



Kolegji AAB
CILËSI. LIDERSHIP. SUKSES!

STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2026

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Introductory Statement

The previous strategic plans of AAB College have served as strategic milestones and guidelines for this Institution from its establishment until today. What makes the present Document special is that it is produced 20 years after AAB's establishment and most stupendous rise since the beginning; what, furthermore, makes it a remarkable achievement is also the timeframe within which it has been drafted, a time of Pandemic that has plagued the whole world. The intermittent emergency lockdown situation, quarantine and online learning have brought forth a chain of challenges; however, AAB is emerging even stronger and determined to consistently increase the quality of studies which are also closely interrelated with scientific research and international cooperation.

The Strategic Plan 2022-2026 has been marked by a meticulously organized process in terms of both inclusiveness and the commitment of carefully selected staff and partners who have rendered an outstanding contribution while sparing nothing of their potentials. It has been a process spanning a period of several months, with group works meeting in six workshops involving the deliberation and input of 56 participants, including students, industry representatives and senior academic associates.

The vision and mission, values and principles have been reviewed and updated drawing on the previous strategies, and place even more emphasis on the College's resolve to carry on proving itself a leader in quality and innovative study and research processes in higher education in the country and further afield. The present Plan contains clearly articulated intervention philosophies and (a) is built on the concept of student and teacher participation in institutional management, (b) seeks student-centered teaching, and (c) promotes quality scientific research that contributes to the advancement of our society and beyond. The breakdown of the present Document into an Implementation Plan, Action Plans and Benchmarks for Measures and Activities ensures that progress in each component of the Document is measurable and measured periodically and separately, thus raising every individual's or administrative unit's the level of accountability.

It remains for us to embark in the same spirit on the course toward efficient and principled implementation of the present Document by co-vibrating with socio-economic developments in the Republic of Kosovo and beyond.

Dr. Sc. Bujar Demjaha, Rector

Lulzim Tafa, Head of the Steering Council

I. Introduction

1.1. Evaluation of 2018-2022 Strategic Plan Implementation

A review of the 2018-2022 Plan has found that most of the goals and measures envisaged therein have been achieved, and some have even been overachieved. Thus, investment in physical infrastructure, technology, means of transportation, employment of academic staff (pursuant to the amended KAA – Kosovo Accreditation Agency – criteria) and other goals and measures have been overachieved. Forecasts on the number of accredited programs, enrolled students, administrative staff, newly established institutions and so on have also been exceeded. Scientific research has been the only area of relative stagnation, which has resulted from the lack of support from government authorities, pressures for academic and infrastructural quality assurance, and relative lack of capacities among staff members. Significant progress has also been marked in the area of incorporating quality assurance procedures into the teaching and research process. For this reason, the current Plan pays special attention to these two areas, on the one hand, and builds on the significant achievements in other areas, on the other.

In the framework of the review, each of the measures foreseen in the original version of the Plan have been elaborated and confirmed/reformulated for purposes of guiding the developments over the 2021-2022 period.

1.2. New Institutions and Units

In the framework of strategies to follow the higher education trends in Kosovo and beyond, AAB proceeded with institutional and program restructuring even after 2017:

To this end, the following institutions and units have been set up and established:

- British School of Kosova,
- Professional Theater "Faruk Begolli",
- Television Channel – ATV,
- Auditing and Accounting Institute,
- Vocational School Vivienne Academy,
- Study programs in medicine and other areas, which have been accredited,
- Medical Diagnostic Center (AMG).

As part of the higher education system in Kosovo, AAB is now entering a new development phase. At the heart of this phase is the fact that market and customer demands have changed: this is a growing process where more than just a diploma is required – what is required is competence to carry out a job, especially in the most sought-after professions in the country and Europe. This is because the market is saturated with higher education diplomas in social sciences (particularly in economics and

law), and has shifted from general studies to applied/professional studies and from the public sector as the main employer to the private sector and (ever increasingly) European market.

It is precisely against this backdrop of the COVID-19 Pandemic and new social, demographic and technological development trends that AAB management has decided to start mapping out its new institutional strategy one year ahead of the expiry of the existing 2018-2022 Strategy.

II. AAB's Priorities and Developmental Directions

The following are the mission, vision, values, principles and priority areas of intervention as defined in the Strategic Plan 2022-2026 drafting process.

2.1. Mission of AAB College

AAB organizes diversified and quality student-centered studies, engages in quality applied and theoretical research, and provides services to the community and industry in order to provide transformational experiences enabling the full development of students, staff, social and economic partners, and society at large.

