

Avni Gashi
Acting Director
Kosovo Accreditation Agency
St. Agim Ramadani, Student's Center, 2nd Floor
10000 Pristina
Kosovo

Bern, 1 October 2019

Subject: Membership of KAA in ENQA

Dear Avni Gashi,

I am writing to inform you of the decision taken by the ENQA Board on 19 September 2019 regarding the membership of KAA in ENQA. After a thorough consideration and discussion on the review report, the ENQA Board concluded that the overall level of compliance with the ESG is not sufficient to renew the KAA membership at this stage. The Board was especially concerned about the cases where only partial compliance with the ESG is reached:

3.1 Activities, policy, and process for quality assurance

The Board shares the panel's concern on the lack of the higher education-wide consensus on the role and activities of the agency that would be a basis for a sound KAA strategic planning.

3.4 Thematic Analysis

The review report reads: *"the survey on stakeholders' opinions (SR2017) presents useful information, but a close connection with the general findings of the external assurance activities as carried out by KAA is missing. Developments, trends and areas of good practice or persistent difficulty should be made clear, to bring these reports more in line with the guideline to the present ESG standard"*. The Board seconds the panel's analysis and asks the agency to follow the requirement of the standard more closely.

3.5 Resources

The Board is concerned of the lack of human and financial resources needed for conducting the activities expected from KAA.

3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

The Board considers that the implementation of formal rather than informal mechanisms to create solid routines of internal quality assurance is needed, as recommended by the panel.

2.3 Implementing processes

The review report reads: *"over the last one and a half year no reviews of full applications have taken place"*. Furthermore, the panel explains: *"in 2018 a full year extension of current*

accreditations has been allowed. There has been no monitoring of follow-up of recommendations in earlier reviews. Monitoring has been limited to formal requirements only, that is: limited to control rather than to quality enhancement. For this matter the 2014 recommendation has not been followed up". The Board seconds the panel's critical remarks and urges the agency to deliver the external quality assurance processes that are in line with the standard, i.e. reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published.

2.4 Peer-review experts

The Board shares the panel's concern that peer-review experts should have appropriate skills and be competent to perform their task, as well as be sufficiently supported by appropriate training and/or briefing. As the report reads: "it would be very useful to work hard on better preparation of experts as regards the demands of AM2018 and have consensus meetings among experts so as to make consistent judgement on the many standards in AM2018 possible." Furthermore, the Board asks the agency to consider closely the panel's recommendation and guarantee students' participation in institutional reviews and program evaluations.

2.6 Reporting

The Board seconds the panel's critical remark that full reports should be regularly published and better substantiated with evidence.

Despite the several critical remarks listed, the Board commends the efforts KAA is making to promote European standards of external quality assurance to the higher education sector in Kosovo and invites the agency to continue with its efforts.

Should KAA wish to re-apply for ENQA membership in the future, you can do that in two years' time from this decision. The ENQA Board advises the agency to carefully follow up and implement the panel's recommendations before re-applying.

In addition, KAA can still avail of the voluntary progress visit – a new enhancement-led feature in the review process. The visit will not have the objective of checking the agency's ESG compliance but might be helpful to determine if the agency has addressed the areas of concern. The visit would take place in about two years' time from this decision. The ENQA Secretariat will be in touch with you in about a year's time to discuss this possibility. The costs of this visit have already been included as part of the review fee and are non-refundable except for the travel costs of the experts. More information about the progress visit can be found in the [Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews](#).

Should KAA object to the decision of the ENQA Board, it may file an appeal according to the procedures outlined in article 24 of ENQA's Rules of Procedure.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact the ENQA Secretariat.

Yours sincerely,



Christoph Grolimund
President

Annex: Areas for development

Annex: Areas for development

As outlined by the review panel, KAA is recommended to take appropriate action, so far as it is empowered to do so, on the following issues:

ESG 3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

KAA is recommended to find as soon as possible HE-wide consensus and consequently decide on a KAA Strategic Plan, including solid activity plans with performance indicators and well defined responsibilities, so as to prepare a sound basis for regular future activities.

Next, KAA is recommended to involve students in the daily activities and the decision making structure of KAA.

ESG 3.3 Independence

In conducting evaluations according to the new procedures as described in the Accreditation Manual 2018, KAA is recommended to make sure that operational independence and independence of formal outcomes is guaranteed.

ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis

KAA is recommended to use data collected during accreditation processes and other activities to carry out thematic and system-wide analysis in order to support further development of the HE system in Kosovo.

ESG 3.5 Resources

KAA is recommended to take all necessary actions in order to assure adequate human and financial resources needed for conducting the activities expected from KAA.

ESG 3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

In order to collect feedback, KAA is recommended to increase and describe in documents the implementation of formal rather than informal mechanisms to create solid routines of internal quality assurance based on principles like closed-loop practices and the four-eyes system.

ESG 2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

KAA is recommended to take care that in institutional and programme self-evaluations, in site visits and in review reports the ESG 2015 Standards Part I are addressed clearly.

ESG 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

KAA is recommended to make sure that during accreditation activities the workability of the methodologies is guaranteed.

ESG 2.3 Implementing processes

KAA is recommended to monitor and evaluate the implementation of accreditation activities from 2019 onwards thoroughly.

Furthermore, KAA is recommended to concentrate on quality improvement, when monitoring the follow-up of recommendations to HEIs provided by expert panels.

ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts

KAA is recommended to make sure that the level of degree-work can and will be judged properly by the expert panels.

Next, KAA is recommended to make sure that full students' participation in institutional reviews and program evaluations is guaranteed.

Finally, KAA is recommended to build a network of national experts, including students, in order to participate in activities such as monitoring of the follow-up of recommendations provided in review reports.

ESG 2.5 Criteria for outcomes

KAA is recommended to monitor how the existing rules for assessing standards and for decision-making work out in reality. If needed, improvements both in decision rules and by way of trainings, may have to be considered.

ESG 2.6 Reporting

KAA is recommended to improve the quality of reports and make sure that they contain deeper analysis and a better connection with evidences and that the full reports are regularly published.