



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo
Agjencia e Kosovës për Akreditim
Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency



AAB College
Faculty of Foreign Languages

ENGLISH LANGUAGE
Master studies

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: 25.07.2023. N.B. With the agreement of KAA, the Expert Team, and AAB, this site visit was conducted online.

Expert Team (ET) members:

- *Dr. Andrew Goodspeed*
- *Juraj Bogat, student expert*

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- *Arianit Krasniqi, KAA Officer*

Sources of information for the Report:

- Self Evaluation Report (inclusive of all annexes and appendices provided);
- Information gained during the site visit and the meetings;
- KAA Accreditation Manual;
- Report Template and sample report, for structural guidance;
- Template for compliance calculation, a required element of the report;
- KAA manual with general and contextual information on Kosovo and the higher education system;
- Syllabi for the program courses;
- Details of academic staff publications;
- List of extracurricular activities related to the program under review;
- Five-Year Research Plan for the Faculty of English;
- Additional documentation requested after the online meetings

Criteria used for institutional and program evaluations

- Standards and performance indicators for external evaluation according to the Accreditation manual of KAA, February 2021

1.2. Site visit schedule

| Time | Meeting | Participants |
|---------------|--|---|
| 09:00 – 09:45 | Meeting with the management of the faculty where the programme is integrated | Shemsedin Vehapi, Vice Rector for Teaching Aida Alla, Dean of the Faculty |
| 09:45 – 10:30 | Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff | Furtuna Mehmeti, Head of QA Office Albulena Ramadani, Head of the Administration Shkelqim Miftari, Head of IT Office |
| 10:35 – 11:35 | Meeting with the heads of the study programme English Language, MA | Uranela Demaj Marika Butskhrikidze |
| 11:40 – 12:25 | Meeting with teaching staff | Mirvan Xhmaili Venera Llundj Aleksandar Takovski Bujar Rushiti Xhavit Rexhaj Fatmir Ramadani Hysen Kasumi |
| 12:25 – 13:25 | Lunch break | |
| 13:25 – 14:10 | Meeting with students | Rajmonda Martini Bardha Shkodra Petrît Çitaku Dea Muharremi Fiona Karaqi Diellza Salicana |
| 14:15 – 15:00 | Meeting with graduates | Rrezarta Mustafa Vönhof Blerta Xharra Florian Bekteshi Arta Zariqi Amire Sherfi Ftesë Kabashi |
| 15:05 – 15:45 | Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders | TranKos Consulting SOS Village Translation Center |

| | | |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| | | Britannica Edmond Ramadani Cambridge School Trokit The British School of Kosova (BSK) Oxford School |
| 15:45 – 15:55 | Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts | |
| 15:55 – 16:00 | Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and program | Shemsedin Vehapi, Vice Rector for Teaching Aida Alla, Dean of the Faculty |

1.3. A brief overview of the institution under evaluation

AAB is a private college in the Republic of Kosovo with a primary campus location in the capital city, Prishtina, and satellite campuses in Ferizaj and Gjakova. The college was founded in 2000, and has since expanded its academic offerings and invested in campus buildings and infrastructure. The institution's Self Evaluation Report (SER) notes that 'AAB consists of a total of 14 academic units with 50 study programs at both BA and MA levels, with about 17,000 students.' The SER also notes that 'Currently, AAB counts 521 members of academic staff, of which 329 are full time while 192 are part time staff.'

The program evaluated herein is the M.A. program in English Language. The program is offered only in the Prishtina campus. It is a program already running, having first been accredited in 2010; this assessment evaluation is for the process of re-accreditation. The program has been accredited/reaccredited three times previously.

The program is a 120-ECTS, 2-year (4 semester) program resulting, for the successful student, in the awarding of the academic degree 'Master of Arts in English Language.' It is delivered as a full-time program.

Please note: this report is the collaborative effort of both members of the Expert Team. Slight variations of style and presentation have been retained in order to preserve each member's original analysis.

2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

2.1. Mission, Objectives and Administration

There is congruity between the mission of the institution and that of the program being evaluated here. The SER notes that the specific mission of the MA in English Language is ‘to equip MA students with specialized knowledge, advanced research skills and integrated professional competence in the field of English language studies. This is achieved through the development of autonomous learning approaches that enable students to contribute to society by implementing these skills in the labor market and their further education.’ This is coherent with the broader mission of AAB as an institution (‘AAB organizes student centered (sic) and diversified studies, engages in quality basic and applied research, and partners with community and industry to provide transformational learning experiences enabling the development of the full potential of the students, staff, social and economic partners, and the society.’)

As will be explored later (Section 2.4: Educational Process Content), the program meets the three stated intentions: a series of topical courses provide the ‘specialized knowledge;’ advanced research skills are developed in most classes, but are particularly addressed and refined in ‘Research Methodologies’ and ‘M.A. Thesis Writing Seminar’; and ‘integrated professional competence’ is largely addressed through varied practical assignments and (generally) diverse assessment criteria. Corollary skills, such as digital competencies, critical thinking, public speaking, and contributive teamwork, are elicited and evaluated through assignments and classroom activities.

The program is intended to cohere with level 7 of the National Qualifications Framework, thus equating internationally to a Bologna Master’s level degree course. The Learning Outcomes are usually congruent with this intention. It is unclear whether or not there is any possibility in the program being assessed for the recognition of irregular or informal prior learning. There does not appear to have been any contracted or external consultation with an expert to assure the program managers that the NQF/EQF standards and expectations are met. It is a recommendation of this report that such consultancy be undertaken with a recognized expert, preferably currently employed in—or recently retired from—an institution in the European Higher Education Area.

The program is designed to be regionally responsive whilst also achieving broader international applicability. In practice, this means recognizing the high value of English language competence in the Republic of Kosovo, where international engagement remains significant in corporate, governmental, non-governmental, and military fields. The program also, however, acknowledges that students may, for personal or professional reasons, depart Kosovo for expatriation in other countries, where high-level competence in English will be presumed. The program is therefore designed with a dual-focus: to meet the needs of the Kosovo labor market,

whilst simultaneously preparing students to utilize English in personal or professional contexts abroad.

It must be observed here, however, that the program under evaluation bears a structural difference from many comparable M.A. English programs in the Balkan region—and more generally throughout the European Higher Education Area—because the graduates of this program are restricted in their eligibility to be hired in state schools as teaching staff. This means that the commonly-encountered pedagogical and methodological elements of M.A. English programs are not present. It is the finding of the ET that this is not ultimately to the detriment of the program; there is more in the field of English than teacher-training alone. By design, therefore, this program focuses upon building English language competence in fields such as (but not restricted to) translation/interpretation; hospitality; copywriting; proofreading and editing; corporate or private language consultancy; and, of course, subsequent academic research, whether individual or academic. Yet it should be understood throughout this report that pedagogical/methodological elements of this program have been deliberately de-emphasized, and that the program is not—and is not structurally intended to be—a teacher-training program.

