

## **Accreditation Report**

**University of Banja Luka  
Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Agricultural Management (Master)**

### **I Procedure**

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The **Assessment Report** of the peer-review experts is **based on** the self-assessment report of the Higher Education Institution (HEI) and extensive discussions with the HEI management, deans and/or heads of the departments, heads of study programme(s), lecturers, staff representatives, students, and alumni.

The basis of the **Assessment Criteria** is part 1 of the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG) in the current official version. At the same time the national context, particularly the national regulations regarding the establishment of study programmes, are taken into account.

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## **II Introduction**

The experts would like to thank the representatives of the HEI as well as students that they have taken part in the discussions and willingly shared information and their views during the site visit. The discussions are valuable not only for the assessment of the institution, but also for a better understanding of the legal and sociocultural context of the local higher education system.

Evaluation basis for the peer-review experts is the self-assessment report of the HEI as well as intensive discussions during the site visit with the HEI management, deans and/or heads of the departments, heads of the study programme, study programme coordinators, teachers, lecturers, administrative staff, students, and graduates.

Main objective of the accreditation procedure is to assess the quality of the study programmes and compliance with the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG). The ESG standards are applied as main assessment criteria in the international accreditation procedure.

In addition, the respective country-specific criteria and standards are taken into account.

A group of experts was set up, which ensured that all areas relevant to the accreditation procedure (e.g. legal, structural, social etc. aspects) as well as the ESG and national criteria were considered. The peer-review experts include professors, representatives of the professional practice and the student representative. A certificate with the ACQUIN seal is awarded upon accreditation of the study programme.

### **1 Short profile of HEI**

The University of Banja Luka, founded on November 7, 1975, has currently 17 faculties. It is the leading higher education institution in the Republic of Srpska and the second largest one in the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The university is managed by the Steering Board, Senate and Rector, who is assisted by the Vice-Rector for education and students affairs, Vice-Rector for scientific research and development, Vice-Rector for international and inter-university cooperation, and Vice-Rector for staff and material resources.

Now, there are 811 fully employed professors and teaching assistants, 342 professors working part-time, and 175 visiting professors, the administration of the university totaling 559 employees.

The university has 43,040 Bachelor graduates, 835 Master of Arts and 1,437 Master of Science graduates and 697 PhD degree holders, with around 17,000 students currently enrolled in the university.

Most faculties are situated in two separate campus sites near the banks of the river Vrbas, in the vicinity of downtown area. Each campus site is equipped with dormitories with accompanying canteens, sports courts, students' clubs, and university Computer Centre.

The University of Banja Luka has all necessary facilities including classrooms and amphitheatres, over reading rooms and libraries, laboratories and computer rooms. The total classroom area is 16,000 m<sup>2</sup> and laboratories 10,000 m<sup>2</sup>. In most classrooms there are computers and over-head projectors installed, allowing for use of digital contents in a class. In addition, the libraries provide their users with 185,000 titles and are subscribed to 75 journals.

**2 General information on the study programme**

Location	University of Banja Luka
Faculty/ department	Faculty of Agriculture: Agricultural sciences
Standard period of study (semesters)	4 semesters
Number of ECTS credits	120 ECTS
Number of study places	20
Form of study	Full-Time
Tuition fee	880 BAM for 1 year

### **III Implementation and assessment of the criteria**

*The peer-review experts assess the quality of the study programme(s) and compliance with the ESG standards as well as with the national standards. The report must document the assessment of each study programme in the cluster, taking into account each criterion. Depending on the criterion, the assessment of criterion may be appropriate at the study programmes cluster level in order to avoid repetition and better describe general context.*

#### **1 ESG Standard 1.1: Policy for quality assurance**

**Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.**

##### **1.1 Implementation**

The highest body in the quality system of the University of Banja Luka is the Quality Assurance Committee. The committee was formed by a decision of the Senate and is tasked, among other things, with preparing quality strategies and policies and submitting them to the Rector and the Senate for adoption. At the university level, a Quality Assurance Office (QAF) was established with one employee, a quality assurance coordinator, with the task of providing technical support to the QAF, coordinating quality assurance activities with organizational units, collecting, processing and analysing assurance data quality, etc. Quality coordinators at the faculty of agriculture were also appointed. Even after reaching the quality threshold, it is the responsibility of the faculty or Academy and the university to work on improving the quality, achieving better results, as well as a prestigious reputation and a satisfactory ranking - middle positions in a class of a similar size university.

The quality assurance strategy, the procedures for monitoring and improving the quality, as well as the forms for monitoring the quality indicators are described in the document Quality System at the University of Banja Luka.

##### **1.2 Assessment**

Based on the university goals and strategic management, the quality assurance policy has been implemented appropriately in the field of research, teaching and learning. Hence, the quality assurance policy of the University meets the requirements of the Ministry of Education and Science of the country. In addition, the successful results of previous years and promising goals for the future shows the satisfaction of internal and external stakeholders in terms of cooperation.

The analysis of the internal quality assurance of the programme has shown that the procedures for the development, approval, periodic review and monitoring of the Master's programme "Agricultural Management" (M.Sc.) are carried out in accordance with the study regulations, which indicates that the initiation, development, approval, monitoring, revision and termination of the Master's programme at the University are carried out transparently and in accordance with the approved procedures, in line with the general objectives of the University's development strategy, as well as the students of education participate in the design and improvement of the Master's programme, the evaluation of its components and the quality of teaching.

The quality assurance system for the educational process consists of an internal quality assurance system (administration, department for quality assurance of education, pedagogical and methodological centre for the organisation of the educational process) and external quality assurance.

During the meeting with the representatives of the University it was noted and confirmed that the University has a clear quality culture that ensures systematic development of the educational programme. The University has an Education Quality Assurance Department, whose main purpose is to monitor educational activities and evaluate the data of academic activities in order to effectively manage the quality of the educational process.

