



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo

Agjencia e Kosovës për Akreditim
Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency



Internal Quality Assurance Policy
Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA)

Contents

- 1. Introduction 3
- 2. KA Internal Quality Assurance 4
- 3. The timeline for implementing the internal quality assurance is as follows 4
- 4. Annual Work Plan..... 5
- 5. Reporting 7
- 6. Internal Communication 7
- 7. Professional Development Of Staff..... 8
- 8. Accreditation Process Quality Assurance 8
- 9. Feedback from Stakeholders..... 9

1. Introduction

The Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) is an independent institution, responsible for internal and external quality assurance, including accreditation, re-accreditation, monitoring, validation and all other quality assurance processes in higher education institutions and their study programs in the Republic of Kosovo, according to the best international practices, including in particular the relevant European standards in the area of quality assurance in higher education.

The KAA's mission is: *“to support the development of quality in higher education institutions through the external evaluation process and ensure the Kosovo society that the quality of higher education is at the level of international standards”*.

The objectives of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) are to:

- Promote, improve and increase the quality of higher education;
- Increase transparency and accountability in the higher education system;
- Improve the quality of studies in higher education institutions;
- Encourage innovative content in higher education;
- Ensure the comparability of qualifications from Kosovo's higher education institutions with those provided by international programs;
- Implement the objectives for Kosovo's integration into the European Higher Education Area and contribute to its development.

In addition to its role in higher education in Kosovo, KAA promotes a culture of quality even within the institution itself. KAA follows a systematic approach to internal quality improvement to achieve its goals and objectives. This includes the drafting and implementation of a series of documents such as regulations, instructions and other policies whereby KAA ensures that its external evaluation procedures and any other area of its action are carried out qualitatively and are subject to continuous quality improvement.

The Internal Quality Assurance Policy of KAA formally establishes and describes all the actions of KAA that are undertaken to implement internal quality assurance. This policy serves as the key mechanism for KAA's internal reflection and is fully in line with KAA's commitment to establishing a system of operation that is comparable to the European quality assurance agencies.

2. KA Internal Quality Assurance

The continuous improvement of KAA quality is ensured by applying the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle. The timely and regular planning and implementation of external evaluation processes, in addition to being prescribed by the applicable legislation, is a key indicator of KAA's performance. On the other hand, the collection of data through control and monitoring, and the review of internal procedures are prerequisites for the continuous improvement of quality. The processes of internal evaluation also contribute to increasing the transparency of KAA's actions towards society in general. In this regard, KAA is committed to the involvement of relevant stakeholders, whose feedback serves as an important basis for informing KAA's policies.

For KAA, the implementation of the PDCA plan implies:

- (P) planning the accreditation and monitoring process as well as planning other KAA work activities;
- (D) implementing the work processes based on the planning, documenting their implementation, and collecting feedback information through questionnaires or other qualitative instruments;
- (C) analyzing the questionnaire data evaluating the results of the accreditation and monitoring process; and
- (A) drafting and implementing improvement plans based on the evaluation data.

KAA prepares an annual internal evaluation report which is initially discussed among KAA's administrative staff. The same report is then sent for review to the State Quality Council (SQC).

SQC holds at least one meeting per year dedicated to discussing the results of the internal evaluation.

The annual internal evaluation report is published on KAA's website.

The Director of KAA is the main responsible person for ensuring the implementation of the PDCA plan.

3. The timeline for implementing the internal quality assurance is as follows

The internal quality assurance process is planned within a timeline which enables KAA to receive feedback and make improvements, thus closing the feedback loop.

The planning of the internal quality assurance process is carried out as follows:

By January at the latest, KAA will:

- set the objectives of the accreditation and monitoring process;
- plan the accreditation and monitoring process;
- plan workshops, training sessions and activities for the professional development of the staff, roundtables and the annual conference, meetings with external stakeholders, and study visits;

From February and by July at the latest, KAA:

- implement the accreditation and monitoring process;
- carry out the professional development activities for the staff;
- complete the preparations for holding the roundtables/debates/annual conference/meetings with relevant stakeholders;

From July and by September at the latest, KAA:

- collect data through questionnaires with stakeholders for the accreditation and monitoring process;
- evaluate the performance of the administrative staff;
- draft the internal evaluation report and improvement plans;

From October and by December at the latest, KAA:

- implement the necessary improvements through the review of accreditation and monitoring procedures or processes;
- standardize the good practices identified during the accreditation and monitoring process;
- Prepare for the next work plan.

