and so on. Quality assurance methods are used throughout the educational process, according to the Quality Assurance Regulation, and all stakeholders inside and outside the College are involved. Quality assurance is carried out in accordance with an activity plan that comprises several evaluations and assessments. The major instrument of evaluation is various types of questionnaires. Focus group sessions are held, and students are invited to participate.

The SER states that the Quality Assurance Regulation of AAB College defines the minimum standards for quality. However, the Quality Assurance Regulation that is available publicly only describes the principles, organisational structure, responsibilities of the different bodies and the instruments used but does not define any standards. From the SER the ET learned that a number of processes at the AAB College have been digitalised, for example, electronic



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recording of student's attendance in lectures and exercises, teaching hours by the academic staff, planning and reporting and managerial tasks, evaluation of professors by students, thus allowing for collection and comparison of data. In the SER, AAB College also states that a progress report is compiled per semester by the Dean's office. This progress report includes various indicators assessing the teaching-learning process of the subjects during the entire semester, for example the number of classes held, possible cancellations, the teaching materials used and posted on e-Service, the communication of professors with students through the online platform, etc. However, the ET did not learn of any particular performance indicators that would be defined, for example, the drop-out rate or the satisfaction rate of students, with a certain standard/ target defined for every year/semester and the achievement of this target being monitored. The draft version of the document *Quality Assurance performance indicators* was additionally submitted to the ET, however it still needs to be improved and submitted to the Faculty management and council for the approval.

The central Quality Assurance Office and faculty coordinators follow semestral work plans, and the frequency of various internal quality assurance systems is established. Once a year, academic personnel receive questions, students receive questionnaires every semester, and employers and graduates receive questionnaires every two years. Aside from these surveys, there is a once-a-year examination of the student's practical work. Student questionnaires are required, according to the ET, and it is impossible to pass a course without completing the questionnaire. The AAB College, on the other hand, admitted that student responsiveness in offering reasonable comments is poor. The majority of pupils would complete the questionnaires without offering any feedback or suggestions. The students met by the ET confirmed that they fill in the questionnaires on a regular basis. However, the students highlighted that meaningful feedback is mostly provided directly to the teaching staff during the study course, rather than through questionnaires. The students also were not aware of any improvements that have taken place as a result of their feedback through the formal questionnaires. The ET learned from the SER and during the online visit that all questionnaire data are analysed and improvement initiatives are implemented. The results of the analysis, however, are not currently available - neither on the Internet nor on the AAB College's internal platforms. The ET believes that this is related to the low student response rate, as students would be more engaged in offering specific feedback if they were aware of the actual impact of their comments.



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Upon the request of the ET to provide examples of summary reports for quality assurance purposes, the ET was provided the Evaluation report about the assessment conducted by academic staff. This report presents the opinion of the academic staff, based on the total of 200 respondents from the full-time academic staff members of the AAB College, but does not present any specific data for the Faculty of Computer Science. The report analyses the results from questionnaires and presents several recommendations resulting from the analysis, for example, that the AAB College should continue to stimulate the academic staff for research work, scientific publications and to participate in conferences as these activities impact the increase of quality of the college, the academic staff should continue to encourage students to access literature (especially online), thus students increase their skills in preparing seminar papers and final papers, faculties should invite more often members of the academic staff to address and discuss internal quality assurance results. The ET did not learn of any specific reports for the Professional Bachelor (BSc) in Cyber Security or the Faculty of Computer Science. From the information provided it was also not fully clear what are the further activities related to these recommendations and whether and how they are implemented. The report presented also does not offer any comparison with the previous results of similar reports. From the SER and discussions during the meetings the ET learned that regular quality assurance reports are produced in the Faculty of Computer Science, in addition to the self-evaluation reports for external evaluation.

The FCS is constantly engaged in drafting general quality reports which are related to all active study programs. More substantial evaluations are carried out when drafting the self-evaluation report for the accreditation process which occurs at least once within three to five years. The ET was also convinced that the arrangements for quality assurance are regularly reviewed and updated. This was confirmed both by the recent updates to internal documentation and the proactive and professional attitude of the quality assurance staff interviewed by the ET. The SER also includes a number of specific examples for the updates that have been made, for example, the review of the Regulation of Quality Assurance and Guide (Guidelines, Manual) on Quality Assurance, as well as the adjustments made during the COVID-19 period.