As a general pedagogical goal, the program is designed to build upon existing skills in both research and the English language. Students enrolling in the program are required to have finished their B.A. in the field of English, or at least to have successfully achieved a B.A. degree (with preference given to those who finished in a humanities field), and to have demonstrable English capability to participate effectively in the classes. During the site visit it was affirmed that this in practice equates to at least B2 level (CEFR) for admission, with a preference for students at C1 or C2 level. The intention of the program is to provide opportunities to diversify one's English knowledge and to explore the various applications of English expertise in the labor market. If the program's ethos were distilled into one conception, it would be that diverse employers need people highly competent in English, with adaptability and capability, but that they do not specifically require people trained primarily to be teachers.

The instructional staff are aware of these two foci—local labor needs, and international opportunities—and affirmed in the site visit discussions their commitment to both. The teachers are well positioned to recognize international requirements, as many of them hold at least one degree conferred by a university outside of Kosovo. They also participate in international conferences, and state that they attempt to publish in international, peer-reviewed journals (with an emphasis on Scopus-indexed journals). According to data provided in response to an ET request (for information regarding staff mobility), the teaching staff have undertaken professional visits to such countries as Czechia, Finland, Israel, Lithuania, and Poland. This is impressive outgoing mobility; but it is a recommendation of this ET that AAB attempt to increase incoming mobility to this program for both students and staff.

The main managerial and administrative functions of the program are undertaken and centralized in the management of the Prishtina campus. Rather confusingly, the SER and ancillary documentation refer to the Faculty of Foreign Languages and the Faculty of English interchangeably. These appear to be coterminous Faculties, in the sense that the Faculty of English seems to be the single, constituent element of the Faculty of Foreign Languages, which may expand at some point in the future. In subsequent documentation, if possible, it would be clarifying to refer to the English program as being offered by a 'Department' of English that is a constituent part of the 'Faculty of Foreign Languages.'

The M.A. in English is delivered and managed in Prishtina. The program itself has a large degree of academic autonomy within the general oversight of institutional executive management; the SER states that 'The faculty has decentralized responsibilities from the central level and enjoys independence of actions in terms of operations, organization of conferences, research work and other academic matters.' It was multiply mentioned in site visit discussions that the English program has no budgetary control, as financial decision-making is centralized at a higher management level. The ET did not hear evidence that this uniquely or specifically inconveniences the English program; it simply appears that financial decision-making authority at AAB is concentrated in executive management. That may be inconvenient at the level of Deans or Program Managers, but is not an uncommon structure. It is recorded here, however, as it was raised multiply by institutional collocutors.

Within the Faculty of Foreign Languages there is a Teaching Council (primarily responsible for academic and research matters, as well as for oversight of the academic programs, their curricula and syllabi, and the appointment of commissions), the Master Study Council (primarily responsible for the oversight of the proposal of topic, research, allocation of mentor, and final defense of the Master's thesis), the Dean, the Vice-Dean, and the Quality Assurance Coordinator. This structure provides a clear line of organizational hierarchy and spread of responsibilities. During the site visit discussions neither the academic staff nor the students expressed confusion about the managerial structure of authority within the program.

There are formal policies, guidelines, and regulations dealing with recurring procedural or academic issues, and these are easily accessible to staff and students.

Among the policies shared with staff and students are those relating to academic integrity and ethical conduct befitting academic responsibilities. The main document regulating ethical conduct at AAB is the Code of Ethics, as ratified by the AAB Senate on 17.12.2021. It is a publicly available document, being located on the institution's website. This carefully regulates research and teaching integrity for academic staff and students, with 25 enumerated examples; there are three additional admonitions specifically targeted at students ('plagiarism or taking another person's work without emphasizing the references well; submitting the same paper

more than once; secret agreements/collaborations among students’). Violations, or allegations of violation, are investigated by—and if necessary punished by—an Ethics Committee.

In addition to the Code of Ethics, AAB also has a specific Decision on Plagiarism, signed into force by the AAB Rector on 10.05.2023. This was provided to the ET, as requested, in the original Albanian and in English translation. It mandates the use of anti-plagiarism software (Turnitin is not mentioned in the Decision, but was affirmed by Program Managers to be the detection software being used under license by AAB). Unless there is an ambiguity in the English that does not exist in the Albanian, the use of plagiarism detection software is encouraged for regular assignments, essays, theme papers, etc., but is mandatory for the submission of the M.A. thesis. This seems a reasonable variation of requirements, in order to a) incorporate the plagiarism detection software into the academic process, without b) unduly wearying the instructors with constant uploading of short assignments; it also spares the institution the frequently exorbitant cost of multiple checks and uploads. The only particular concern the ET has in relation to the Decision on Plagiarism is the establishment of 20% as an acceptable maximum for detected ‘plagiarism.’ The ET realizes that plagiarism detection software sometimes identifies harmless verbal coincidence as copying; yet 20% seems uncommonly high. The ET recommends reducing this permissible percentage of textual similarity—even if only as an English M.A. internal policy—to 15% or lower.

The AAB collocutors affirmed during the site visit discussions that the policies, terms of reference and statements of responsibility relating to the management and delivery of the program are reviewed at least every two years and are amended as required by changing circumstances.

| <i>Nr.</i> | <i>Standard</i> | <i>Compliance</i> | |
|------------|--|-------------------|-----------|
| | | <i>Yes</i> | <i>No</i> |
| 1.1 | The study program mission is in compliance with the overall mission statement of the institution. | X | |
| 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 |
| 1.3 | The study program has a well-defined overarching didactic and research concept. | X | |
| 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 | |
| 1.5 | All staff and students comply with the internal regulations relating to ethical conduct in research, teaching, assessment in all academic and administrative activities | X | |

| | | | |
|-----|--|---|--|
| 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 | |
|-----|--|---|--|

Compliance level: (83%) Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Undertake NQF/EQF external consultancy on the program with a recognized expert, preferably currently employed in—or recently retired from—an institution in the European Higher Education Area.*
2. *Increase incoming staff mobility/guest lectures.*
3. *Increase incoming student mobility.*
4. *Clarify the confusing terminology of having a ‘Faculty of English’ within a ‘Faculty of Foreign Languages.’*
5. *Consider—only if for this program—lowering the acceptable maximum ‘plagiarism rate’ for an M.A. submission from the current 20% to at most 15%.*

2.2. Quality Management

Quality Assurance is a self-identified priority for AAB College, and internal rules, policies, and documents regulate the monitoring and achievement of Quality Assurance, such as (from the SER) ‘the Statute, the Quality Assurance Regulation, the Quality Assurance Manual, [and] the Strategic Plan 2022-2026.’ Other additional documents, although not explicitly named as ‘Quality Assurance’ policies, nevertheless have a direct bearing on the achievement of high-quality results; the clear intention, for example, of the aforementioned Decision on Plagiarism is to reduce academic fraud and thus support academic integrity and the maintenance of scholarly quality.

AAB also asserts itself to be in compliance with ENQA standards; the ET has seen no evidence to cast doubt upon this assertion. As is explained in the Quality section of the institution’s website, ‘Quality assurance is done in accordance with the Regulation on Quality Assurance and the Instruction on Quality Assurance, which comply with the legal framework in Kosovo and with the Law on Higher Education and Administrative Instruction on Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and international standards of the European Network of Quality Assurance (ENQA).’