4. Annual Work Plan

Based on the strategic plan, KAA drafts annual work plans which, in addition to routine work, include activities that are part of the fulfilment of KAA's strategic objectives. The annual work planning at KAA includes:

- setting accreditation and monitoring process objectives – involves setting quality indicators aimed at improving the quality of the accreditation and monitoring process;
- planning the re/accreditation process – based on the e-Accreditation platform, KAA provides for the number of educational institutions the accreditation of which expires at the institutional level and study programs. Secondly, KAA maintains regular communication with HEI representatives through email and meetings in person. In this way, KAA is informed about the HEIs' plans for opening new programs, consequently submitting new accreditation applications. These data serve as the main reference point for planning the accreditation process, including planning the number of international experts and the number of accreditation visits;
- planning post-accreditation procedures – in accordance with the Methodology for Post-accreditation Procedures and the Monitoring Procedure, depending on the duration of accreditation at the institutional level or study programs, and depending on the recommendations of international accreditation experts given in external evaluation reports, KAA identifies study programs and/or higher education institutions that should be subject to compliance checks with recommendations given by international experts;

- planning the monitoring process – in accordance with the Methodology for Post-accreditation Procedures and the Monitoring Procedure, KAA makes an annual plan for the monitoring process. This implies planning general monitoring and monitoring according to accreditation standards;
- planning SQC meetings – SQC decides on the minimum number of its meetings. Depending on the dynamics of KAA's work, SQC may increase its meetings to meet the needs for addressing requests and issues raised by the accreditation process, monitoring, or other relevant matters for KAA's work. SQC meeting dates are made public on KAA's website;
- planning workshops between administrative staff and SQC – with the aim of discussing progress and identifying challenges during KAA's work, at least two workshops are planned annually between administrative staff and SQC members. These workshops may also include the participation of other actors such as external experts, students, academic staff members, MEST members, NGO members, etc.;
- planning professional development of staff – KAA plans at least one activity annually aimed at the professional development of administrative staff;
- planning international activities – involves planning study visits for KAA staff or SQC members to international quality assurance forums, events, and conferences;
- reviewing KAA documents/regulations and policies and drafting new documents – depending on circumstances, KAA plans within a year the initiation of reviewing existing documents or drafting new documents. This involves collecting and analyzing data, identifying international expertise (if applicable), identifying donors to support with professional expertise and financial resources for the realization of reviewing/drafting relevant documents for KAA;
- planning meetings with relevant stakeholders – KAA plans at least once a year formal meetings with HEIs, students, academic staff members, employers, business associations, economic chambers, or other professional chambers. These meetings serve as a tool for collecting feedback from external stakeholders regarding the needs and demands of the higher education sector and as a tool for informing KAA policies and procedures;
- planning tables, debates, or conferences discussing issues related to the advancement of quality assurance in Kosovo – at least once a year, KAA organizes roundtables, debates, or conferences where key local actors are gathered to discuss issues concerning the improvement of quality in higher education.
- participation in activities within joint projects with donors – KAA benefits from donor support aimed at improving the quality of higher education in Kosovo. Depending on the dynamics planned by the projects, KAA plans the implementation of activities that support KAA's processes, improvement of KAA's regulations and guidelines, or activities for the professional development of KAA staff.

The annual work plan serves as a guide for the work of KAA's administrative staff, as well as SQC members. Every weekly and annual meeting between administrative staff and every workshop held between administrative staff and SQC members should refer to the annual work plan to ensure the timely and effective realization of the activities defined in the plan.

KAA's annual work plan is reviewed and approved by SQC.

KAA's annual work plan is published on the website.

5. Reporting

In accordance with the applicable legal requirements, KAA prepares an annual work report at the end of each year, which is submitted to the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo and the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI).