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Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
Standard 2.1. All staff participate in self-evaluations and cooperate with reporting and improvement processes in their sphere of activity.	X	
Standard 2.2. Evaluation processes and planning for improvement are integrated into normal planning processes.	X	
Standard 2.3. Quality assurance processes deal with all aspects of program planning and delivery, including services and resources provided by other parts of the institution.	X	
Standard 2.4. Quality evaluations provide an overview of quality issues for the overall program as well as of different components within it; the evaluations consider inputs, processes and outputs, with particular attention given to learning outcomes for students.	X	
Standard 2.5. Quality assurance processes ensure both that required standards are met and that there is continuing improvement in performance.		X
Standard 2.6. Survey data is being collected from students, graduates and employers; the results of these evaluations are made publicly available.		X
Standard 2.7. Results of the internal quality assurance system are taken into account for further development of the study program. This includes evaluation results, investigation of the student workload, academic success and employment of graduates.	X	
Standard 2.8. The institution ensures that reports on the overall quality of the program are prepared periodically (eg. every three years) for consideration within the institution indicating its strengths and weaknesses.	X	
Standard 2.9. The quality assurance arrangements for the program are themselves regularly evaluated and improved.	X	

Compliance level: Substantially compliant



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ET recommendations:

- 1. Periodically prepare internal reports on the overall quality of the study program (at least every three years).*
- 2. Review and update the Quality Assurance Guideline (2015) and ensure that it is easily accessible on the AAB College website.*
- 3. Publish the results of evaluations at least on the Intranet of the College and inform students about what improvements have been made as a result of their feedback.*
- 4. Compile summary reports based on the survey results and statistical data both on the study program and the Faculty level and ensure that the findings (recommendations) of these reports are taken into account in the development processes.*

2.3. Academic staff

The employment of staff is conducted according to the Statute of the AAB College, the Regulation on Appointment, Re-Appointment and Promotion of Academic Staff, as well as other relevant documents. The job descriptions are included in the Regulation for Systematisation of Jobs. Legal requirements set for the teaching staff are met: the employment of academic staff is done in full compliance with the Law on Labour, the Statute of the AAB College and the Administrative Instruction on Accreditation of HEIs. Employed academic staff at the Faculty of Computer Science in total counts 28 full time academic staff and 7 part-time academic staff where 13 + 3 of them have a PhD degree, 6 + 2 are PhD candidates and 9 + 1 have MSc degree and one part-time academic staff has BSc degree. Therefore, the condition that at least 50% of the academic staff in the study program are full time employees, and account for at least 50% of the classes of the study program is satisfied. Furthermore, there are no retired teachers.

The teaching load for each member of the academic staff in the Professional BSc study program in Cyber Security is 4 - 8 teaching hours. Of the regular staff members, none of them is engaged for more than four hours in other teaching institutions which was confirmed during the meeting with the teachers. The teaching process is conducted in separate groups and for lectures a group of students consists of maximum 60 students while for the laboratory exercises a group consists of maximum 20 students. For each group of students and for each 60 ECTS credits in the study program, amounting to 180 ECTS of the Cyber Security study



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program in total, the Faculty has employed five full time professors with the academic degree of Doctor of Science. The professors responsible for the study program are as follows: Engin Melekoglu, Rahmil Limani, Ersan Hamdiu, Edon Bublaku and Fjolla Tafa.

AAB College has established and operationalized the Center for Professional Advancement and Innovation. Staff training programs are divided into three levels – basic, professional and advanced levels. The Individual Professional Development Plan consists of four parts: 1) Personal goals and objectives, 2) Personal analysis, 3) Development plan, 4) Measures to achieve the goals/objectives. However, the teaching staff indicated that the need for career development is bigger than the AAB College can afford: need for more sabbaticals and training in leading foreign universities, training in writing project proposals and in fund-raising was mentioned among others. Young researchers and lecturers are encouraged to pursue their doctoral studies while retaining their teaching duties at the AAB College. However, one of the weaknesses mentioned in the SER is the lack of external funding for postdoctoral studies and low international movement of academic staff. Therefore, the academic staff and the Faculty should seek funding opportunities and increase the number of the staff international research and professional visits.