During the accreditation process, it was noted that the results of external quality assurance of higher education are presented in detail on the University's website, especially the comments and suggestions made during previous accreditations on the official website of the University.

In the accreditation process, it is clear that employers are constantly involved in the process of periodic revision of the educational programme. The university has consultation and advisory bodies, as well as an expert council of employers and graduates.

### **1.3 Conclusion**

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## **2 ESG Standard 1.2: Design and approval of programmes**

**Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.**

## 2.1 Implementation

The objective of the International Master study program “Agricultural Management” is to educate the Master of Business Administration for applied research in the field of agricultural management. Graduates should independently and responsibly undertake management tasks and advisory services in enterprises in agricultural sector, agricultural administration and enterprises providing professional services as well as to conduct research in this field, and, if necessary, after obtaining given pedagogical qualifications, be qualified for teaching.

The program allows students, depending on their previous training, to be qualified for the following fields of occupation:

- Agricultural enterprises: managing large agricultural enterprises,
- Training and consulting: consulting, adult education,
- Planning, implementing, and evaluating agricultural projects and joint ventures: design and planning of public and private sector projects in agriculture at national and international level, operational and overall economic assessment of projects and project management,
- Trade and services: national and international trade in agricultural products, marketing activities on the market and market and price reporting, accounting, banking, insurance, consultancy in production and sales in the relevant industry (protection of plants, animal feed, fertilizers, agricultural equipment, food and beverages),
- Agricultural enterprises: Management and professional management tasks in the companies in the field of agriculture,
- Management in agriculture: Organization and implementation of state support programs, design and implementation of agricultural policies, cooperation with foreign institutions,
- Organizations, Cooperatives, Land Management: Governing in international organizations, professional associations, cooperatives, housing associations, rural youth organizations, management in self-help organizations,
- Agricultural research: Planning, implementing and evaluating research projects in the field of empirical economic and social research in and outside agriculture, evaluation of production-oriented research projects from an economic and agro-political point of view.

The study program features studies of applied research with a comprehensive content of agroeconomic modules.

International study program “Agricultural Management” (IMA) consists of compulsory modules: "Agromanagement", "Economics in production", "Controlling", "Business informatics with social and empirical research", "Seminar on agricultural policy", "Business planning", "International agricultural marketing", "Project management".

Besides compulsory modules, students have to choose six elective modules: "Field crop production projecting", "Fruit production projecting", "Animal husbandry projecting", "Accounting", "Production quality management", "Consulting methods", "Cooperative forms of business organization", "Banking", "Market and Subsistence Oriented Production Systems", "English in Agriculture", "Management consulting", "Agricultural extension methodology", "Regional development", "Applied research and rural development projects", "Sustainable energy industry", "International Trade of Agri-food Products". The elective modules are mostly similar, but there are some differences, elective modules at UNIBL are in some cases extended in terms of content and number of classes compared to the modules at HSWT. Module of “Farm machinery” offered at HSWT is substituted by module “Fruit production projecting”, which is more interesting for students at UNIBL considering that University of Banja Luka is situated in a fruit growing region, while farm machinery is more used in agricultural production of Germany. Elective modules list at University of Banja Luka is same for 2nd, 3rd, and 4th semesters. Majority of elective modules from program “Agricultural Management” are offered at other master study programs offered by the department of Agricultural Economy and Rural Development.

The IMA focuses on application-oriented training. Therefore, it is essential that candidates have experience in agricultural practice. Because bachelor or diploma study programs with integrated internships or practical study semesters are only rarely offered in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a practical study semester has been specifically integrated into the master's program. The practical semester is completed mainly on specially selected agricultural enterprises with highly qualified managers (i.e., suitability for training, licensed internship, personal suitability of the manager).

During the practical semester students get to know the agricultural enterprise as a holistic organism and, for the first time, gain insight into the relationships between crop production, animal husbandry, environmental impacts, quality and marketing of the products and the company's success. Such enterprises are mostly family businesses that offer trainees in addition to accommodation and food and family connection, insights into the socioeconomic conditions in a private agriculture. Frequently, good connections to the company manager are established, which are maintained during the subsequent study and often beyond. In addition, the practical semester offers a good opportunity to improve language skills and to learn specialized terminology. Admission to the 2nd semester (winter semester, first theory semester) requires the successful completion of the practical semester.

## 2.2 Assessment

According to the national standard, the curriculum of the Master's program "Agricultural Management" (M.Sc.) has been successfully adapted to the national standard since 2009 and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. Hence, in the specialization component, all 18 subjects of the curriculum are approved by HSWT. Currently, all components of the curriculum have been successfully implemented in the practice in terms of education, research and employment. In addition, the current local and global agricultural production system shows the relevance and necessity of this curriculum, as well as the fact that it corresponds to the goals of the Kyrgyz government and national strategies.

The study programme is in line with the University's mission and vision, as well as with the goals of the 2020-2024 strategic plan, particularly with the first three objectives of education, research and management.

The content of the educational program has a clear structure; the educational components included in the educational program make up a logical interconnected system and collectively allow the achievement of stated goals and program learning outcomes.

The content of the educational programme corresponds to the subject area of the subject area "Management" of the Master's level of the university. In particular, the ability to solve complex tasks, which fully corresponds to the standard of higher education in the field of knowledge "Management and Administration", is the integral feature of the educational programme. The structure of the educational program provides an opportunity for the formation of an individual educational trajectory, in particular through the individual choice of academic disciplines by students of higher education to the extent provided by legislation.

The educational program and curriculum provide for the practical training of higher education students, which allows them to acquire the competencies necessary for further professional activity.