Quality Assurance in AAB College is centralized under the supervision of the Central Quality Assurance Office, the head of which is the Director of Quality Assurance. The Office has direct oversight over the quality assurance mechanisms used throughout the institution, but in practical terms is often represented by a Faculty Quality Assurance Coordinator. Thus, in instances specific to this evaluation report, the Central Quality Assurance Office routinely processes quality maintenance materials for the M.A. in English Language (such as, for example, the student questionnaires). In practical terms, however, most academic staff interaction regarding Quality Assurance questions would not be directly through the Central Quality Assurance Office, but through the Faculty Quality Assurance Coordinator.

The lines of responsibility for QA compliance at AAB are extensive, and run from the Rectorate and the Senate, through the Central Quality Assurance Office (and the Director of Quality Assurance), the Deans, the Faculty QA Coordinators, and the staff themselves. There is, by independent verification of both students and staff, an acceptance of, and belief in, QA policies and procedures such as student questionnaires, or the regulatory documents in force. Yet it would perhaps be wise to invite an occasional inversion of Quality Assurance momentum; instead of being a centralized, institutional obligation, perhaps staff and students should be formally invited, once or twice a year, to brainstorm and propose new Quality Assurance initiatives from the ‘bottom-up.’ The QA policies evident in AAB appear sincere and well-structured; but they also look like mandatory obligations, rather than as invitations to innovation and excellence. To exemplify this point, the Quality Assurance Manual states that

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‘regular meetings,’ membership of ‘permanent and interim academic bodies,’ and being ‘responsible persons for the study program’ are all examples of academic QA participation. No doubt this is true: but these are obligations, and are traditional requirements of academic employment; it would be desirable to see more creativity and innovation being asked of the academic staff, in the field of Quality Assurance, particularly as the English M.A. staff are notably young, as a group.

In specific terms of what is already being done, the main Quality Assurance mechanisms for monitoring institutional performance are student questionnaires, and staff evaluation processes. The student questionnaires solicit opinion, and are administered electronically on a semestral basis. Completion and return of the questionnaires is mandatory. The results are anonymized. The data that the questionnaires elicit are then transferred to the relevant line manager (here, the Dean), or at least to the relevant Faculty Quality Assurance Coordinator; and to the instructor being evaluated.

Although the concept of student questionnaires is of uncontested utility—and near ubiquity—in higher education, the ET has slight concerns about how these AAB surveys are structured and conducted. The sample questionnaire provided by AAB to the ET consisted of only six statements based on a Likert scale (this refers to the academic questionnaire; the infrastructure questionnaire had 11 statements). The six statements in the academic questionnaire were reasonable, focusing largely on professorial conduct in the classroom (demonstration of expertise, correct assessment of submitted materials, respecting the schedule and curriculum, etc.), yet six questions are too brief an evaluation after a full semester. At present, there are no statements in the student questionnaire to evaluate (for illustration): the applicability of the course to intended employments; favoritism or preference in the classroom management; the appropriateness of the complexity or simplicity of the course for the group taking it; the variety (or lack thereof) of assessment methodologies; or even simply the basic interest of the class. It might be suggested that six statements form a deliberately short questionnaire, in order to persuade the students to comply with a request that they might otherwise ignore. Yet this overlooks the fact that compliance is mandatory: students must complete and submit the questionnaire whether it has six statements to evaluate or fifteen. Thus, the ET recommends that the mandatory student questionnaire template be expanded to include at least another six more statements to evaluate additional areas such as those mentioned immediately above, and that space for open-ended comment be created.

The staff performance evaluation process is a common, widely-utilized process of managerial discussion and assistance, and by general assent among the teaching staff (during the site visit discussions) is a useful mechanism for addressing weaknesses or identifying opportunities for additional refinement of skills. There does not appear to be any comparable program for evaluation, observation, or instruction by peers. The ET recommends that peer-observation

opportunities be developed, either for the observation of teaching, or the shadowing of a more experienced teacher by a comparatively less experienced teacher. It would also be beneficial to establish a roster of program-specific internal training: each teacher on the M.A. English Language program could nominate herself/himself as a peer trainer for basic skills, and then make training arrangements for any staff colleagues who wish to learn that skill. Both instructors and instructed could benefit from that opportunity, and the participation would be positively reflected in the staff performance evaluation.

It should be noted that Quality Assurance is commonly understood to be a series of policies and procedures by which the management assist, monitor, and encourage the academic staff. Yet one of the main emphases of Quality Assurance is also the guarantee of high integrity and serious accomplishment in the processes of teaching and learning. Much of this internal academic monitoring of teaching, curriculum development, syllabus revision and updating, represents a process of continued engagement by the academic staff. During the site visit discussions, the academic staff verified that they are actively engaged in, and consulted about, how best to improve the delivery of their subject matter. In several instances, the instructors particularly noted that they maintain their academic freedom in both the structure of the syllabus and in the selection of topics to teach within the accredited course. The teaching staff are also permitted to establish the most appropriate assessment criteria and mechanisms for their specific courses. It should also be recorded, in this context, that the teaching staff and program managers verified that these processes of evaluating one's own teaching and course structure; evaluating it in the company of colleagues and associates; and then aligning it with the curriculum; is a regular, and inclusive, process.

(This report will comment more extensively on curriculum structure and the apposition of teaching approaches in Section 2.4, Education Process Content).

Finally, the review, revision, and potential restructuring of the academic program is a complex process involving the staff and students. The SER states unambiguously that it is a process conducted in compliance with the KAA requirement: 'More substantive and general evaluations at the study program level are carried out during the drafting of the self-evaluation report for the accreditation process, which occurs at least once every three years.' This is admirable, yet in the site visit discussions both alumni and external stakeholders (employers) were asked directly by the ET what role they had in the preparation of the SER and accompanying discussions, and almost no one had been involved in any clear manner. It is therefore the recommendation of the ET that staff, program alumni, and external stakeholders be more transparently included, on a formal basis, in the processes of program evaluation, whether or not the evaluation is impelled by an upcoming accreditation process.

| | | Compliance | |
|------------|---|-------------------|-----------|
| Nr. | Standard | Yes | No |
| 2.1 | All staff participate in self-evaluations and cooperate with reporting and improvement processes in their sphere of activity | X | |
| 2.2 | Evaluation processes and planning for improvement are integrated into normal planning processes. | X | |
| 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 | |
| 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 | |
| 2.5 | Quality assurance processes ensure both that required standards are met and that there is continuing improvement in performance. | X | |
| 2.6 | Survey data is being collected from students, graduates and employers; the results of these evaluations are made publicly available | | X |
| 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 | |
| 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 | |
| 2.9 | The quality assurance arrangements for the program are themselves regularly evaluated and improved. | X | |
| | | | |

Compliance level: (89%) Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Invite students and staff to contemplate and propose Quality Assurance mechanisms and targets from their perspective.*
2. *The mandatory student questionnaire template be expanded to include at least another six more statements to evaluate additional areas such as those mentioned immediately above, and that space for open-ended comment be created.*