The responsibilities of teaching staff are defined in the Statute of the AAB College, in the Regulation on Systematisation of Jobs of AAB College and other documents. These include among other responsibilities the engagement in the academic community, availability for consultations with students and community service. A list of activities organised by the academic staff was attached as an appendix to the SER. The evaluation of academic staff is based on three components, namely the self-assessment, the students' assessment and the assessment by the supervisor (the Dean). The self-assessment is form-based, and conducted once a year. Assessment by students is anonymous and is conducted through electronic questionnaires that students complete at the end of each semester. Superior's assessment is based on the self-evaluation reports of the academic staff. Furthermore, the face-to-face discussion takes place if the Dean finds it necessary to discuss some aspects presented in the self-evaluation report. The results of the evaluation are not made public in order to protect the privacy of the academic staff. However, the AAB College plans to start publishing them in a generalised form in the newsletter. It is important to notice that the submitted CVs of the academic staff are totally different in the form, content and even the language. Therefore, it is strongly advised to make a standard template such as Europass CV for all academic staff and



publish them on the Faculty web page under the academic staff profiles which currently only include a few basic information.

The Strategic Plan for 2022-2026 sets development of teaching/learning resources and learning environment as belonging to the priority areas of the AAB College (one of the five strategic goals) – three measures are for the development of the academic staff in accordance with their needs for quality student-centred teaching and two measures for digitalization of teaching, as well as for improving the capacities for a qualitative implementation of digitalized teaching forms in teaching. Improving the quality of learning materials was not explicitly mentioned in the strategic documents. Moreover, students whom the ET met mentioned the lack of learning materials in Albanian language as one of the problems related to their studies.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
Standard 3.1. Candidates for employment are provided with full position descriptions and conditions of employment. To be presented in tabular form data about full time (FT) and part time (PT) academic/ artistic staff, such as: name, qualification, academic title, duration of official (valid) contract, workload for teaching, exams, consulting, administrative activities, research, etc. for the study program under evaluation.	X	
Standard 3.2. The teaching staff must comply with the legal requirements concerning the occupation of teaching positions included in the Administrative instruction on Accreditation.	X	
Standard 3.3. Academic staff do not cover, within an academic year, more than two teaching positions (one full-time, one part-time), regardless of the educational institution where they carry out their activity.	X	
Standard 3.4. At least 50% of the academic staff in the study program are full time employees, and account for at least 50% of the classes of the study program.	X	



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Standard 3.5. For each student group (defined by the statute of the institution) and for every 60 ECTS credits in the study program, the institution has employed at least one full time staff with PhD title or equivalent title in the case of artistic/applied science institutions.	X	
Standard 3.6. Opportunities are provided for additional professional development of teaching staff, with special assistance given to any who are facing difficulties.	X	
Standard 3.7. The responsibilities of all teaching staff, especially full-time, include the engagement in the academic community, availability for consultations with students and community service.	X	
Standard 3.8. Academic staff evaluation is conducted regularly at least through self evaluation, students, peer and superiors' evaluations, and occurs on a formal basis at least once each year. The results of the evaluation are made publicly available.	X	
Standard 3.9. Strategies for quality enhancement include improving the teaching strategies and quality of learning materials.		X
Standard 3.10. Teachers retire at age limit or for other reasons lose the status of full-time teachers and are considered part-time teachers.	X	

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Improvement of the teaching strategies and the quality of learning materials must be included in the strategic documents and plans.*
- 2. The number of staff international research and professional visits should be increased.*
- 3. Create a standard template such as Europass CV for all academic staff and publish them on the Faculty web page.*



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2.4. Educational process content

The study program Professional Bachelor in Cyber Security aims to equip students with the skills that are needed by professionals in the fight against cybercriminals and it focuses on the integration of scientific theories and practical training in the field of different types of cyber security. Furthermore, one of the goals of the study program is to organise a teaching process that will bring students closer to the labour market. This is done through mandatory internships/projects and practical laboratory exercises. During the meeting with employers of graduates it was stated that in general they are satisfied with the knowledge and skills that students acquired in the current study program. The study program complies with the level 6 of the National Qualifications Framework.

By analysing the learning outcomes listed in the SER, the expert team noted that more practical skills and competencies are lacking. Also, the first two semesters each have four courses with a high number of ECTS credits, and in their syllabus a large number of hours are reserved for laboratory exercises. In addition, students must attend the Lab Project course and three Project courses in which students are fully committed to practical work. Therefore, the expert team recommends reducing the number of ECTS credits to 5 ECTS for the Lab Project course and adding another course from the cyber security field in the second semester and attributing 5 ECTS credits to it.