The scope of the educational program and individual educational components (in credits of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) realistically reflects the actual workload of applicants, is appropriate for achieving the goals and programmatic results of education.

The right to freely choose educational components and form an individual trajectory is provided for by the educational program and regulated by relevant regulatory acts. Students studying in the educational program can individually choose the bases of practice and the topic of the master's thesis. The educational program provides practical training and allows you to acquire the competencies necessary for further professional activity.

Students' English language skills should be improved. Higher entrance requirements should be created with regard to English skills or students should be offered compulsory language courses to improve their English language skills.

Within the framework of the further development of the curriculum, current topics such as big data and digitalisation should be given greater consideration.

### 2.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## 3 ESG Standard 1.3: Student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment

**Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach**

### 3.1 Implementation

Through various teaching methods, in particular through seminar presentations and case studies and computer-based simulations of enterprises and production, practical training, teamwork and problem-solving skills of students are encouraged and developed. With the help of case studies and comparisons of organizations at the international level and transnational trade costs, students learn to qualify for professional activities in international environment. The ability to work in international environment is encouraged by expanding of expertise and knowledge of foreign languages.

Practical exercises are integrated in all modules, in which the participants usually work on case studies on the computers themselves. The lecturers prepare exercises, are present during the exercises and accompany and support the students. Depending on the question, groups of different sizes are formed for exercises, each group member having a PC. The subject Project management takes place as a planning workshop almost exclusively in group work.

The system of examinations is governed in particular by the of Study rules on the first and second cycle of studies at Faculty of Agriculture, University of Banja Luka in accordance with Law on Higher Education, the Statute of the University of Banja Luka, the Statute of the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Banja Luka and the curriculum for the International Master's Program "Agricultural Management".

The examination system in the IMA consists of variety of written exams, oral exams and seminar papers submission.

Within the framework of the Erasmus + program, the University of Banja Luka implemented a program of cooperation with the University of Weihenstephan in Triesdorf, Germany, which

relates to the exchange of students and staff in the field of agricultural education. The cooperation program is being implemented for the period 2015-2020, and by the time of writing this report, eight students of the University of Banja Luka had a practical semester at the University of Weihenstephan in Triesdorf, three students took part in the exchange in the first cycle of studies, and three students from the University of Banja Luka continued their education at the IMA at the University of Weihenstephan in Triesdorf and a total of 23 staff exchanges lasting 5-50 days were realized. In the meantime, a new application for the Erasmus + KA2 project has been submitted, which would further deepen the cooperation with the University of Weihenstephan through capacity building, staff and student mobility, and through the improvement of teaching methods.

### **3.2 Assessment**

Overall, it can be stated that the teaching methods used promote student-centred learning and are sufficiently diverse. The teaching and learning forms are therefore rated as very good by the evaluators. The students provide information about a very good supervision relationship with the teaching staff. The students are very satisfied with the supervision and emphasised the excellent support and accessibility of the teaching staff. The study advisors advise students on the choice of study programme and the creation of an individual study plan.

Students are continuously supported by the teaching staff in preparing for exams. The examination regulations are also transparent.

All documents relevant to the study programme are available in the university information system.

All information on the study programme is complete and transparent. Interactive teaching methods encourage students to take an active role in the learning process.

Students receive questionnaires to evaluate their courses and the overall learning experience. Discussing the feedback from these surveys with students can be an additional valuable tool in the student-centred quality process. Students can use office hours and the various electronic communication tools to submit complaints or suggestions for improvement.

Students also have various options available for complaints about assessment.

Students are assessed through various methods, e.g. written and oral examinations, presentations and written assignments. The assessment corresponds to the intended learning outcomes. The assessment procedure and regulations are clear to students and are published at the beginning of each course.

Quality control of study preparation takes place throughout the study period and consists of sufficient different control measures:

The University provides equal opportunities for students in all fields of study, regardless of gender, nationality, religion and social status, language and mode of instruction, as well as taking into account special educational needs and individual opportunities to design an individual educational program aimed at developing the student's professional competence and cognitive activity.

Thus, the documents and materials provided by the university indicate that the university has developed an effective system of knowledge control. It can be concluded that the university applies the principle of student-centred learning, which aims at the personal development of students and ensures equal opportunities for all groups of students.

### 3.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## 4 ESG Standard 1.4: Student admission, progression, recognition, and certification

**Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student “life cycle”, e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.**

### 4.1 Implementation

In accordance with social needs, the faculty admits students for the second cycle of study. The decision to call the competition, on the proposal of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Agriculture, is made by the Senate of the University of Banja Luka. The conditions of the competition define more precisely the conditions that the candidates must fulfil for each specific course. Admissions criteria for the study program “Agricultural Management” is completed I study cycle with at least 180 ECTS credits. Ranking of the candidate list is made based on the average grade of the student in the first cycle of studies and possibly some additional criteria that are adopted and defined when deciding on the competition for the respective academic year.

The number of students in the second cycle of studies is determined based on the proposal of the Council of the study program Agricultural Economics and Rural Development and the approval of the bodies of the University of Banja Luka and the Government of Republika Srpska.

### 4.2 Assessment

The study requirements are clearly defined and can also be viewed by applicants across parents on the university's website. The website in question is easy to find and very clearly laid out. The university has a suitable procedure for recording relevant information on the course of studies and taking action if necessary. The review panel assesses the admission procedure as transparently described and well thought-out. At the beginning of their studies, students are

sufficiently informed about the course of their studies and all opportunities to participate in university life. Upon completion of their studies, graduates therefore receive meaningful and transparent documents showing the qualifications and learning outcomes acquired. In addition, the university has sufficient procedures in place to collect information on students' progress.