3. *Peer-observation opportunities should be developed, either for the observation of teaching, or the shadowing of a more experienced teacher by a comparatively less experienced teacher*
4. *Establish a roster of program-specific internal training, for peer-to-peer skill building.*
5. *Staff, program alumni, and external stakeholders should be more transparently included, on a formal basis, in the processes of program evaluation, whether or not the evaluation is impelled by an upcoming accreditation process.*

2.3. Academic Staff

The academic staff for the M.A. in English Language derive from the larger group of instructors who provide B.A. instruction as well. Thirty-three of them are listed in tabular form—as required—in the SER with name, qualification, academic title, and teaching load. Of those 18 have achieved at least their Doctoral degrees, and some hold higher academic professorial titles. 5 are listed as currently pursuing their PhD degrees. 9 are listed as holding an M.A. degree. Four of the thirty-three are part-time, with the remainder being full-time. The institutional collocutors affirmed during site visit discussions that no member of academic staff teaches more than 8-10 teaching hours, and none teaches more than four additional hours in another institution. Two professors with full-time employment have been appointed as heads of the program; the program thus meets the requirement that for each student group, and for every 60 ECTS credits in the study program, the institution has employed at least one full-time staff with PhD title.

Hiring into employment is done in an orderly and transparent manner. Conditions of the institution, the position, and the working responsibilities are made available to applicants during the hiring process. The employee hired is consequently informed about her or his responsibilities regarding conduct of lessons, research and publication targets, extracurricular service (such as office hours or teaching council participation), community outreach obligations, and other job description elements. The clarity of this process was verified in site visit discussions by the members of the teaching staff, who also affirmed that such conditions apply to subsequent competitions for promotion/advancement in academic title.

Based on this evidence, the ET therefore believes that the academic staff of the M.A. in English Language meet all relevant requirements and legal obligations for the positions they hold and the hours they teach. The ET is unaware of any programmatic violation of hiring or staffing requirements or obligations. The ET evaluates that the teaching staff for the M.A. in English Language meet the legal requirements concerning the occupation of teaching positions included in the Administrative Instruction on Accreditation (AIA).

The academic staff stated that they feel institutionally supported in their endeavors both to teach and to maintain research profiles. They verified that they are given broad academic freedom in creating their syllabi, and in the delivery of their lectures, or the conduct of their seminars. They stated that they felt the internal logistics and infrastructure (chairs, projectors, wi-fi access, etc.) were adequate and appropriate to their classes on the M.A. program. They also mentioned, several times, that AAB has prioritized the concept of ‘student-centered learning,’ and the academic staff appears in general to be supportive of this initiative.

Research support is available, and the academic staff have utilized recent opportunities to present at conferences, or to accept invitations to lecture as guests at foreign institutions. As verified in documentation supplied by AAB at the request of the ET, the M.A. in English Language academic staff are active in pursuing and participating in academic mobility opportunities. The ET considers this beneficial and effective; yet the ET also expresses concern at the lack of incoming mobility, particularly of peer lecturers or external (international) experts. Whilst it is entirely understandable that visa restrictions may impede AAB staff from participating in all available opportunities for academic activity abroad, the Republic of Kosovo is broadly permissive in permitting external scholars to visit. It is a recommendation of this report that the M.A. in English Language make reasonable efforts to attract incoming mobility of guest staff, to temporarily diversify the student instruction, and perhaps to provide training opportunities to full-time AAB staff.

Research capability and productivity are important elements of teaching and academic mentorship. These will be addressed in greater length and detail later in this report (see Section 2.6 Research).

Training is already being offered to academic staff, such as presentations on ‘Internal quality assurance systems,’ ‘Scientific publications,’ ‘The Importance of publishing in Web of Science and Scopus platforms,’ etc. These are all valid subjects for training, and several were presented by international guest presenters. Yet the ET expresses a minor concern that many of the training sessions appear to be reactive instead of proactive. It is unlikely that staff felt a particular need to be informed of the particular ‘Importance of publishing in Web of Science and Scopus platforms,’ as they were already aware of the basic answer that multiple ranking systems focus on WoS/Scopus journals.

It does not appear that a strategy exists for building training and professional development cooperation with other local or regional partners or universities. AAB M.A. staff have extensive professional contacts among the regional colleges and universities, and could organise useful roundtable discussions, or one-day workshops, with national or regional partner colleges, universities, or research institutes.

In general, however, the training and performance monitoring efforts are important elements of the ongoing effort, at program level, to increase teaching effectiveness, improve student-centrality, and to identify how best to improve access to the most appropriate materials needed.

Academic staff confirmed that the processes of evaluation—specifically, managerial performance review, and student questionnaires—are in place, work effectively, and are useful. These results are not generally made public. The academic staff are also monitored through their use of the AAB e-platform: this includes such activities as posting materials online,

sharing appropriate and relevant links, providing general announcements, and other similar activities.

The SER rather unobtrusively notes ‘To date, peer-to-peer evaluation has not yet been carried out.’ This should be emphasized as a lost opportunity. Collegial teaching observation can be highly valuable, and can be undertaken both formally and informally (i.e., producing a written record, containing feedback, and copied to the Dean; or purely informal, with oral feedback). Additionally, peer evaluation of syllabi, test design, grading criteria and assessment methodologies are all areas in which the colleague may provide helpful insight, without the pressure or stress of dealing with an external expert.

The academic staff have obligations to the community beyond their teaching and research requirements. Such extracurricular activities have, in recent years, included international conferences, workshops, open lectures, guest lecturing, and other similar activities. These seem appropriate as community outreach. Their variety is sufficiently broad that even the unenthusiastic can find some way to participate, and thus meet expectations for outreach.

It was verified by the institutional collocutors that teachers who reach the age-limit for retirement, or who under different circumstances lose their full-time status, are moved into the category of part-time teachers.

| | | <i>Compliance</i> | |
|-------------------|---|--------------------------|------------------|
| <i>Nr.</i> | <i>Standard</i> | <i>Yes</i> | <i>No</i> |
| 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 | |
| 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 | |
| 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 | |
| 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 | |

| | | | |
|------|--|---|---|
| 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 | |
| 3.6 | Opportunities are provided for additional professional development of teaching staff, with special assistance given to any who are facing difficulties | X | |
| 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 | |
| 3.8 | Academic staff evaluation is conducted regularly at least through selfevaluation, students, peer and superiors' evaluations, and occur on a formal basis at least once each year. The results of the evaluation are made publicly available | | X |
| 3.9 | Strategies for quality enhancement include improving the teaching strategies and quality of learning materials | X | |
| 3.10 | Teachers retired at age limit or for other reasons lose the status of full-time teachers and are considered part-time teachers. | X | |

Compliance level: (90%) Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *As noted in the recommendations to Section One, efforts should be made to increase incoming staff mobility, or at least to engage foreign scholars—preferably English native speakers, in English native-speaking countries, to teach a guest lecture or two online.*
2. *AAB English M.A. staff should try to organise topical roundtable discussions, or one-day workshops, with national or regional partner colleges, universities, or research institutes.*

2.4. Educational Process Content

The program under evaluation is a two-year, 120 ECTS credit M.A. program, with the presumptive expectations that students will pursue their studies full-time, and take four consecutive semesters of 30 ECTS credits each. There appears to be no anticipation of enrolling one-year students (who apply for the M.A. having achieved a four-year, 240 ECTS undergraduate degree); the AAB M.A. in English Language is, in structural terms, designed to accommodate only those applicants who have achieved the common Bologna-standard 180 ECTS three-year undergraduate degree. The enrolment cohort size envisioned is 200 per year.