Most of the courses within the curriculum have analytical syllabuses that contain discipline's objectives, basic thematic content, learning outcomes, distribution of classes, seminars and applicative activities, students' assessment system, literature, etc. However, the ET noticed that syllabuses for courses Lab Project and Project need updating. The ET recommends to update and improve literature and introduce mandatory lectures with clearly defined hours in course Lab Project. Furthermore, the syllabus of the course Project must be updated, the exact number of hours of practical work conducted at AAB and industry must be defined, as well as it has to be clearly stated that students have to submit a written report to complete this course. The syllabuses of all courses are distributed to the students through the E-service platform before the beginning of the semester. According to students, syllabuses are explained and discussed with students at the beginning of each semester. The language in which the study program is offered is Albanian.



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It can be said that the study program is student-centred since it offers different teaching methods which support active learning processes, such as lectures, internship/projects, seminars, laboratory exercises, teamwork, etc. This was also confirmed by students. Furthermore, there is an electronic platform E-Student which contributes to a much faster and more accurate communication between the academic staff and students. It is important to note that students evaluate the academic staff and the courses quality at the end of each semester. The results of these surveys are analysed and further measures are taken if needed which means that the effectiveness of planned teaching strategies in achieving different types of learning outcomes is regularly assessed and adjustments are made. After the period of exams ends, students' success rate for each course is presented in the form of a report. Organising additional hours of lectures and exercises, reducing the number of students in groups, providing additional preparatory hours before the exam deadline, additional individual consultations with assistants are just some of the most common examples which are conducted as a result of continuous assessments of student achievements. However, this is not a part of any formal document, policy or procedure.

The internship within this study program is conducted at AAB College and also in the industry. The practical work in course Lab Project is conducted at AAB College whereas the course Project is intended for practical work conducted either within AAB (100 hours + 50 hours of consultations) or in the industry (100 hours). Lab Project is an obligatory course conducted in the second semester, while the obligatory course Project is given in the third, fourth and fifth semester. In order to facilitate internships, the Faculty and the College has signed several cooperation agreements with different institutions. At the meeting with heads of the study program, it was explained that during the internship a mentor from AAB and also from the industry is assigned to a student. A student can choose a theme of the project based on his/her interests and the mentor from AAB will help a student find a company where the student will go on internship based on the theme of the project. While on internship, students have to submit a written report in order to complete the course.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
Standard 4.1. The study program is modelled on qualification objectives. These include subject-related and interdisciplinary aspects as well as the	X	



acquisition of disciplinary, methodological and generic skills and competencies. The aspects refer especially to academic or artistic competencies, to the capability of taking up adequate employment, contributing to the civil society and of developing the students' personality.		
Standard 4.2. The study program complies with the National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. The individual components of the program are combined in a way to best achieve the specified qualification objectives and provide for adequate forms of teaching and learning.	X	
Standard 4.3. The disciplines within the curriculum are provided in a logical flow and meet the definition and precise determination of the general and specific competencies, as well as the compatibility with the study programs and curricula delivered in the EHEA. To list at least 7 learning outcomes for the study program under evaluation.		X
Standard 4.4. The disciplines within the curriculum have analytical syllabuses which comprise at least the following: the discipline's objectives, the basic thematic content, learning outcomes, the distribution of classes, seminars and applicative activities, students' assessment system, the minimal bibliography, etc. The full course description/ syllabuses of each subject/ module should be attached only in electronic form to the self-assessment report for the study program under evaluation	X	
Standard 4.5. If the language of instruction is <u>other than Albanian</u> , actions are taken to ensure that language skills of both students and academic staff are adequate for instruction in that language when students begin their studies. This may be done through language training prior to the commencement of the program.	n.a.	
Standard 4.6. The student-teacher relationship is a partnership in which each assumes the responsibility of reaching the learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are explained and discussed with students from the perspective of their relevance to the students' development.	X	