Admission requirements are clearly defined. Admission in relation to the need for teachers ensures that there is no oversupply of trained teachers. In addition to the regular admission procedure, the university supports disabled students and students from national minorities.

The university monitors the development of students during their studies. An important element of student success is the sharing of information about the structure of the study programme, prerequisites for course selection, course objectives, course assignments, examinations, workload, etc. In the department, a compulsory introductory course is offered to all students, which introduces them to all the above-mentioned areas. In addition, students receive information from various counselling services throughout their stay at the university.

The degree certificates issued by the university enable students to either continue their education at institutions outside the country or to pursue a professional career abroad.

Overall, it can be said that the university has transparent enrolment procedures, records and monitors the development of students and issues sufficiently meaningful graduation certificates that demonstrate the qualifications acquired in the program.

### 4.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## 5 ESG Standard 1.5: Teaching staff

**Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff**

### 5.1 Implementation

The Law on High education defines minimum conditions for selection of scientific and teaching staff at the university. The Minister adopts the Rulebook on the conditions for selection into scientific-teaching, artistic-teaching, teaching and associate positions, which determines the procedure and conditions for the selection of teachers, that is, associates into the corresponding academic position.

The Quality Assurance Strategy includes teaching staff development policy. The quality of teaching at the University of Banja Luka is achieved through regular analysis of available staff and needs, selection according to public procedures that affirm scientific, research and peda-

gological achievements as well as the candidate's contribution to the economic, social and cultural development of the community, checking the quality of work in teaching and research and creating conditions for permanent education and advancement. The Strategy also includes forms for keeping Records on the condition and needs of the teaching staff, analysis of the workload of each teacher and associate, as well as monitoring of Indicators of the quality of teaching staff are closely related.

The University of Banja Luka signed the Declaration of Commitment to the European Charter for Researchers and the Code for the Employment of Researchers on January 30, 2013, as the first institution from Bosnia and Herzegovina. In April 2015, the University of Banja Luka was awarded the HR Excellence in Research logo by the European Commission, making it the first scientific research institution in Bosnia and Herzegovina to bear the aforementioned logo. The logo of excellence means that the University of Banja Luka adheres to the standards prescribed by the European Union when it comes to the rights and obligations of researchers and that the employment procedures at the University are harmonized with those of the European Union. Acquiring the logo of excellence is a significant recognition for the university, but at the same time an obligation, as it implies the implementation of all measures from the Action Plan created on the basis of the conducted survey on the European Charter of Researchers and the Code at the University of Banja Luka. The latest reports on the realisation of the Action plan are available on the university web page.

All staff responsible for teaching are full-time employed at the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Banja Luka. Currently, 12 teachers including eight professors, three assistant professors and one senior teaching assistant are involved in the study program.

Three members of teaching staff from the Faculty of Agriculture, study program of the Agricultural Economy and Rural Development completed a master's degree IMA under an identical curriculum at the University of Applied Sciences Weihenstephan in Triesdorf. For more than ten years they teach agro-economic modules in the first and second cycle of studies, These teachers cooperate with teachers and associates at the University of Weihenstephan successfully, implementing teaching and research process in accordance with local and international standards.

## **5.2 Assessment**

In general, according to the University's self-assessment report, the positive trends in education, research and training shows the effectiveness of the University's human resources policy. Also, bilateral and multilateral active cooperation with internal and external

partners indicates that the University has been achieving good results in the field of education, research and professional training of teaching staff.

The academic and professional qualifications of the teachers involved in the implementation of the educational program ensure the achievement of the goals and program learning outcomes defined by the respective program.

Procedures for the competitive selection of teachers are transparent and allow to ensure the necessary level of their professionalism for the successful implementation of the educational programme.

The procedure of competitive selection for the positions of scientific and pedagogical workers at the University is regulated by the relevant Regulations and determines the main requirements and procedures of competitive selection.

The announcement of the competition is posted on the University's website in accordance with the legislation. When evaluating candidates during the competitive selection of teachers, academic and professional qualifications are taken into account in accordance with the goals of the educational program and professional activity. The level of proficiency in the state language, foreign languages, the presence of an academic title, a scientific degree in the specialty of teaching disciplines is taken into account; availability of scientific publications, including in Scopus, WoS, textbooks, manuals, methodological developments, participation in international projects, internships, experience of teaching and practical work, participation in grant projects and research topics, etc.

The institution of higher education promotes the professional development of teachers through its own programs or in cooperation with other organizations.

The university, together with its partners, provides various forms of professional development of teachers.

Teachers improve their professional qualifications and teaching skills mostly through participation in projects, internships, trainings, etc.

The institution of higher education attracts practicing professionals, industry experts, and representatives of employers to classroom classes.

All teachers of the program improve their professional qualifications on an ongoing basis in the areas of the disciplines they teach. Teachers undergo internships, courses to improve pedagogical skills. The best practices are the academic mobility of teachers, both international and national, to participate in conferences, forums, and seminars. Active academic and professional activity contributes to the internationalization of the educational

program and the University. The competitive selection procedure is transparent, takes into account teachers' professionalism, experience, and pedagogical skills.

Professional teaching is assured. Applicant selection and staff development are clearly regulated and meet all standards. There is no doubt about the academic qualifications of the teaching staff. The numerical ratio of teachers to students is very good, which is also appreciated by the students. In the discussions with lecturers and students, the impression was confirmed that the staff is very good, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The students confirmed very good supervision by the lecturers. All lecturers are very well qualified. They describe the situation in class and the contact with the lecturers as extremely pleasant and motivating. Yet, the English language skills of teaching and administrative staff should be improved and corresponding further training courses implemented.

The same standards and uniform application procedures for teaching staff should be prevailed at all partner universities.

Professional practice representatives should be consulted in an institutionalised way in curriculum development.