As noted previously, the program is slightly anomalous in comparison with other regional and international English M.A. programs, in that it has almost no formal element of teacher-training. This, however, is not a devastating omission, as the program envisions a broad variety of potential employments for graduates, including private (often online) language tuition, hospitality, translation/interpretation, copywriting, editing and proofreading, and other similar, language-based employments. It is also intended to enable graduates who wish to do so to pursue advanced, tertiary (doctoral) level scholarship in other institutions; AAB does not offer a doctoral degree in English Language.

Application to the program is open, and candidates may apply with either a B.A. in English, or a B.A. in another field (preferably humanities) with a demonstrated English language capability. In site visit discussions, AAB collocutors emphasized that as English is widely studied and spoken in the Republic of Kosovo, the average level of even comparatively weak applicants is usually B2 or B1 (CEFR). Additionally, they noted that linguistic improvement is expected and monitored within the progression of the program: the SER asserts that a successful student passing ‘Advanced Course of English for Specific Purposes’ will have demonstrated C1 level English, while C2 level English will be required for the courses ‘English Phraseology’ and ‘Advanced Course of Academic English.’ This seems implausibly ambitious; ‘English Phraseology’ is an 8th semester course, following directly on the 7th semester ‘Advanced Course of English for Specific Purposes,’ and there is no evident reason why this one semester should account for an improvement from C1 to C2. Yet at the level of C1 or C2 these distinctions still relate to individuals with formidably strong language ability—the ET is more concerned by the fact that there seems to be no formal minimum CEFR level for acceptance into the M.A. in English Language. It is the policy of AAB that applicants should test at a minimum C1 level, or else be required to take an English skills course, but this seems needlessly provisional—it is clearer just to establish a minimum level for the program at C1, with no exceptions for lower performance. It is a recommendation of this report that an admission requirement for admission to this program be an achieved score of C1 or above (CEFR), in English, before enrolment.

The program is intended to be based around four main components: theoretical/academic-oriented courses, professional development/practical courses, research methods and techniques, and literary courses. This seems an appropriate division of intellectual foci, again recognizing that comparable programs elsewhere would almost certainly include more pedagogical and methodological ‘teaching’ courses.

Each of the taught semesters of the program consists of 25 ECTS credits of mandatory instruction, with the remaining 5 ECTS credits available from an elective course, of which three are available per semester. The curriculum is as follows:

Semester One: Advanced Course of English for Specific Purposes (mandatory); Research Methodologies (mandatory); General Linguistics (mandatory); Contrastive Text Analysis (mandatory); and a choice of electives, being a) Advanced Course in Language Learning Strategies; b) Studying, Understanding and Using Literature; or c) Intercultural and Professional Communication.

Semester Two: English Phraseology (mandatory); Anglo-American Literature—Selected Authors (mandatory); Advanced Course of Translation Theory (mandatory); English Stylistics (mandatory); and a choice of electives, being a) Application of Technology in Translation; b) World Englishes; or c) History of English Language.

Semester Three: MA Thesis Writing Seminar (mandatory); Advanced Course of Consecutive Interpreting (mandatory); Advanced Course in Simultaneous Interpreting (mandatory); English Semantics and Pragmatics (mandatory); and a choice of electives, being a) Advanced Course in Academic English; or b) Advanced Course of Sociolinguistics; or c) Creative Writing in Professional Contexts.

Semester Four deviates from this mandatory-elective dual structure, as it is based upon the consultations for, and accomplishment of, the thesis draft (24 ECTS), and an internship (6 ECTS).

The program is a generally coherent and clearly-structured English language program aimed at postgraduate learners who wish to refine their English language abilities for potential employability in a wide variety of fields in which English is necessary or an advantage. The basic alignment and development of the curriculum is evident, although one may note that the structural design does not allow for ‘streams’ or ‘fields of specialization’—the electives do not clearly lead from one to another in successive semesters. Another consideration of concern is that numerous courses (interpretation courses, contrastive text analyses, etc.) seem to require students to have high linguistic capability not only in English but also in Albanian; it is not

clear whether or not any accommodation plan exists for any student who does not also competently speak Albanian.

Because the design and progression of the curriculum are evident, only brief remarks are necessary here about several individual classes. Not every course is noted; these are simply reflections on elements of some courses that are either unusual, or incongruous. ‘Advanced Course of English for Specific Purposes’ is, as elaborated in the syllabus, largely a business English course; it would be advisable to diversify the ‘specific purposes’ in this course, to cover a more varied series of topics (business English, basic medical English, basic legal English, English for hospitality, etc.). ‘Contrastive Text Analysis’ is a reasonable course, appropriate for this level, but does seem to presume Albanian language competence. It is unclear how a Kosovo citizen who was a native speaker of Serbian might participate effectively in this course. ‘Studying, Understanding and Using Literature’ incorporates numerous authors from outside the Anglophone world; although the writers selected are of a high caliber, it is opaque why an English M.A. should focus on Borges, Eco, and Solzhenitsyn. ‘Advanced Course of Translation Theory’ would seem to need a larger engagement with the implications of machine translation, post-editing, and similar consequences of technology in the discipline; the current course appears highly traditional in a rapidly-changing field. ‘Application of Technology in Translation’ would be better placed as a mandatory third semester class, given the significance of technology in contemporary translation/interpretation. Perhaps a slot could be created for it by conflating ‘Advanced Course in Consecutive Interpreting’ and ‘Advanced Course in Simultaneous Interpreting,’ both of which are mandatory, and which are clearly related, but which could perhaps be merged into one class with a dual focus. (It was a firm recommendation of the employers, during the site visit meeting with external stakeholders, to include more elements of technology in the study of translation and interpretation; this ET concurs). ‘History of the English Language’ has a praiseworthy intention of providing an historical survey, but is confused in structure: Old English gets one week; Middle English gets four weeks, with Chaucer only appearing in the fourth; Modern English carries the bulk of the time allocation, but appears thematically repetitive in places (i.e. three separate weeks on ‘English Around the World,’ ‘The Spread of English,’ and ‘English as a Lingua Franca,’ which are interrelated phenomena). ‘Creative Writing in Professional Contexts’ seems innovative.

Class sizes seem to vary significantly, from low levels of 15 to upper levels of 70-80; the SER reports that ‘lectures do not exceed more than 80 students per group, whereas exercises are organized with no more than 40 students,’ and that the usual class size is ‘no more than 25 students per group.’ In looking at the curriculum, it is difficult to identify which of the courses could usefully be delivered to a group of 80, but logistical and scheduling pressures may make this occasionally necessary. As a general observation, in advanced (2nd & 3rd cycle) study, the smaller the group, the better the learning, discussion, and interaction.