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Standard 4.7. Teaching strategies are fit for the different types of learning outcomes programs are intended to develop. Strategies of teaching and assessment set out in program and course specifications are followed with flexibility to meet the needs of different groups of students.	X	
Standard 4.8. Student assessment mechanisms are conducted fairly and objectively, are appropriate for the different forms of learning sought and are clearly communicated to students at the beginning of courses.	X	
Standard 4.9. Appropriate, valid and reliable mechanisms are used for verifying standards of student achievement. The standard of work required for different grades is consistent over time, comparable in courses offered within a program, and in comparison with other study programs at highly regarded institutions.	X	
Standard 4.10. Policies and procedures include actions to be taken in to dealing with situations where standards of student achievement are inadequate or inconsistently assessed.		X
Standard 4.11. If the study program includes practice stages, the intended student learning outcomes are clearly specified and effective processes are followed to ensure that those learning outcomes and the strategies to develop that learning are understood by students. The practice stages are allocated ETCS credits and the work of the students at the practical training organisations is monitored through activity reports; students during practice stages have assigned tutors among the academic staff in the study program.		X
Standard 4.12. In order to facilitate the practice stages, the higher education institution signs cooperation agreements, contracts or other documents with institutions/organisations/practical training units.	X	

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Update the syllabus of the course Project.*



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- 2. Lower the number of ECTS for the course Lab Project to 5 ECTS and add one more course from the cyber security field in this semester with 5 ECTS.*
- 3. Update the syllabus of the course Lab Project, improve the literature in this course and include mandatory lectures.*
- 4. Include in official policies, procedures or regulations actions to be taken in situations where standards of student achievement are inadequate or inconsistently assessed.*

2.5. Students

The admission procedure is clearly defined and publicly announced. The admission criteria are determined based on the Statute of AAB College and legal regulations established by KAA and MEST. These criteria fairly apply to all students. To enrol in the study program, students must possess a high school diploma and pass the Matura state exam. According to the SER for each registered student an online account is opened which serves students throughout their period of studying at AAB College.

The study groups are organised to ensure an effective and interactive teaching and learning process. Study groups are organised as follows: maximum number of students in lectures is 60 and maximum number of students in practical laboratory exercises is 20. In accordance with the Regulation on Studies of AAB College, feedback to students on their performance is done no later than seven days from the date of the exam, through the E-service platform. This was also confirmed by the teaching staff. According to students and teaching staff, students have the right to appeal and make a written complaint to the Dean and request an evaluation before commission. Grading is done electronically and the record of student grades is kept in an electronic database. Students can generate the transcript of grades from the system at any time. According to the SER, the scheduling of exams is regulated by the Central Administration of the College, but in case students have requested for extension of deadlines these requests are always approved (within the provisions of the Regulation). Also, at the meeting with teaching staff, it was stated that students with disabilities can take an exam in a modified way.

AAB College monitors and analyses student pass rates in every course through the e-Service platform. These data are used to improve the quality of the studying process. Also, students



have to participate in mandatory questionnaires every semester where they evaluate the academic staff and the content of the courses. Through these questionnaires students can suggest improvements related to the study program. Students confirmed that the progress in a case of poor results can be seen and that their suggestions are taken into consideration. The Faculty also applies the Code of Ethics which stipulates that the Dean of the Faculty can report students to a Disciplinary Commission for cases of copying/plagiarism. Furthermore, the teaching staff confirmed using Turnitin platform for detecting plagiarism. The software includes Albanian and English languages and the software usage was explained during the two training sessions for the academic staff who mentioned that they are satisfied with the plagiarism detection mechanism. However, the plagiarism detection mechanism is not regulated and the ET was unable to check the efficiency of it. The students' transfer between higher education institutions, faculties and study programs is regulated in formal internal documents (Statute of AAB College and the Administrative Instruction at the level of MEST). All students' rights and obligations are made publicly available.

Each member of the academic staff has two hours per week, specified for individual meetings and consultations with students. In cases where the requests for meetings are high, the academic staff is obliged to hold even more consultations per week with students, either physically or online, through electronic platforms. An academic staff is appointed as an academic advisor who helps students with the difficulties they encounter while studying in the study programs. According to the students, the teachers answered their questions promptly, even outside working hours.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
Standard 5.1. There is a clear and formally adopted admission procedure at institutional level that the study program respects when organising students' recruitment. Admission requirements are consistently and fairly applied for all students.	X	
Standard 5.2. All students enrolled in the study program possess a high school graduation diploma or other equivalent document of study, according to MEST requirements.	X	