In addition to state institutions, KAA's annual work report is published on the website and distributed electronically to all relevant stakeholders and KAA's collaborators.

The report is prepared no later than the first quarter of the following calendar year (March).

The report includes the assessment of the fulfilment of the annual work plan, with a main focus on the implementation of the accreditation and monitoring process. KAA's annual report on the accreditation process includes at least data such as the number of applications submitted to KAA, the number of formally approved and rejected applications by SQC, the number of accreditation visits, the number of international experts involved in the evaluation of institutions, the number of positive and negative decisions by SQC. These data are prepared separately at the institutional level and the level of study programs.

The work report also includes data on the implementation of monitoring procedures, other activities such as the organization of workshops, the completion of the review/drafting of new documentation, the implementation of projects, the realization of professional development activities for staff, the organization of study visits, the implementation of joint international activities, etc.

6. Internal Communication

KAA is continuously increasing the number of administrative staff. In accordance with the new Law, KAA has completed the internal reorganization process, i.e. the administrative staff will henceforth operate in separate departments and divisions as outlined in the new organizational chart. This implies that KAA must formalize internal procedures such as setting work agendas, distributing tasks, ensuring continuous information exchange between divisions and departments, harmonizing work between divisions and departments, etc., to increase the effectiveness of KAA's work.

In this regard, KAA holds regular weekly and monthly meetings with the administrative staff, as well as joint workshops with SQC:

- **weekly meetings** – held with the respective departments, lasting at least one hour. In these meetings, weekly priorities are set, tasks are distributed, and the necessary resources for task completion are ensured. At the end of each weekly meeting, a brief summary of the discussions is prepared and circulated among the administrative staff.
- **monthly meetings** – held with all staff collectively, lasting at least one hour. In these meetings, continuous exchange of information and data among staff is ensured, work processes are discussed, task achievements are evaluated, challenges are identified, and activities are coordinated to ensure

that KAA's work processes are harmonized between departments and divisions. Monthly meetings follow an agenda, and a summary of discussions is prepared and circulated among the administrative staff at the end of the meeting.

- **organization of workshops** - besides meetings among administrative staff, KAA also holds regular workshops with SQC. Depending on time and financial resources, these joint workshops are organized outside the workplace as a form of motivation and support for the administrative staff. Workshops serve as platforms to discuss KAA's work challenges, opportunities for improvement, and the progress achieved in KAA activities, and propose additional measures if certain activities are not implemented according to the work plan. Workshops follow an agenda, and a minutes document is prepared at the end.

7. Professional Development Of Staff

KAA ensures that professional development activities for the administrative staff are carried out fairly and proportionally for all administrative staff. Professional development activities for staff include:

- a) conducting study visits to European quality assurance agencies aimed at gaining European best practices and experiences;
- b) participating in trainings or workshops organized by ENQA or other European actors;
- c) organizing trainings within Kosovo (funded by KAA or donors);
- d) other activities which, in KAA's judgment, are relevant and beneficial for KAA's scope.

KAA ensures that at least once a year, specific training is organized for each member of the administrative staff. Depending on the scope of the department, KAA engages local or international experts to provide the training.

Based on work priorities, KAA ensures that at least once a year, the administrative staff of the Accreditation Division and the Monitoring Division conduct a study visit abroad to relevant quality assurance agencies to learn European best practices.

Administrative staff who benefit from a professional development activity share their experiences with other colleagues through joint meetings.

The performance evaluation of the administrative staff is carried out in accordance with the provisions of the applicable local legislation and the KAA Staff Evaluation Manual.

8. Accreditation Process Quality Assurance

KAA ensures the quality of the accreditation and monitoring process by taking the following actions:

- the accreditation process is planned in a timely manner;
- the criteria and procedures for selecting international experts are fully complied with;
- training and information sessions are held for international experts;
- conflicts of interest between experts and the institution under evaluation are avoided;

- coordinators for the accreditation procedure are appointed for each institution under evaluation;
- continuous information exchange with international experts and higher education institutions at every stage of the external evaluation process is ensured.

