

**Approval of the Application
by Kosovo¹ Accreditation Agency (KAA)
for Inclusion on the Register**

Register Committee

Ref. RC15/A18

Ver. 1.0

Date 2015-06-05

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Application of:	13/09/2014
External review report of:	10/04/2014
Review coordinated by:	ENQA
Review panel members:	Ossi V. Lindqvist (chair), Obe de Vries (secretary), Dionyssis Kladis, Rositsa Doneva, Kotryna Peilakauskaite
Decision of:	4/5 June 2015
Registration until:	30 April 2019
Absented themselves from decision-making:	none

1. The application adhered to the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.
2. The Register Committee considered the external review report of 10/4/2014 on the compliance of KAA with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG²). The Register Committee found that the report generally provides clear evidence and analysis of how KAA complies with ESG.
3. The Register Committee sought and received clarification from KAA (letters of 3/11/14 and 26/2/15) as well as the chair of the review panel (letter of 3/11/14).

Analysis:

4. With regard to the specific European Standards and Guidelines, the Register Committee considered the following:
5. **ESG 2.1:** The Register Committee sought and received clarification from the review panel on the question of how the different aspects of part 1 of the ESG are reflected in KAA's criteria for accreditation.

¹ All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this document shall be understood in full compliance with United Nation's Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

² The application was made before adoption of the 2015 version of the ESG. It has therefore been considered on the basis of the 2005 version of the ESG, and all references refer to that version.

While the Register Committee was able to concur with the panel's conclusion regarding this standard, it underlined the need for a more detailed and systematic mapping between the standards of ESG Part 1 and the criteria used by KAA.

6. **ESG 2.2:** The Register Committee sought and received clarification from KAA on the involvement of stakeholders in developing its processes.

Having considered the clarification the Register Committee concurred with the conclusion regarding this standard. The Committee, however, noted that there is a need for broader and more systematic involvement of stakeholders, especially students, in the development of KAA's processes.

7. **ESG 2.8:** The Register Committee noted that KAA published only one system-wide analysis to date, while initial steps have been taken to publish such analyses more often in the future. The Committee concurred with the review panel's conclusion that KAA only partially complies with the standard; the issue has therefore been flagged.
8. **ESG 3.6:** The Register Committee noted that the review report referred to KAA's own view that its independence may remain fragile and required consolidation, which was reflected in KAA's strategic plan. The Committee further noted that there were concerns expressed about KAA being too much embedded in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST).

Notwithstanding the panel's conclusion on the standard, the Register Committee considers that independence will continue to require careful attention in the future. The issue has therefore been flagged.

9. **ESG 3.7:** The Register Committee noted that students do not take part in panels for programme (re-)accreditation. The Committee took note of KAA's comments on the review report, stating that KAA will involve students in the panels for programme (re-)accreditation.

While the Register Committee recognised that KAA made decisions to solve the non-compliance with this element of the standard, the implementation in practice cannot be judged at this stage. This issue has therefore been flagged.

The review panel was concerned that the current composition of KAA's appeals committee "may threaten the independence and therefore the credibility of the process" (p. 26). The Register Committee sought and received clarification from KAA on the nature of its appeals procedure.

The Committee acknowledged the legal constraints which influence the way in which KAA's appeals procedure is organised, but underlined the need to ensure that appeals are considered independently of those who made the decision against which the appeal has been made.

While recognising that KAA is working on improving the current procedure to that effect, these changes have not yet been reviewed by an independent external panel. This issue has therefore been flagged.

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Conclusion:

10. **Based on the external review report and the considerations above, the Register Committee concluded that KAA complies substantially with the ESG and therefore approved the application for inclusion on the Register.**

KAA's inclusion shall be valid until 30/4/2019³.

11. **The Register Committee took note of the current criminal investigation against two KAA officials. Since the result of these investigations might have a bearing on KAA as an institution, given the senior positions held by the accused, KAA is requested to inform EQAR of further developments related thereto (i.e. eventual filing of charges, court decisions) by way of a Substantive Change Report**
12. The following issues have been flagged for particular attention when considering a potential application for renewal of inclusion. KAA is expected to address these issues specifically in its next self-evaluation report, setting out whether the issue has been resolved or indicating what progress has been made. KAA is further responsible for informing the coordinator of the next external review and the review panel of the need to address these issues in the external review report.

ESG 2.8: System-wide analyses

It should be analysed how KAA has carried out additional system-wide analyses.

ESG 3.6: Independence

It should receive attention how KAA has progressed in consolidating its independence. In particular, the arrangements for the appointment of the Executive Director and KAA's further staff should be addressed.

ESG 3.7: Involvement of students on programme accreditation panels

It should be addressed whether KAA has systematically included student experts on all panels for programme accreditation.

ESG 3.7: Appeals committee and process

It should receive attention whether KAA's appeals procedure has been changed in a way to ensure that appeals are considered independently of those who made the decision.

³ Inclusion is valid for five years from the date of the external review report, see §4.1 of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.