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Standard 5.3. The study groups are dimensioned so as to ensure an effective and interactive teaching and learning process.	X	
Standard 5.4. Feedback to students on their performance and results of assessments is given promptly and accompanied by mechanisms for assistance if needed.	X	
Standard 5.5. The results obtained by the students throughout the study cycles are certified by the academic record.	X	
Standard 5.6. Flexible treatment of students in special situations is ensured with respect to deadlines and formal requirements in the program and to all examinations.	X	
Standard 5.7. Records of student completion rates are kept for all courses and for the program as a whole and included among quality indicators.	X	
Standard 5.8. Effective procedures are being used to ensure that work submitted by students is original.	X	
Standard 5.9. Students' rights and obligations are made publicly available, promoted to all those concerned and enforced equitably; these will include the right to academic appeals.	X	
Standard 5.10. The students' transfer between higher education institutions, faculties and study programs is clearly regulated in formal internal documents.	X	
Standard 5.11. Academic staff is available at sufficient scheduled times for consultation and advice to students. Adequate tutorial assistance is provided to ensure understanding and ability to apply learning.	X	

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Regulate the plagiarism detection mechanisms and measure their efficiency.



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2.6. Research

Since this is a professional BSc study program, it is not expected to have scientific research as one of the major study program objectives and this is the case in this study program. However, the research is an integral part of the study program mainly conducted during courses Lab Project and Project but this is not reflected in the study program learning outcomes which should include at least applied research.

Policies that support high quality scientific research and publications are established and they are also consistent with the international standards and established norms in the field of the study program. Expectations for teaching staff involvement in research and scholarly activities and performance in relation to these expectations are clearly specified in the work contract, in the Statute of the AAB College, in the Regulations for Scientific-Research Activities and in the Regulation on Appointment, Reappointment and Promotion of Academic Staff.

The research of academic staff is internationally visible for most academic staff (for example, in Google Scholar or Research Gate) but the part of the academic staff only have LinkedIn profiles and the recommendation is to create a have scientific profiles on online scientific platforms (such as ResearchGate, IEEE, Google Scholar, etc..) in order to improve the global visibility of the institution in the field of science. The publications of some academic staff have relatively high citation scores but the majority of them work part-time. Moreover, participation in international conferences has been extremely low. Some other important instruments for high level research – active research groups, regular research seminars, involvement in international research projects etc – are not sufficiently developed as well. Research is still individually based and although a scientific development plan and various policies and regulations have been established they did not result in increased research activities. However, recently, a new Regulation for Scientific Research has been introduced which will enable additional funds for the publications but the results will be visible in the next few years.

The academic staff publishes papers under the name of the AAB College but the majority of is publishing their work in local or regional journals and conferences. The table in SER on page 35 includes publications in WoS in the last five years and the number is extremely low,



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as well as the participation in international conferences. Furthermore, according to the additionally submitted document which shows a number of all scientific publications for all academic staff in the last four years, the majority of the academic staff do not satisfy the minimum of one published paper per year, as required by their contract. During the meeting with the academic staff it was stated that they all publish at least one paper per year and even more, therefore it is not clear whether the submitted data are correct.

The research of the academic staff does not fully harmonize with the topics they teach. Furthermore, no evidence was given to the ET that academic staff are encouraged to include in their teaching information about their research and scholarly activities. This was confirmed during the meeting with the academic staff and they mentioned that they are more concentrated on providing learning materials and outcomes for the industry not for the science since this is a professional study program.

Procedures for the development and commercialization of intellectual property are stated in the Regulation on Intellectual Property. Issues related to intellectual property are also foreseen in the Employment contract of academic staff, Article 14, which stipulates that intellectual property rights in any work that is done or created by the employee during the employment relationship (during the hours and in the workplace) shall be counted as the employer's work. Intellectual property issues are also regulated on the national level. During the meeting with the students it was mentioned that they were not invited by professors to participate in the projects and to write and present a scientific paper.

Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
Standard 6.1. The study program has defined scientific/applied research objectives (on its own or as part of a research centre or interdisciplinary program), which are also reflected in the research development plan of the institution; sufficient financial, logistic and human resources are allocated for achieving the proposed research objectives.		X
Standard 6.2. Expectations for teaching staff involvement in research and scholarly activities are clearly specified, and performance in relation to these expectations is considered in staff evaluation and promotion criteria.	X	



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Standard 6.3. Clear policies are established for defining what is recognized as research, consistent with international standards and established norms in the field of study of the program.	X	
Standard 6.4. The academic staff has a proven track record of research results on the same topics as their teaching activity.		X
Standard 6.5. The academic and research staff publish their work in speciality magazines or publishing houses, scientific/applied/artistic products are presented at conferences, sessions, symposiums, seminars etc. and contracts, expertise, consultancy, conventions, etc. are provided to partners inside the country and/or abroad.		X
Standard 6.6. Research is validated through: scientific and applied research publications, artistic products, technological transfer through consultancy centres, scientific parks and other structures for validation.	X	
Standard 6.7. Each academic staff member and researcher has produced at least an average of one scientific/applied research publication or artistic outcome/product per year for the past three years.	X	
Standard 6.8. Academic and research staff publish under the name of the institution in Kosovo they are affiliated to as full-time staff.	X	
Standard 6.8.(1) Academic staff are encouraged to include in their teaching information about their research and scholarly activities that are relevant to courses they teach, together with other significant research developments in the field.	X	
Standard 6.9. Policies are established for ownership of intellectual property and clear procedures set out for commercialization of ideas developed by staff and students.	X	
Standard 6.10. Students are engaged in research projects and other activities.		X

Compliance level: Partially compliant



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ET recommendations:

- 1. Increase the number and the quality of the scientific publication specifically in journals and conferences indexed in the recognized databases, such as Web of Science.*
- 2. Create scientific profiles on the official Faculty web page and on online scientific platforms in order to improve scientific visibility of FCS (such as ResearchGate, IEEE, Google Scholar, etc.).*
- 3. Include state-of-the-art scientific results in courses' content.*
- 4. Include students in the applied and scientific research, as well as projects.*

2.7. Infrastructure and resources

AAB College operates in three campuses, one in the city of Prishtina which is the main campus and two others in two others in Gjakova and in Ferizaj. In Prishtina, the learning process takes place in the building owned by the AAB College with around 40,000 m² and which includes large classrooms, small classrooms, amphitheatres, laboratories, special spaces for students, offices for deans and management, sanitary units and recreational spaces for students, etc. All premises used by the AAB College are owned by AAB and not rented. The Faculty conducts the study program in several classrooms and five fully equipped IT laboratories that are not shared with other faculties. Although the capacity of laboratories is large, 30 to 40 students/computers (one computer per student), during the meeting with the heads of the study program it was explained that this number was inherited and that the maximum size of a group in a laboratory is 20 students but there are more computers since some computers often do not work and for other reasons. Considering the number of students, the number and size of teaching classrooms and laboratories is adequate. At the same time, it seems that there is not enough environment in the public space for students to work outside of class, apart from the library. Based on the additionally provided data on the application admission and dropout rates and the fact that the Faculty and the AAB College have a big number of students, as well as the industry requirements the ET decided that the maximum number of students to be enrolled in the program is 70.

From the video presentation of the AAB College it can be seen that the Faculty has more than adequate infrastructure for the organisation of the teaching process and for conducting basic



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research work. The staff and students of the BSc study program in Prishtina benefit from all the resources and services available at the Prishtina campus. Regarding the administrative support, the Faculty has two administrative staff members which provide administrative services, but there are also other offices that support the teaching process, the academic staff and students such as: Central Administration, Office for Software Development, Office for IT Support, Transfer Office, Career Office, etc. Regarding the online resources for students, there is an electronic platform e-Student used for most of the services, such as posting teaching materials and giving grades by teaching staff and creating reports and student transcripts by administrative staff.

According to the Statute of the AAB College and Regulations of the AAB College the Faculty enjoys academic freedom and independence of action, in terms of functioning, organising conferences, research work and other academic issues. However, faculties are not independent budget units, and therefore the budget is allocated by the AAB College management for all academic units. As stated in the SER, the AAB College budget is managed efficiently and the financial viability was also ascertained in the assessment by the independent audit companies. Financial plan on the BSc professional study level program is composed and was additionally provided until the 2026/2027 academic year. Budget revenues are unbalanced, with tuition fees accounting more than 95% of the total study program revenue, while revenues from other sources such as research projects and donors are minor. However, the financial plan shows sustainability of the study program.