However, despite the above-mentioned positive trends, the University's human resources policy should continue to increase the transparency of recruitment of the teaching staff and develop new training methods, technologies and their implementation.

### 5.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## 6 ESG Standard 1.6: Learning resources and student support

**Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.**

### 6.1 Implementation

The Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Banja Luka covers a total area of 2.125 m<sup>2</sup> which includes classrooms, offices, a library, a computer center and offices.

The faculty has eight classrooms of total area of 594 m<sup>2</sup> and 544 seats. The total number of offices with Internet access is 51. Classrooms are equipped with 11 video projectors.

The Faculty of Agriculture has one reading room within the library. The reading room covers an area of 71 m<sup>2</sup> and has 73 seats. The reading room is equipped with a single projector and has Internet access. About 8,100 library units of monographs in Serbian and foreign languages

and about 50 titles are available in the library fund. These publications include literature on various fields of agricultural sciences.

Doctoral dissertations, master's theses, specialist, and diploma papers are stored in a special database with 1,383 titles, while the total number of published papers in the journal "Agrozanje" was 638 (the number refers to the number of published papers since 2006).

The total number of offices in the faculty is 45, equipped with furniture and computers. The computer room intended for the teaching process covers an area of 88 m<sup>2</sup> with 26 seats and internet access and one video projector.

There are 35 laptops available to the staff at the Faculty of Agriculture.

On a total area of 602 m<sup>2</sup> is located a laboratory complex, consisting of 17 equipped laboratories. The laboratories have 76 seating and 15 internet access locations.

The faculty has part of the land around the building, which today houses a larger greenhouse with a total area of 486 m<sup>2</sup> and two smaller greenhouses of 144 m<sup>2</sup> and 100 m<sup>2</sup> an aquaculture laboratory of 20 m<sup>2</sup> and an entomology laboratory of 20 m<sup>2</sup>.

Basic information on the courses offered by the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Banja Luka is provided by the Students Office. However, individual support and advice for prospective students is primarily provided by the faculty's Vice Dean for teaching and the department head of the respective degree program.

The counselling service offered by the Vice Dean and Head of the Department offers information and advice on the following topics: questions about the choice of study and study opportunities at the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Banja Luka, about application and admission requirements, problems or crises during the course of the study, questions about a change of subject or university or a dropout and information material, addresses to university locations and study opportunities at faculty.

## **6.2 Assessment**

The ratio between the number of students and the teaching materials and spaces is appropriate. Libraries and classrooms are well digitised and it should be mentioned which has a positive effect on the development process of student-centred learning. Therefore, the premises and equipment are adequate to support the effective implementation of the programme objectives and learning success in all respects.

From the meeting with the student council and the self-evaluation report, it can be concluded that the information provided to the students about the service facilities of the university is very good.

The resource facilities of the study programme can be described as very good. The modern and excellent equipment, which corresponds to the subject standards, is suitable for providing students with a sound education. In the opinion of the review panel, the overall resource endowment is thus very well suited for the implementation of the degree programme. Buildings, rooms and technical equipment can be described as exemplary. The library offers students extensive support in searching for information and using the available technology. The university is also well equipped for digital teaching.

The needs of a heterogeneous student body are also adequately addressed. Internal quality assurance takes material resources into account in its evaluation culture and regularly solicits feedback from students. The evaluation team assesses all material, financial and human resources as fully sufficient to achieve the qualification goals of the study programme. The needs of a heterogeneous student body are taken into account in every respect.

For the administrative staff, there is the possibility of individual further development. The scope and qualifications of the non-academic administrative staff can be described as very good. Sufficient opportunities for further training are available.

It can be stated that the degree programme has a high degree of studyability. Yet, the University of Applied Science Weihenstephan-Triesdorf should establish a good administrative infrastructure for all partner universities and create even more support services in general and during student mobility phases with a view to even better studyability.

In order to guarantee the implementation of the study programme, the staff should also grow with the increasing number of students.

### 6.3 Conclusion

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## 7 ESG Standard 1.7: Information management

<b>Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.</b>
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### 7.1 Implementation

The Strategy on Quality Assurance as well as Procedure on Quality Assurance define forms for planning as well as monitoring and evaluation of annual plans and programs. The collection of minimum quality records is a permanent obligation of the working group appointed by the teaching-scientific, that is, teaching-artistic council. The analysis is carried out by a working group consisting of management members, study program managers and a quality assurance

coordinator. The result of the analysis is summarized in the Quality Status Report. Checking and improving the quality of current programs is done through two types of activities: Annual evaluations and periodic revisions.

The university finds it important to establish and main databases on companies and institutions where graduates are employed and to have constant contacts with graduates in order to maintain and update records of their employment. During annual evaluations, the following questions are addressed

- the effectiveness of the program in disseminating current knowledge and its practical application in the given field,
- the extent and level to which students achieve the expected learning outcomes,
- the effectiveness of the curriculum in relation to the expected learning outcomes,
- effectiveness of teaching methods and approaches to examination and evaluation.

For the most reliable evaluation of the effectiveness of the study program, it is necessary to correlate the results of the evaluation with other elements of quality, such as: incoming quality of students, data on student progress, on the implementation and quality of teaching, teaching methods, teachers and other relevant information.

The university has a web portal for employees that combines the functionalities needed to perform administrative and work duties and provides necessary information to employees. It includes such information as overview of exam dates and exams, viewing and downloading the list of students registered to take the exam, class schedule, search and review of student data, downloading of reports, review of survey results and review of employee engagement for the university administration etc.

The student web portal provides students with access to the Faculty Information System (FIS). The main purpose of the portal is to transfer all administrative work that the student normally performs through the counter at the Student Service to online. The portal provides following information review of the student's exam, overview of upcoming exam dates and exams, choice of elective subjects, profile selection, overview of grades, failed exams and ECTS credits, class schedule (for users, by profiles, rooms, professors, students, subjects), student survey of professors, various notifications for students - for all students, for a group of students or individually etc.