Drop-out and student delay rates for the program do not appear unduly negative for the region and the postgraduate level. In response to a request from the ET, AAB provided data indicating that the drop-out rates for this program were: (enrolment cohort year) 2018-2019: 17%, 2019-2020: 16%, 2020-2021: 12.5% (with subsequent cohorts still in the program). Although any drop-out is a lost opportunity for that individual, a fluctuation of 10-20% is regionally anticipatable, and results as low as 12.5% are to be commended.

As has been previously noted, students are held accountable for academic ethics, and for the originality of their work. The students and graduates who spoke with the ET during the site visit discussions verified that they had been properly informed about expected ethical conduct as students. They also know that their theses will be subjected to 'Turnitin' system examination.

Assessment is set by the instructor, commonly by agreement with the students in the first or second week of term. As a general observation, the methods of assessment are diverse and appropriate, allowing students to express themselves, and to demonstrate their knowledge, through different media (presentations, essays and papers, tests). This is not universal: 'Advanced Course of Translation Theory,' for example, has only four graded components (Attendance 10%, Participation 10%, Midterm Examination 30%, and Final Examination 50%). As may also be seen here, the syllabi reveal that virtually all courses offer 10% for attendance, sometimes divorced from yet more available points for 'participation.' It seems generous in a 2nd cycle study program to give 10% of the grade merely for showing up. It should additionally be noted that many classes have a heavily-weighted final examination, which is a traditional and conservative approach, but which goes somewhat against the 'student centered' ethos of the program; the general philosophy of 'student centered learning' would suggest that no individual project, test, presentation, or assignment, should be so heavily weighted that failing it results in certain or near-certain failure of the entire semester. Finally, some assessments seem strangely disbalanced with their prominence in the schedule: 'Intercultural and Professional Communication' devotes three full weeks to Group Projects, but seems only to allocate 10% of the grade to this time-consuming activity.

The learning outcomes are structured around the basic categories of Knowledge, Skills, and Competences. The learning outcomes for the program as a whole, as expressed in the SER, are more concise and clear than are some of the similar learning outcomes for the specific classes in their syllabi. Yet the general apposition of the learning outcomes to the basic qualities intended to be developed—by discipline and postgraduate level—are appropriate. They are discussed with the students at the beginning of each course, during the introduction of the syllabus.

| | | Compliance | |
|------------|---|-------------------|-----------|
| Nr. | Standard | Yes | No |
| 4.1 | The study program is modelled on qualification objectives. These include subject-related and interdisciplinary aspects as well as the 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. | X | |
| 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 | |
| 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 be listed at least 7 learning outcomes for the study program under evaluation. | | X |
| 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 | |
| 4.5 | If the language of instruction is other than Albanian, 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 | X | |
| 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 | |
| 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 | |

| | | | |
|------|---|---|---|
| 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 |
| 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 |
| 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 | |
| 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 organizations is monitored through activity reports; students during practice stages have assigned tutors among the academic staff in the study program | X | |
| 4.12 | In order to facilitate the practice stages, the higher education institution signs cooperation agreements, contracts or other documents with institutions/organizations/practical training units | X | |

Compliance level: (75%) Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *An admission requirement for acceptance to this program should be an achieved score of C1 or above (CEFR), in English, before enrolment.*
2. *Make immediate contingency plans for how students with low or inexistent Albanian may reasonably take courses that seem to require English and Albanian of a high order (notably, those courses related to translation and interpretation, and 'Contrastive Text Analysis').*
3. *'Studying, Understanding and Using Literature' should refocus upon English-language writers.*
4. *'Advanced Course of Translation Theory' should incorporate additional emphases upon machine translation, post-editing, and other contemporary complications of the field of translation.*
5. *Consider making 'Application of Technology in Translation' a mandatory third semester class, given the significance of technology in contemporary*

translation/interpretation. A slot could perhaps be created for it by conflating 'Advanced Course in Consecutive Interpreting' and 'Advanced Course in Simultaneous Interpreting' into one course (a difficult structural challenge, but employers joined the ET in feeling that technological elements in translation are underrepresented in the curricula and training).

- 6. Retain—but restructure—the course 'History of the English Language,' in order to provide a clearer, more logical, and more balanced survey. The present logic governing the structure is unclear.*
- 7. Whenever possible, maintain class sizes at 25 or fewer students.*
- 8. Consider requiring attendance, instead of rewarding this mandatory action with 10% of the course grade.*
- 9. In line with the principles of 'student centered' learning, diversify the assessments and assignments; and revalue tests, assignments, or projects that account for 40% or 50% of the course grade, as failure in any one such assignment makes passing the course a practically impossible task.*

2.5. Students

The admission procedure seems to be fair and transparent. Potential students are introduced with the AAB university and the English language department through the visits from the university officials or students, or during organised student fairs or through word of mouth. For the MA study in particular, a decent percentage of students are continuing their BA studies while some part of them come from other departments, faculties or even walks of life. It had to be noted here that the ET noticed a rather unusual trend regarding Kosovos' higher education institutions - the average number of students enrolling into MA studies and then graduating at AAB seems to be rather high when compared to other higher education institutions in Kosovo, be it public or private. Usually the students gain employment during their studies and then simply drop out or lose interest, but it seems that that is not the case here. While this fact may be interpreted in many different ways, the ET recognises this as a positive occurrence and recognises it as a sign of a well structured and conducted study.

Standards 5.1, 5.2, and 5.10 are completely met. As stated earlier, the admission process is transparent and well adjusted for all candidates. Enrollment process has additional steps for students who did not graduate from BA studies in the same Department in order to determine their language knowledge and skills. Students then enroll into "differential year" where, alongside regular curricular classes, they must also enroll and pass the "differential classes" from the BA studies. This procedure and situation is well addressed with the Statute of AAB college and the Regulation of Master Studies at AAB college.

Standards 5.3, 5.6, and 5.11 are also completely met. Even though there is a rather large number of enrolled students each year, the study groups are dimensioned according to the Statute and in some cases those groups are even smaller and therefore more student-oriented. Student-orientation is also visible when addressing their special situations and giving them flexible treatment if there is a justified cause. Another situation where student-orientation is palpable is the availability of the teaching staff for any kind of support the students might need.

Standard 5.4 is fully met since students receive timely feedback on their results with further instructions about assistance. And as a mode of assistance and as a corrective tool, student works are analysed by plagiarism software in some instances which gives them relevant feedback and self discipline for future works (Standard 5.8).

And finally, from the administrative perspective - standard 5.5, 5.7, and 5.9 are also fully met. Students' results are certified and always available through their E-Student platform which has a wide array of services and functions. While the ET did not receive (nor did it ask for) the

records of student completion rates, we are assured that such data is easily extrapolated from the E-Student platform and therefore this standard is also fully met.