The campus in Prishtina has two libraries in a very good condition with enough teaching materials and reading space in the reading and self-study rooms that are also partially equipped with computers, satisfying KAA requirements. Although all students and teaching staff have access to the J-STOR that offers them an access to scientific databases, none of the scientific databases mentioned in the SER are connected to the computer science field, and therefore it should be added. The infrastructure and facilities have electric stairs, elevators, emergency exits and all relevant infrastructure for students with special needs.



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Standard	Compliance	
	Yes	No
Standard 7.1. The adequate long-term implementation of the study program is ensured in quantitative terms as regards premises, human resources and equipment. At the same time, it is guaranteed that qualitative aspects are also taken into account.	X	
Standard 7.2. There is a financial plan at the level of the study program that would demonstrate the sustainability of the study program for the next minimum three years.	X	
Standard 7.3. The higher education institution must demonstrate with adequate documents (property deeds, lease contracts, inventories, invoices etc.) that, for the study program submitted for evaluation it possesses the following, for the next at least three years: a) owned or rented spaces adequate for the educational process; b) owned or rented laboratories, with the adequate equipment for all the compulsory disciplines within the curriculum, wherever the analytical syllabus includes such activities; c) adequate software for the disciplines of study included in the curriculum, with utilisation licence; d) library equipped with reading rooms, group work rooms and its own book stock according to the disciplines included in the curricula.	X	
Standard 7.4. The number of seats in the lecture rooms, seminar rooms and laboratories must be related to the study groups' size (series, groups, subgroups); the applicative activities for the speciality disciplines included in the curricula are carried out in laboratories equipped with IT equipment.	X	
Standard 7.5. The education institution's libraries must ensure, for each of the study programs: a) a number of seats in the reading rooms corresponding to at least 10% of the total number of students in the study program; b) a number of seats in the group work rooms corresponding to at least 10% of the total number of students in the study program;	X	



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<p>c) their own book stock from Albanian and foreign speciality literature, enough to cover the disciplines within the curricula, out of which at least 50% should represent book titles or speciality courses of recognised publishers, from the last 10 years;</p> <p>d) a book stock within its own library with a sufficient number of books so as to cover the needs of all students in the cycle and year of study the respective discipline is provided for;</p> <p>e) a sufficient number of subscriptions to Albanian and foreign publications and periodicals, according to the stated mission.</p>		
<p>Standard 7.6. The infrastructure and facilities dedicated to the implementation of the program is adapted to students with special needs.</p>	<p>X</p>	

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Improve the financial plan at the study program level with more revenue sources.*

3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

Based on the study of extensive documentation and an online visit to the Faculty of Computer Science that was very professionally organised, the ET for the accreditation process has prepared this report based on the defined Standards & performance indicators for external evaluation according to the Accreditation Manual of KAA and given recommendations for further quality improvement. AAB College as a large non-public institution has an important role for the local but also for the regional higher education landscape. The constant growth is present in the number of teaching staff, facilities and size of the infrastructure, as well as in achieving a high degree of institutional maturity in terms of organisation, management and leadership. The teaching and administrative processes of the Faculty of Computer Science are adjusted to the needs of students and the general goals of the study program Professional Bachelor (BSc) in Cyber Security are in line with the mission and strategic goals of the Faculty and AAB College, as well as the needs of the labour market. However, there are



several improvements written under each standard recommendation which are necessary in order to further improve the quality of the proposed study program.

Standard	Compliance Level
Mission, objectives and administration	Fully compliant
Quality management	Substantially compliant
Academic Staff	Fully compliant
Educational Process Content	Substantially compliant
Students	Fully compliant
Research	Partially compliant
Infrastructure and resources	Fully compliant
Overall Compliance	Fully compliant

The Expert Team wants to point out that in general the self evaluation report is well written which has greatly facilitated the re-accreditation process. However, for some standards important information and more details are missing, and those were obtained through the request for the additional documentation. We believe that you have a good study program that has a bright future, and we encourage you to improve it further and to continue with good practices. In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the study program Professional Bachelor (BSc) in Cyber Security offered by the Faculty of Computer Science and is Fully compliant with the standards included in the KAA Accreditation Manual, and therefore, recommends to accredit the study program for a duration of 5 years with a number of 70 students to be enrolled in the program.

4. APPENDICES *(if available)*

None



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Expert Team


Chair


(Signature)

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23rd June 2022
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