## **7.2 Assessment**

The university has a well-functioning information management system. The administration has thorough data collection systems. The current and complete data structure is used very well

for the internal quality management system. The evaluation of the data is accompanied by quality assurance measures and planning of follow-up activities.

The programme uses the existing infrastructure of the university to collect student feedback on individual courses and lectures as well as on the environment at the university in general. Students report that they feel encouraged to give feedback to lecturers and that their feedback is well received by lecturers. A survey of student satisfaction with the quality and conditions of the study programme is conducted annually to investigate student opinion on the quality of the University's educational and administrative services.

For the programme that is in the process of being accredited, there is sufficient information to attract applicants.

The university has the necessary procedures for collecting and analysing information about the programme, including key performance indicators, information about the student body, the level of academic achievement, student performance and examinations. Students are provided with educational resources and student support services.

The expert group therefore notes that the university regularly collects and analyses information on the study programme, students, graduates and other activities as part of the quality management system and makes it available to the internal quality assurance system.

Both students and teachers are involved in the processes through a procedure and existing structures at the university. In addition, graduates and employers are also involved in the process.

Thus, as part of the university's quality management, data on students is collected and their assessment is carried out. Also based on the self-evaluation report of the university and the discussions during the online evaluation, the expert group was able to confirm that the institution implements the necessary measures to assess the quality of teaching.

Information management includes the use of various methods to provide information. Confidentiality of information is also guaranteed.

### **7.3 Conclusion**

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## **8 ESG Standard 1.8: Public information**

<b>Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.</b>
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## 8.1 Implementation

The study program "Agricultural Management" is made transparent by the publication in various media. Extensive information is provided by the coordinator for international collaboration at the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Banja Luka.

The information system includes an official website of the university. In addition to static presentations, the university portal has dynamic web pages connected to databases, from which visitors can obtain up-to-date information on study programs, learning outcomes, curricula, teachers and their research results, and other data.

Organizational units such as Faculty of Agriculture have their own website but oblige to adhere to the agreed standards in terms of technology, content and appearance.

A guide for students, a guide for employers (information package) and other brochures about the university are printed from the promotional material. For the promotion of the new study program on Agriculture Management a flyer is published and distributed.

Open days in high schools are organized.

Faculties make an annual plan of activities regarding public communication and keep records of public presentation.

A university bulletin is published and covers all the news on main university achievements in research, teaching, academic and student exchange, student life, etc.

Information's are also shared via Facebook and Instagram.

## 8.2 Assessment

The main source of public information about the study program "Agricultural Management" (M.Sc.) is the official website of the university, the website of the Faculty of Agricultural Economics, the website of the Faculty of Agrobusiness and Management, and website of the Master's Center which is the graduation department for this study program.

All persons interested in receiving information about events at the university and, in particular, information updates on program have informational support through close communication using various social networks: Facebook, Instagram. The Master's Preparing Center additionally highlights all information related to the program on its official Facebook page. Considerable attention is paid to the coverage of all events related to the organization of the educational process, the life of students and graduates. The university has its own YouTube channel, where all scientific and educational events of the university are covered and students upload videos. Students can find here the information about the history of successful partnership, advantages of studying the master's program etc.

The university offers detailed information on studying and teaching as well as on the university's main research areas. Organisational documents and relevant regulations are made available on the website. Contact persons and contact points for the degree programme and student life are clearly and transparently named.

The information provided to the public about the degree programme is satisfactory overall. There are many opportunities for prospective students to find out about the university and student life.

Information about study programmes is publicly available (admission criteria, learning outcomes, qualifications awarded, information about employment of graduates, etc.). Information about the study programme that is in line with the university's mission is secured. High school graduates, students, graduates and other interested groups can find out about the university's activities and offers on its homepage. In addition, contact persons are named for further information and questions. Yet there should be better strategic communication activities developed to publicise the study offer in order to arouse the interest of potential applicants in the long term.

The university provides information about its activities, such as the degree programme and the selection criteria for admission, the intended learning outcomes of the degree programmes, the teaching, learning and examination methods, the student success rates and the qualifications of the teaching staff.

In addition, the university provides information on its homepage about its academic achievements, such as publications, external and internal conferences and events, as well as non-academic achievements, such as cultural and social projects and activities.

The study-related documents and information are to be accessible to both students and prospective students. In addition, contact persons are named for further information and questions.

The university provides information about its activities. The University conducts its activities based on the principles of transparency, openness, involvement and awareness-raising of all stakeholders in educational activities: One of the main means of providing information is through the use of information technology and media. In addition to the information on the University's website, the public and applicants are provided with information on the specifics of the study programme under accreditation through events such as the Open Day.

### **8.3 Conclusion**

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## 9 ESG Standard 1.9: On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

**Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.**

### 9.1 Implementation

The Quality Assessment Strategy defines that Checking and improving the quality of current programs is done through two types of activities: annual evaluations and periodic revisions.

Annual evaluations mean routine checks through which it is determined whether the program achieves the set goals and whether, and to what extent, students achieve the expected learning outcomes, with an emphasis on the effectiveness of the curriculum.

Periodic audits, which the university initiates from time to time, represent a deeper review of the validity and relevance of the program in order to confirm the need for its continued implementation.

Procedure for monitoring and quality improvement prescribes necessary quality records and quality improvement activities as well as the dynamics of the performance of certain activities and the competences and responsibilities of persons on certain issues.

Regular quality assurance activities implemented throughout the year at University of Banja Luka include:

- Student survey on the quality of the teaching process,
- University self-evaluation report,
- Collection and processing of quality indicators,
- Organizing seminars, panels and workshops on quality assurance topics.