Apart from these, to organize relevant and quality studies for its students and to carry out its third Mission, AAB:

- encourages the spirit of entrepreneurship, creativity, critical thinking, and universal values with its students in order to bring about innovative initiatives and projects;
- provides a learning environment that enables social, academic and professional mobility and helps in the development of a responsible individual – citizen;
- focuses on activities in the field of publishing, culture and media;
- engages in a dynamic dialogue with social partners and community, and
- joins in most relevant networks of higher education and science in Europe and in the world.

2.2. Vision - 2030

AAB is a lead institution in the country and region in the application of innovative approaches in higher education, research and technology that offers students and staff transformational experiences in the service of personal and social development in the era of globalization.

2.3. Values That Motivate Us

AAB staff put all their energies into their work and face daily challenges by upholding the following values:

AAB remains consistently committed to individual, innovative approaches and academic and scientific values. These values are outlined in key AAB provisions and documents, including AAB's Code of Ethics.

2.4. Principles That Guide Us

In the course of our 20-year work we have managed to build a set of key principles that guide us in achieving our goals always in a certain social context and by respecting and cooperating with others. These principles have been built, adapted and advanced with the experience of the individuals who make up the great AAB family. The following principles have been identified in the Development Strategy 2022-2026:

Professional, academic and scientific ethics,
The principle of justice and equal treatment for all
The principle of openness, transparency and flexibility
Monitoring, evaluation of institutional performance
Effectiveness and efficiency
Equal opportunities and meritocracy.

2.5. Priority Areas and Intervention Philosophy

The following delineates the intervention philosophy and main strategic concepts of identified priority areas subject of strategic intervention in AAB in the five-year period. These areas and the philosophy of strategic intervention are defined following a process of all-inclusive consultation with strategic planning participants.

2.5.1. Teaching

Philosophy of Strategic Intervention:

The concept of student-centered teaching and student autonomous work is the dominant concept in the field of teaching in AAB. Given the phase we are entering, AAB will focus even more on the implementation of this concept in teaching, starting from the policy review, rearrangement of the teaching/learning environment, provision of spaces for group work, review of practices and applied methodology in the classroom, provision of individualized spaces, provision of premises for consultations and others. Modern teaching theory and practice in the last 100 years teaches us that the student should be the subject of learning and engage in interactive classroom approaches by engaging in relevant and personalized learning experiences. The didactic concept applies to students' active engagement and increase in their

participation not only during the conduct of a lesson in the classroom but all stages of the teaching/learning process.

This philosophy will be outlined throughout the 21 measures related to this area of intervention, including staff training programs, curricula and syllabi design, preparation and planning practices, classroom teaching practices, quality assurance mechanisms, resource support planning, teaching/learning environments and so on. Before changing current practices, AAB will assess the situation and identify needs for change, improvement, advancement etc., depending on the situation ascertained. In this context, it is important to analyze how management, teachers, but also students view their role and place in the full promotion of the student-centered concept. In teaching with active participation, the didactic concept with the student at the center constitutes the most advanced model and this is precisely what we want to implement. To achieve this goal, the Training Center and its programs, as well as other staff and student support programs, will play an important part. All the envisaged measures aim to create an active dynamic system both in the classroom and outside it for purposes of developing students' competencies for personal development, and also contributing to the overall development of the country.

2.5.2. Science

Philosophy of Strategic Intervention:

Scientific research in AAB College aims to advance, create and disseminate knowledge in order to improve the well-being of the population as well as assist in cultural, social and economic development. The scientific values of AAB College concur with the international values of scientific integrity and academic freedom. Scientific activity in AAB College is defined by three main elements: scientific output, quality, and visibility in the scientific community. In order to create scientific output and influence the community and society, a research culture must first be created; creation of that research culture takes several years. Meanwhile, the indicator pointing to the achievement of this goal is the degree and output of scientific research in AAB, and the level we will have achieved as a scientific college. The scientific research output and scientific quality is now measured by important databases such as Scopus and WoS, and thus we see where we stand as a College in this respect. Another important element consists in our international visibility and reputation in the science sector.

In this context, it is important for AAB to transform itself from an institution focused mainly on teaching into an institution with aspirations for scientific activities. To build research culture and strengthen scientific dimension, twelve measures have been envisaged under the field of science. These measures are accompanied by relevant descriptions, infrastructure, financial resources, staff motivation, training for researchers, capacity building for applications in international and local projects and funds, and more.

In summary, the measures described below are aimed at creating a research culture at AAB by ensuring scientific output, and quality and visibility of research at AAB. On the other hand, AAB's gradual transition from a mainly teaching institution to a teaching and research institution in the five-year plan will be attained.

2.5.3. Internationalization and Partnership

Philosophy of Strategic Intervention:

Intervention Philosophy:

With regard to the area of international cooperation, AAB aims to increase networking and presence in the European Higher Education Area and beyond. In addition, international cooperation through various activities will serve advancement of teaching quality, research and accomplishment of the third Mission. This sector will also be actively engaged in the achievement of the third mission through partnerships, and cooperation programs with industry, community, and various organizations which are active in the field of culture, art and social development in general.