The general impression that the ET got for this section is that the students are genuinely happy and satisfied with all aspects of the studies. They respect and appreciate their teachers and their colleagues, they take their studies seriously, they are helpful and they seem to be well aware of their role in the present and future world.

| | | Compliance | |
|------------|--|-------------------|-----------|
| Nr. | Standard | Yes | No |
| 5.1 | There is a clear and formally adopted admission procedure at institutional level that the study program respects when organizing students' recruitment. Admission requirements are consistently and fairly applied for all students. | X | |
| 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 | |
| 5.3 | The study groups are dimensioned so as to ensure an effective and interactive teaching and learning process. | X | |
| 5.4 | Feedback to students on their performance and results of assessments is given promptly and accompanied by mechanisms for assistance if needed. | X | |
| 5.5 | The results obtained by the students throughout the study cycles are certified by the academic record. | X | |
| 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 | |
| 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 | |
| 5.8 | Effective procedures are being used to ensure that work submitted by students is original. | X | |
| 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 | |
| 5.10 | The students' transfer between higher education institutions, faculties and study programs are clearly regulated in formal internal documents. | X | |
| 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: (100%) Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *No specific recommendations in this regard. The ET got the impression that the students, their rights, treatment towards them and all other aspects of student life are well within the above stated standards.*
2. *General recommendation would be to offer more contemporary elective lectures regarding production of social media content, using AI in translation and similar topics.*

2.6. Research

Research has been partially addressed in several previous sections of this report—see specifically Section 2.3 (Academic Staff) and Section 2.4 (Educational Process Content)—yet given the importance of research in contemporary pedagogy, it is here addressed separately. Some points previously made may inevitably be reiterated here, for the clarity of exposition.

Research is an important of the M.A. in English Language curriculum. It must be: one of the main distinctions between the first and second cycle of studies is the development of research capability—and growing research autonomy—in the second cycle. The most prominent example of this, in the AAB M.A. in English Language program, is the thesis itself; this will be examined later in this Section. Yet before addressing the thesis, it is pertinent to note that there is indisputable curricular commitment to research instruction and training. This is best demonstrated by the companions courses Research Methodologies (first semester) and the M.A. Thesis Writing Seminar (third semester), both obligatory. These courses, which unavoidably contain some thematic overlap, nonetheless represent a recurring attempt to provide students with the methodological, ethical, and critical skills necessary to design, study, and complete their own academic research. Seen another way, fully 10% of the ECTS credits obtained in the entire degree program come from mandatory research instruction. This direct instruction is supported by the recurrent research elements in other courses, such as research papers, thematic presentations, and classroom debate, all of which require at-home research preparation.

The thesis itself is the culmination of academic progress in the M.A. in English Language program, representing 24 ECTS credits, and being undertaken with the direct supervision of a professor within the English faculty. The student has general autonomy in selecting her or his research topic. The topic for exploration is commonly derived from a list of available topics proposed by the potential mentor, although it is not obligatory to select a topic from the list. Any thematically-appropriate topic is permissible provided that it is approved by the mentor and the Master Study Council. The thesis is commonly intended to be completed in one semester, although, realistically, this task will take longer for some students, as the academic staff verified.

Research is also a significant aspect of the obligations of the teaching staff. They are expected to maintain awareness of the main developments in their specific fields, and to update their syllabi and materials accordingly. Where possible, this is designed to include the instructor's own work. AAB has also begun promoting the possibility of research collaboration among an academic staff member and one or more promising M.A. students. This can be a laudable collaboration, allowing younger researchers to conduct scholarship under the guidance of a more seasoned colleague; yet care must be taken to ensure that student participation is fully

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recognized in any subsequent publications. Additionally, no academic staff member should be listed ex officio as an author or co-author on a student paper to which he or she has made no substantive contribution other than mentorship.

Academic staff members are required to maintain a publication profile as researchers, and in site visit discussions with the ET they asserted that, in general, they have institutional support for research, conference attendance, guest lecturing, and publication support. This is monitored and recorded during the staff performance evaluations. Staff are expected to publish with their AAB affiliation.

It should be noted here that research publication is something of a contentious subject. The academic staff of the M.A. in English Language program are generally active in publication, and some of them have extensive publication records stretching back a decade or more. The academic staff also affirm that they enjoy research opportunities, and understand that publication is an important element of their work. Yet because of recent external emphasis within Kosovo on Scopus-indexed publications, AAB has accordingly prioritized Scopus-based publication. The ET detected an element of frustration among the academic staff at this development, not because there is anything wrong with the Scopus index, but because the emphasis on Scopus journals can be seen to devalue publications elsewhere, or to disesteem prior publication (such as conference proceedings from before the COVID-19 pandemic). But the academic staff also now have a clear criterion for publication, instead of simply trying to publish their work in any forum; now they are directed to publish in Scopus-indexed journals, and are achieving success (35 articles published by English program staff in Scopus-indexed journals at the time of the submission of the SER).

In regard to research, what is notable about the research portfolios of the academic staff on the M.A. in English Language is the significant variation in productivity from colleague to colleague. Some individuals on the program have exemplary academic publication records—comfortably international peer-reviewed journals; multiple publications in one year; numerous single-author publications; and a perceptible deepening of seriousness and complexity of the work being produced, and the academic fora in which it is being published. This is highly encouraging. Yet it must also be acknowledged that multiple teachers on the M.A. in English Language appear to have had quite fallow periods of diminished or inexistent research productivity. Some do not meet the basic criterion of averaging one published paper for the most recent three years; but some indicate a broader lack of publications over an extended period of time. One cannot seize past opportunities missed, yet it should be a priority for the Program Managers, and for the Dean, to identify under-publishing members of staff, and to establish reasonable and realistic publication targets for those staff members.

It would also be to the benefit of all the staff if those highly-productive research scholars were to give training seminars or workshops on topics of common interest and relevance, such as: how to identify an actionable research topic; how to develop an appropriate research methodology for the topic being considered; how to identify the journal or conference most likely to provide the best, most professional, forum for the research being presented, etc.

The M.A. in English Language utilizes the plagiarism-detection software ‘Turnitin,’ which is a commonly-used system for detecting verbal coincidence with materials submitted to other institutions covered by Turnitin. Of course, mentors and students are expected to avoid and beware plagiarism throughout the research and composition of the thesis, before the Turnitin survey is conducted. Yet, as before in this report, the ET cautiously suggests that the percentage of verbal matching acceptable under AAB policy—up to 20%—is too high. While it may be institutional policy to permit up to 20% of verbal matching, the ET recommends a Faculty of English policy to cap verbal matching at 15%.