The Quality Assessment Strategy defines a student survey on the quality of the teaching process as a method of collecting information on the quality of the teaching process. The survey is conducted at the end of each semester with a minimum set of common questions about the most important characteristics of teaching in each study program.

### 9.2 Assessment

The Examination of the regulatory documents in the Academic Policy section of the University's website, the self-evaluation report, the results of the faculty and student survey, and the results of the online survey confirmed that monitoring and regular evaluation of the study program "Agricultural Management" (M.Sc.) is carried out at the University.

The schedule of activities for monitoring the quality of education was approved, according to which the University monitors and regularly evaluates the study program in order to achieve the objectives and meet the needs of students and society. In order to determine the level of satisfaction of internal needs, the university organises and conducts a survey among students, faculty and University staff every academic session.

The survey is conducted to determine the level of satisfaction with the students' educational needs, their attitude towards the educational process, the socio-cultural environment, etc.

The results of the survey are statistically analysed, discussed in the administrative meetings and taken into account in the further planning of educational activities. According to the monitoring statistics, the programme management analyses and compiles the survey results in order to initiate the necessary measures to achieve the desired results.

The existing quality management seems to function according to a hierarchical principle. However, the goal is a functioning control circle between the participants in order to improve the quality of research and teaching (Circle of Quality). This Circle of Quality functions according to the bottom up - top down principle.

The university regularly reviews the strategy and policy in the area of quality and monitors its implementation.

Overall, it should be noted that responsibilities are clearly and comprehensibly regulated, not least because the core processes of quality assurance are documented in the university's regulations.

Feedback between students and teachers is a prerequisite for improving teaching and should be introduced. The evaluation results of the anonymous course evaluations will be presented to the students after the surveys and discussed with them in order to derive concrete measures for improving teaching.

It became clear in the discussions that there is definitely close contact with the graduates and that they are surveyed very soon after graduation.

The course evaluations thus serve the continuous development and improvement of quality and studyability. The student workload is continuously surveyed in the course evaluations; corresponding questions are included in the questionnaires. An evaluation of the workload through a module should take place at regular intervals.

Students are made aware of the student workload and examination requirements by the lecturers at the beginning of the course. In the degree programme, the measure of how many hours one ECTS point corresponds to the student workload is anchored in the regulatory documents.

With regard to the quality of teaching, it should be noted that measures to ensure it begin with the recruitment of teaching staff. In addition, the university offers teaching staff various further training opportunities, both on technical and didactic topics.

It can be stated that there is a combination of internal and external quality management in order to offer its own study programmes in a generally ESG-compliant manner.

The study programme “Agricultural Management”(M.Sc.) is regularly evaluated to ensure quality and to check compliance with the high quality standards. Ongoing monitoring of the study programme is carried out in accordance with the quality assurance policy. The programme is reviewed regularly and if changes are required, they are made. This process is exemplary. The study programmes thus have suitable and different procedures for internal quality assurance.

The university has a systematic procedure of analysis, development, monitoring and periodic revision of the educational program. Employers who confirmed this process as transparent, understandable and accessible are involved in the improvement of the educational program. A culture of quality has been formed in the academic community of the University, which contributes to the continuous development of the educational program and educational activities under this program.

The process of collecting proposals from various groups of stakeholders is insufficiently organized. It is recommended to strengthen work on the organization of the process of collecting proposals from various groups of stakeholders.

Standardised evaluation procedures should be introduced, in order to advance the quality assurance of the study programme and, if necessary, to be able to derive recommendations for action.

### **9.3 Conclusion**

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

## **10 ESG Standard 1.10: Cyclical external quality assurance**

<b>Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis</b>
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### **10.1 Implementation**

The Quality Assessment Strategy defines that checking and improving the quality of current programs is done through periodic revisions. Revision implies a re-examination of the agreement of learning outcomes with the framework of qualifications and with the standards of pro-

fessional associations and regulatory bodies, responding to new demands of students, employers' expectations, changed circumstances on the labor market and the possibility of employment. During the audit, in addition to the opinions of external parties that are used in annual evaluations, the following should also be obtained and processed with particular attention:

- reports of external verifiers, especially accreditation bodies,
- opinions of the largest and most successful employers,
- standards of professional associations,
- provisions of regulatory bodies,
- statistics of relevant institutions and
- opinion of high-ranking external evaluators with academic or professional credibility.

Accreditation of the study program "Agricultural Management" was conducted in 2019. On the basis of recommendations given in the report a plan for eliminating weaknesses in the study program and implementation of recommendations for improvement was developed and implemented.

## **10.2 Assessment**

As far as the legal framework of quality assurance is concerned, the study program is conducted in accordance with the regulations and guidelines. For this purpose, the university has a combination of internal and external quality management to offer the study programme in accordance with the ESG. The University has undergone institutional accreditation. The accreditation results are incorporated into the structuring of the University's business processes. Of particular importance is the cooperation with external stakeholders such as partner universities, graduates, industry and employers in order to gain impetus for continuous internal quality development.

Quality management ensures very well that the general quality assurance measures and instruments are constantly up-to-date and transparent. The University fulfils all obligatory aspects of external quality assurance: the different organisational units and levels are adequately in place and were explained in detail in the interviews with the HEI. Both internal and external quality assurance of the University's measures take into account all legal requirements and benefit from each other to advance the quality development of the study programme. External quality assurance extends to all necessary organisational levels such as financial operations and educational provision. The internal and external quality assurance mechanisms for the continuous development of the programme is well developed and the cyclical functioning of the programme's quality assessment is effective. The quality of the surveys and the processing of

the results can be rated as very good. No specific problems in the cyclical external quality assurance were reported for the study programme.