For this purpose, appropriate measures have been foreseen, such as capacity building to apply for and implement local and international projects. To achieve these goals, cooperation agreements with international universities should be signed, and those activities that enable the exchange of AAB College students and staff with universities in the region, European countries and beyond be implemented. The following encouraging policies are designed to engage AAB staff in international cooperation programs in teaching and science, and find international partners for successful application for and implementation of projects:

2.5.4. Students and Staff

Philosophy of Strategic Intervention

The main concept in the field of AAB staff and students is to increase the participation of staff and students in decision-making. This means empowering students and teachers, and a kind of democratization in decision-making in order to increase engagement in leading, managing and implementing mutually agreed processes in AAB.

For this purpose, a number of measures and actions have been identified that have had to do with students and staff, the latter including not only non-academic staff but also academic staff. Among the main issues identified are those related to the rate of student attendance, establishment of a performance evaluation system, assessment of the needs of different sectors, and increase of capacities for a better fulfillment of staff's and students' requests and new role. In order to support the staff and students for the new role, a series of activities will be organized through either the Deans' Offices, or AAB Students' Union. Essential in this regard is ensuring students' and staff' active participation in management and decision-making bodies, such as teaching and scientific councils, various ethical and scientific committees, deans' offices, Rectorate and Governing Council.

2.5.5. Teaching/Learning Resources and Environment

Philosophy of Strategic Intervention

Infrastructure, technical services and logistics constitute a very important segment because it provides assistance to all units operating within AAB. Infrastructure and technical and logistical services serve to create the best possible conditions for the teaching process, scientific research and cooperation with the community. So, if the teaching sector plans in due time adequate spaces for the student-centered teaching process, then we are able to plan in due time allocation of spaces, necessary inventory and best conditions for the implementation of the respective concepts in teaching. The same goes for cases where providing space for professors or newly-employed staff, laboratories and work cabinets, student or staff transportation, etc., are required.

During the strategic planning, the working group for infrastructure and logistical and technical services conveyed the main concepts presented by other academic and scientific groups, and foresaw relevant measures to facilitate the implementation of these concepts. For instance, the provision of more cabinets for teachers, rearrangement of classrooms and classroom desks, provision of specific laboratories for study programs, provision of relevant technologies for all other programs are some of the measures foreseen for this period of the strategic plan. Arrangements in campuses, transportation, maintenance, and other services in the sector are also envisaged.

2.6. Strategic Goals and Measures to Attain Them

2.6.1. Teaching – Goals and Strategic Measures

Strategic Goal 1: Building and consolidating the culture of creative teaching and student quality assessment based on the student-centered approach and students' independent work.

AAB is committed to consolidating a teaching and study culture built on student-centered philosophy. The measures of this Strategy are designed in such a way as to enable capacity building and provision of necessary resources needed to put the concept of student-centered teaching into practice. Another aim will be to increase student autonomy in both studies and research. Curricula and work methodology will be designed and implemented in a way that steadily increases student's autonomous engagement and responsibility for own professional development. Autonomous engagement will culminate in diploma thesis writing at all levels of study.

Expected results:

- Capacities have been developed and academic staff has been motivated to implement the student-centered concept (see Measures 1.1., 1.4., 1.5., 1.6., 1.7., 1.21.)
- Study programs at AAB have become more relevant and help to develop students' competencies in accordance with their needs (for study and employment), market trends and demands of society (see Measures 1.2., 1.3., 1.14., 1.21.).
- Measures of a social dimension have been implemented to provide quality studies and improve student performance (social dimension), including community students and students with disabilities (see Measures 1.3. - 1.7.)
- AAB provides quality training for the development of academic staff in accordance with their needs for quality student-centered teaching (see Measures 1.8, 1.19., 1.20).
- Digitalization of teaching has been put in place and the capacities for a qualitative implementation of digitalized teaching forms in teaching have increased (see Measures 1.15 and 1.19)
- Study programs are constantly reviewed and new programs are designed in line with students', market and society demands (see Measures 1.10, 1.16., And 1.18.)
- Accountability, transparency and cooperation in the teaching process have increased (see Measures 1.9., 1.12., 1.13).

2.6.2. Science – Goals and Strategic Measures

Strategic Goal 2:

Creating a system designed to raise scientific research quality through staff and student support for research work for purposes of achieving the third Mission and social development.