The students and graduates, in separate site visit discussions, verified that the basic library holdings—physical and digital—are adequate to their research needs. There was particular gratitude expressed by the graduates for the institutional access they enjoyed to J-STOR. Among other databases to which students and staff have access, the SER lists ‘EBSCO, J-STOR, DOAJ—Directory of Open Access Journals, Edward Elgar, SCIENCE COMMONS—Open Access Law Journal, BioOne Research Evolved, JSTOR, IOP Electronic Journals, Oxford Reference’ and others.

| <i>Nr.</i> | <i>Standard</i> | <i>Compliance</i> | |
|------------|---|-------------------|-----------|
| | | <i>Yes</i> | <i>No</i> |
| 6.1 | The study program has defined scientific/applied research objectives (on its own or as part of a research center 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 | |
| 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 | |
| 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 | |
| 6.4 | The academic staff has a proven track record of research results on the same topics as their teaching activity. | X | |

| | | | |
|------|--|---|---|
| 6.5 | The academic and research staff publish their work in specialty 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 | |
| 6.6 | Research is validated through: scientific and applied research publications, artistic products, technological transfer through consultancy centers, scientific parks and other structures for validation | X | |
| 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 |
| 6.8 | Academic and research staff publish under the name of the institution in Kosovo they are affiliated to as full-time staff. | X | |
| 6.9 | 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 | |
| 6.10 | Policies are established for ownership of intellectual property and clear procedures set out for commercialization of ideas developed by staff and students | X | |
| 6.11 | Students are engaged in research projects and other activities | X | |

Compliance level: (91%) Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. In any collaborative research by a member of staff and a student, the English program must carefully monitor a) that all student work is properly recognised and acknowledged, and b) no 'ex officio' credit is given to the staff member if he or she has not contributed substantively to the work.*
- 2. It should be a priority for the Program Managers, and for the Dean, to identify under-publishing members of staff, and to establish reasonable and realistic publication targets for those staff members.*
- 3. Highly-productive research scholars should be encouraged or incentivized to give training seminars or workshops on topics of common interest and relevance relating to publishing, research, topic identification, and methodology selection.*

2.7. Infrastructure and Resources

The premises where the lectures occur are entirely owned by the AAB College. The AAB College also has an adequate number of teaching staff and other human resources to conduct the studies fully. Since this is language study, no special equipment as one would find in some natural studies is required and therefore the standard 7.1 is fully met.

Sustainability is firmly visible from the financial plan for the next 5 years. The greatest part of revenues comes from student fees, a minor part from projects and another minor part from donors. Revenue is divided among salaries for the teaching and administrative staff, for other expenses like repairs and maintenance and also it is invested in science and laboratory equipment. Noteworthy is the predicted percentage of roughly 25% of revenue to be invested in science and laboratory equipment. The ET suggests to put a special emphasis on that remark for the next reaccreditation period.

The Standard 7.3 has for substandards; a) and d) standards are fully met since all of the facilities, infrastructure and equipment belongs to the AAB College and there are enough units at disposal for adequate teaching process. Standard c) is also met since there are some softwares used for CAT and text editing, as well as plagiarism software. Substandard d) is met in regard that library exists and it does indeed have its own book stock, reading places and isolated work areas.

Standard 7.4 is also met for the reasons stated in the section 5, regarding the student groups.

Standard 7.5 is partially met. Substandards a) and b) are not met. Even though there are 2 libraries at AAB College, those libraries are rather small and the numbers stated in the standard do not correlate with what the ET saw in the video. The MA English language alone has 250 students, and 10% of that is 25. There are also many more Departments at the faculty and the libraries are shared. That means that each library should have a lot more reading and working areas in order to meet this standard. Moreover, for substandard b), no areas for group work were seen in the video, only isolated solo work rooms.

Substandards c), d), and e) are met fully.

The facilities and infrastructure are well adjusted for students with special needs - the building has elevators for students with mobility impairment, special toilets and marked parking lots and therefore this standard is also fully met.

| | | Compliance | |
|------------|---|-------------------|-----------|
| Nr. | Standard | Yes | No |
| 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 | |
| 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 | |
| 7.3 | <p>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:</p> <p>a) owned or rented spaces adequate for the educational process;</p> <p>b) owned or rented laboratories, with the adequate equipment for all the compulsory disciplines within the curriculum, wherever the analytical syllabus includes such activities;</p> <p>c) adequate software for the disciplines of study included in the curriculum, with utilization license;</p> <p>d) library equipped with reading rooms, group work rooms and its own book stock according to the disciplines included in the curricula</p> | X | |
| 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 specialty disciplines included in the curricula are carried out in laboratories equipped with IT equipment. | X | |
| 7.5 | <p>The education institution's libraries must ensure, for each of the study programs:</p> <p>a) a number of seats in the reading rooms corresponding to at least 10% of the KAA Accreditation Manual – Updated 2021 26 total number of students in the study program;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>c) their own book stock from Albanian and foreign specialty literature, enough to cover the disciplines within the curricula, out of which at least 50% should represent book titles or specialty courses of recognized publishers, from the last 10</p> | X | |

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| | years; 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; e) a sufficient number of subscriptions to Albanian and foreign publications and periodicals, according to the stated mission | | |
| 7.6 | The infrastructure and facilities dedicated to the implementation of the program is adapted to students with special needs. | X | |

Compliance level: (100%) Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Sincere investments in science and equipment as per financial plan*
2. *Increase revenue from projects which can result in smaller fees for students or faster development of scientific projects*

3. FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ET

As may be seen throughout this report, the M.A. in English Language at AAB is a broad-based program designed to provide the successful student with a wide range of skills and experiences relating to English language usage. It is not primarily intended as a language-skills building curriculum,(for those with weak English) nor does it focus on pedagogical training; rather, it emphasizes the desire in the labor market for employees who are highly capable in English, but who are able to utilise their language skills outside the teaching profession.

The program is staffed by a group of instructors who are, in some cases, internationally educated, and most of whom have had experience in international conferences. They participate in, and are held accountable to, effective feedback mechanisms, such as student questionnaire data, and performance evaluations with line-managers. As a general observation, they are also regular in their publications, although this does not apply equally to all staff members. The academic staff are focusing their publication efforts on Scopus-indexed journals, more through requirement than through conviction that Scopus is the most relevant or desirable.

The students seem engaged, thoughtful, and satisfied with the program as it currently runs. They particularly emphasized the responsiveness and accessibility of the teaching staff. An appreciable number of students participate in academic mobility programs; too few incoming students visit AAB on similar programs. Alumni and external stakeholders are generally pleased with the program, its graduates, or its interns.

This report has noted multiple areas that the Expert Team hopes to see refined; they are reelected in the recommendations at the conclusion of each section, and are elaborated throughout the narrative portions of the report. Yet, despite areas for improvement, the Expert Team finds that the M.A. in English Language is Fully Compliant with requirements, and is therefore recommended to receive Re-Accreditation, for a period of five years, with a maximum student enrolment per academic year of 200 students.

It may be noted that, due to a calculation error in the first draft of this report, this overall evaluation was recorded as ‘substantially compliant.’ This report corrects that error.


Compliance level: Fully compliant

Student quota recommended: 200

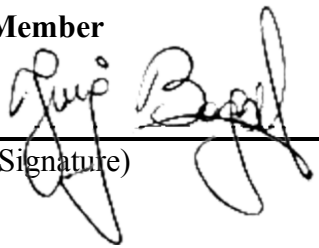
Three or Five Years: Five Years

Expert Team

Member

| | | |
|---|----------------------|-------------|
|  | Dr. Andrew Goodspeed | 07.08.2023. |
| (Signature) | (Print Name) | (Date) |

Member

| | | |
|--|--------------|-------------|
|  | Juraj Bogat | 07.08.2023. |
| (Signature) | (Print Name) | (Date) |