The follow-up activities of the university's external quality assurance in preparing the next procedure are generally well thought out. The results of the external assessment and recognition of the quality of the study program (reports, expert opinions, etc.) are published on the university's website.

In conclusion, the coherence between external and internal quality assurances is well structured.

### **10.3 Conclusion**

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

#### IV Recommendation to the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN

##### 1 **Assessment of compliance the Standards and Guidelines in the Higher European Area (ESG) in the actual official version**

The study programme „„**Agricultural Management**”(M.Sc.) was assessed on the basis of the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG) and the national or other relevant regulations.

The expert group concludes that the **ESG standards** 1.1 (Policy for quality assurance), 1.2 (Design and approval of programmes), 1.3 (Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment), 1.4 (Student admission, progression, recognition and certification), 1.5 (Teaching staff), 1.6 (Learning resources and student support), 1.7 (Information management), 1.8 (Public information), 1.9 (On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes) and 1.10 (Cyclical external quality assurance) are fulfilled.

The assessment criteria are as follows:

**Standard 1.1 Policy for quality assurance:** Universities have a publicly accessible quality assurance strategy, which is part of their strategic management. This strategy is developed and implemented by internal stakeholder representatives through appropriate structures and processes, involving external stakeholders.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.2 Design and approval of programmes:** Universities have procedures for the design and approval of their courses. The courses are designed in such a way that their objectives, including the desired learning outcomes, can be achieved. The qualification obtained during a degree program is clearly defined and communicated; it refers to the corresponding level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, the qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment:** Universities ensure that the courses offered are carried out in such a way as to encourage students to play an active role in the design of the learning process and that this approach is also taken into account when assessing students / examinations.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification:** Universities ensure that the courses offered are carried out in such a way as to encourage students to play an active role in the design of the learning process and that this approach is also taken into account when assessing students / examinations.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.5 Teaching staff:** Universities ensure the competence of their teachers. They use fair and transparent procedures for the recruitment and further training of their employees.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.6 Learning resources and student support:** The university has adequate funding to finance study and teaching and ensure that there is always a sufficient and readily available range of learning and support available for their studies.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.7 Information management:** Universities ensure that they collect, analyze and use the relevant data relevant to the successful conduct of studies and other activities.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.8 Public information:** Universities publish easily understandable, correct, objective, up-to-date and well-accessible information about their activities and courses of study.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes:** Universities are constantly monitoring their courses and regularly reviewing them to ensure that they achieve the goals set and meet the needs of students and society. The tests lead to a continuous improvement of the courses. All affected parties will be informed about any measures planned or resulting from this.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

**Standard 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance:** Universities regularly undergo external quality assurance procedures in accordance with the ESG.

The criterion is **fulfilled**.

The peer-review experts note that the recommendations from the previous accreditation procedure have been adequately taken into account.

## 2 Accreditation Recommendation

The peer-review experts recommend an unconditional accreditation of the study programme **„Agricultural Management“ (M.Sc.)** with the following **recommendations**:

1. Students' English language skills should be improved. Higher entrance requirements should be created with regard to English skills or students should be offered compulsory language courses to improve their English language skills.
2. Within the framework of the further development of the curriculum, current topics such as big data and digitalisation should be given greater consideration.
3. The same standards and uniform application procedures for teaching staff should prevail at all partner universities.
4. The English language skills of teaching and administrative staff should be improved and corresponding further training courses implemented.
5. Professional practice representatives should be consulted in an institutionalised way in curriculum development.
6. The HSWT should establish a good administrative infrastructure for all partner universities and create even more support services in general and during student mobility phases with a view to even better studyability.
7. In order to guarantee the implementation of the study programmes, the staff should also grow with the increasing number of students.
8. Better strategic communication activities should be developed to publicise the study offer in order to arouse the interest of potential applicants in the long term.
9. Standardised evaluation procedures should be introduced, in order to advance the quality assurance of the study programme and, if necessary, to be able to derive recommendations for action.

## V Decisions of the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN

Based on the evaluation report of the expert group and the statements of the Higher Education Institutions the Accreditation Commission of ACQUIN makes on the 09 May 2023 the following decisions unanimously:

**The study programme “Agricultural Management” (Master) at the University of Banja Luka is accredited without any conditions.**

**The accreditation is valid until 30. September 2029.**

The following recommendations are given for the further development of the study programme:

- Students' English language skills should be improved. Higher entrance requirements should be created with regard to English skills or students should be offered compulsory language courses to improve their English language skills.
- Within the framework of the further development of the curriculum, current topics such as big data and digitalisation should be given greater consideration.
- The same standards and uniform application procedures for teaching staff should be prevailed at all partner universities.
- The English language skills of teaching and administrative staff should be improved and corresponding further training courses implemented.
- Professional practice representatives should be consulted in an institutionalised way in curriculum development.
- The HSWT should establish a good administrative infrastructure for all partner universities and create even more support services in general and during student mobility phases with a view to even better studyability.
- In order to guarantee the implementation of the study programmes, the staff should also grow with the increasing number of students.
- Better strategic communication activities should be developed to publicise the study offer in order to arouse the interest of potential applicants in the long term.
- Standardised evaluation procedures should be introduced, in order to advance the quality assurance of the study programme and, if necessary, to be able to derive recommendations for action.
- It is recommended to carry out further development of the internal quality assurance system by timely response to legislative changes, and by improving the coordination of measures to monitor the quality of the educational programme and educational activities at the University level.
- The expert group recommends involving students more in the work of the department in order to take their wishes and suggestions more into account when planning and implementing the educational process, selecting, reviewing and updating the educational programme.
- It is recommended to ensure the teaching of professional disciplines by a specialist with appropriate qualifications.