An important activity is the organization of individual and collective meetings with higher education institutions before the start of each accreditation process. Through these meetings, KAA provides detailed guidance on the accreditation process and ensures full clarification of any uncertainties that HEIs may have. In addition to the formal and legal criteria set by local legislation, through the annual work plan, KAA sets standards for the accreditation and monitoring process. This involves establishing measurable performance indicators (%) related to:

- improving the accuracy of the time period for the implementation of the accreditation and monitoring process;
- improving the satisfaction of higher education institutions and international experts with the implementation of the accreditation and monitoring process;
- improving the satisfaction of industry representatives with the accreditation process and the quality of higher education in Kosovo;
- improving student participation in the accreditation and monitoring processes;
- improving the documentation of good practices during the accreditation and monitoring process;

After the accreditation process is completed, KAA compares the results with the standards set during the planning phase. In this way, KAA identifies any deviations from the process and the reasons for not meeting the process as planned.

After analyzing the data, KAA drafts a summary report containing plans for improving the quality of the accreditation process. Through data analysis, KAA also identifies and documents good practices.

9. Feedback from Stakeholders

KAA ensures that the accreditation process is carried out in accordance with the applicable legal provisions and that the accreditation results fulfil KAA's mission and vision by collecting feedback from relevant stakeholders. Feedback is collected through questionnaires, meetings, or organizing discussion tables.

Questionnaires are administered systematically, usually after the completion of the re/accreditation process for the respective year (with HEIs and expert teams), while meetings and discussion tables are organized in accordance with AKA's work plan and address specific topics of general interest.

The administration of questionnaires is carried out as follows:

Higher Education Institutions

- KAA designs questionnaires aimed at evaluating the quality, regularity, and transparency of the accreditation process, starting from the application procedure, the administration of re/accreditation documentation by KAA, the planning, organization, and implementation of the accreditation visit, and the procedures after the completion of the accreditation visit.

- The KAA coordinator sends the questionnaire electronically to the contact person of the higher education institution that has been subject to the re/accreditation process at the institutional level or the study program level.
- The questionnaire is submitted to the institution after receiving comments on the factual state of the draft report.
- The completion of the questionnaire by HEIs is recommended to be finished within a week.

Members of the expert teams

- KAA designs questionnaires aimed at evaluating the planning, organization, and implementation of the accreditation visit, the support of the expert team by AKA coordinators, as well as the collaboration among the expert team members.
- The KAA coordinator submits the questionnaire electronically to each member of the expert team who was involved in the evaluation process of the higher education institution.
- The questionnaire is sent to the expert after the final evaluation report is received.
- The completion of the questionnaire by the experts is recommended to be finished within a week.

Students

- KAA designs questionnaires aimed at evaluating the organization of the accreditation process, focusing on the inclusion of students in the internal and external quality assurance processes.
- KAA identifies students for completing the questionnaires through a list provided by the higher education institution.
- The student questionnaires are conducted once a year, usually in June of the respective year.

Employers and industry

- KAA designs questionnaires for employers and industries aimed at assessing employer satisfaction with graduates in the job market. The major focus of the questionnaire is the relevance of study programs to the skills and competencies acquired through higher education and identifying areas for improvement.
- KAA identifies a list of potential employers and relevant organizations, such as economic chambers, to whom the questionnaire is submitted electronically.
- Employer and industry questionnaires are conducted once every two years.

The results of the questionnaires from each stakeholder are presented and discussed in a summary form at a KAA meeting after the completion of the accreditation process for the respective year (usually in July).

Issues raised by the above-mentioned stakeholders through the questionnaires serve as a basis for reviewing/improving future procedures applied by KAA.

The results of the questionnaires and concrete proposals for reviewing/improving procedures are also discussed in SQC meetings.

A summary of the findings from the questionnaires is published on KAA's website.

KAA ensures that at least once a year, meetings are held with students, various government stakeholders, line ministries, business organizations, economic chambers, and individual employers to discuss trends in higher education, shortcomings of graduates in the job market, innovations in the job market, and accordingly, the adaptation of curricula to rapid technological changes, etc.