AAB will continue to create institutional mechanisms and build capacities for scientific research that benefit teachers' and students' scientific development, and also serve the social and economic development of the country. This will be achieved by increasing investment in science and placing greater focus on applied research that helps accomplish the third Mission, and contributes to development in the country. The research will also be a bridge between AAB staff and colleagues in the country and around the world through joint conferences and research projects.

Expected results:

- a. Conditions have been advanced and capacities have been built for staff engagement in scientific research and publication of research results (see Measures 2.1.-2.7., and Measures 2.9)
- b. The Research Centers have become operational through the engagement of research groups in concrete local and international projects (see Measure 2.8).
- c. The number and quality of projects and scientific research at the level of Master studies has increased (see Measures 2.10 and 2.11)
- d. Partnership relationships have been established between AAB and industry, and knowledge and technology transfer agreements have increased (see Measure 2.12).

2.6.3. Partnership and Internationalization: Goals and Strategic Measures

Strategic Goal 3: Building sustainable cooperation with local and international partners in order to advance the quality of teaching and scientific research, and increase AAB's presence in relevant European and other international initiatives, networks and processes in the field of higher education and science.

AAB is determined to be open to industry, social partners, as well as peer higher education and science institutions. This is necessary in the age of globalization, advances in communication, advancement of digital technologies, online and distance learning, internationalization of higher education and so on. The only borders in higher education are the borders and limitations that may have remained from the traditional forms of teaching and research. The COVID-19 Pandemic has proven how important cooperation, networking, partnerships and creating synergies with other institutions are. Establishing partnerships with industry has already gained paramount importance because it not only ensures quality studies, but also develops competencies and increases employability and student employment rates. AAB will be actively committed to achieving the third Mission as it pertains to industry, community and social partners. The core of this Strategic Plan reflects this orientation on the part of AAB.

Expected results:

- Staff and student capacities for the design and implementation of local and international projects (see Measures 3.1., 3.2. and 3.5) have been built.
- Stable partnerships and relationships with authorities, industry and international partners in the field of higher education (see Measures 3.3 and 3.4.) have been established.

2.6.4. Students and Staff: Goals and Strategic Measures

Strategic Goal 4: Improving work and study conditions, and increasing student and staff participation in decision-making in order to improve efficiency of studies and employability of graduates.

AAB is interested to increase staff's and students' participation in key processes in the College, including leading, managing, and implementing all processes. To this end, AAB has drafted concrete measures related to organizing students' and staff's engagement, creation work and study conditions, performance evaluation, and the widest possible staff's and students' participation in decision-making. The first steps in this direction have been taken with the establishment and consolidation of student organization and representation in AAB.

Expected results:

- Policies and a regulatory framework have been drafted and adopted in support of an active staff's and students' participation in academic and decision-making processes in AAB (see Measures 4.1. And 4.6).
- A system has been established to continuously support the development and motivation of staff and students (see Measures 4.2., 4.3., 4.4., 4.7., and 4.8.)
- A system of ensuring accountability at work has been set up and implemented (see Measures 4.5 and 4.6).

2.6.5. Teaching/Learning Environment: Goals and Strategic Measures

Strategic Goal 5: Developing an environment enabling quality teaching, studies and research through the creation of functional spaces, provision of more advanced material resources, and efficient management of teaching/learning spaces.

The COVID-19 Pandemic and rapid technological developments have proved that the teaching/learning spaces, equipment, and material means for the realization of teaching and scientific research in the higher education institutions need to be reconsidered. In 2020, AAB was part of an Erasmus Plus project on teaching/learning spaces in higher education as an active member of a large consortium of 11 European higher education institutions. The concepts and experiences gained from the research and exchanges within this project have been shared with the institution leadership, and applied to advance the teaching and learning environment at AAB. These experiences are also reflected in the relevant measures in this Strategic Plan. The new strategic interventions focus on the following: creation of a better student-centered environment, diversification of learning spaces to meet AAB students' and staff's curricular and extracurricular needs.

Expected results:

- Working conditions for academic staff have improved through the provision of space for academic work, consultation and research work (see Measure 5.1).
- The learning environment is adapted in accordance with the concept of the student at the center (see Measures 5.1., 5.2., 5.3., and 5.6.).
- Library services for students and staff are further advanced through the provision of suitable environments and electronic resources (see Measures 5.4. and 5.5.).
- Conditions for laboratory work are created in accordance with the specific requirements of the programs (see Measure 5.7).
- AAB central database is advanced in accordance with the needs of departments and development trends (see Measure 5.9).
- Teaching/Learning conditions and environments in all three campuses of AAB (Prishtina, Gjakova and Ferizaj) are advanced and standardized (see Measures 5.10. – 5.11).
- Conditions for studies and movement of people with disabilities are advanced (see Measure 5.11.).
- Technological conditions are created for the digitalization of academic, scientific and administrative processes (5.6. and 5.13).