



agency for science and higher education

**REPORT  
OF THE EXPERT PANEL  
ON THE  
RE-ACCREDITATION OF  
College of Management and Design Aspira**

**Date of site visit:  
8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

September 2019



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## INTRODUCTION

The Agency for Science and Higher Education (the Agency) is an independent legal entity with public authority, registered in the court register, and a full member of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

All public and private higher education institutions are subject to re-accreditation, which is conducted in five-year cycles by the Agency, in accordance with the Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education (Official Gazette 45/09) and subordinate regulations, and by following *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) and good international practice in quality assurance of higher education and science.

The Agency's Accreditation Council appointed an independent Expert Panel for the evaluation of the College of Management and Design Aspira.

Members of the Expert Panel:

- Prof. Sandra Janković, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management University of Rijeka, Croatia, panel chair,
- Prof. Thorsten Kliewe, Fachhochschule Münster, Germany,
- Diana Plantić Tadić, Ph.D. college professor, VERN' Polytechnic, Croatia,
- Gordan Kožulj, MBA, representative of the business sector, Deloitte Croatia, Croatia,
- Ivan Katavić, student, VERN' Polytechnic, Croatia.

During the site visit, the Expert Panel held meetings with the following stakeholders:

- Management,
- Head of Quality Assurance and Improvement Units, Head of Business Careers Centre and Student Support, Head of Life Long Learning Department, Head of International Cooperation Office, ECTS coordinator,
- Students,
- Alumni,
- Heads of study programmes,
- Full-time teaching staff,
- External lecturers,
- Representatives of the business sector, potential employers.

The Expert Panel members had a tour of the work facilities, library, IT classrooms, student administration office and classrooms, and attended sample lectures, where they held a

brief Q&A session with students. The Expert Panel members also visited the companies that host student internship.

In accordance with the site visit protocol, the Expert Panel examined the available additional documents and study programme descriptions (learning outcomes).

The Expert Panel drafted this Report on the re-accreditation of the College of Management and Design Aspira on the basis of the College of Management and Design Aspira Self-evaluation report, other relevant documents and the site visit.

The Report contains the following elements:

- Short description of the evaluated higher education institution,
- Brief analysis of the institutional advantages and disadvantages,
- List of institutional good practices,
- Analysis of each assessment area, recommendations for improvement and quality grade for each assessment area,
- Detailed analysis of each standard, recommendations for improvement and quality grade for each standard,
- Appendices (quality assessment summary by each assessment area and standard, and site visit protocol),
- Summary.

In the analysis of the documentation, the site visit to the College of Management and Design Aspira and writing of the Report, the Expert Panel was supported by:

- Viktorija Juriša, coordinator, ASHE,
- Iva Žabarović, assistant coordinator, ASHE,
- Irena Škarica, interpreter at the site visit,
- Ivana Rončević, translator of the Report, ASHE.

On the basis of the re-accreditation procedure conducted, and with the prior opinion of the Accreditation Council, the Agency issues a following accreditation recommendation to the Minister for Higher Education and Science:

1. **Issuance of a confirmation on compliance with the requirements** for performing the activities, or parts of the activities,
2. **Denial of license** for performing the activities, or parts of the activities,
3. **Issuance of a letter of expectation** with the deadline for resolving deficiencies of up to three years. A letter of expectation can include the suspension of student enrolment within a set period.

The accreditation recommendation also includes a quality grade of a higher education institution, and recommendations for quality improvement.

## **SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATED HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION**

**NAME OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION:** College of Management and Design  
Aspira

**ADDRESS:** Mike Tripala 6 and Domovinskog rata 65, Split; Heinzelova 62a, Zagreb

**DEAN:** Alen Jerkunica, mag. oec., senior lecturer

### **STUDY PROGRAMMES:**

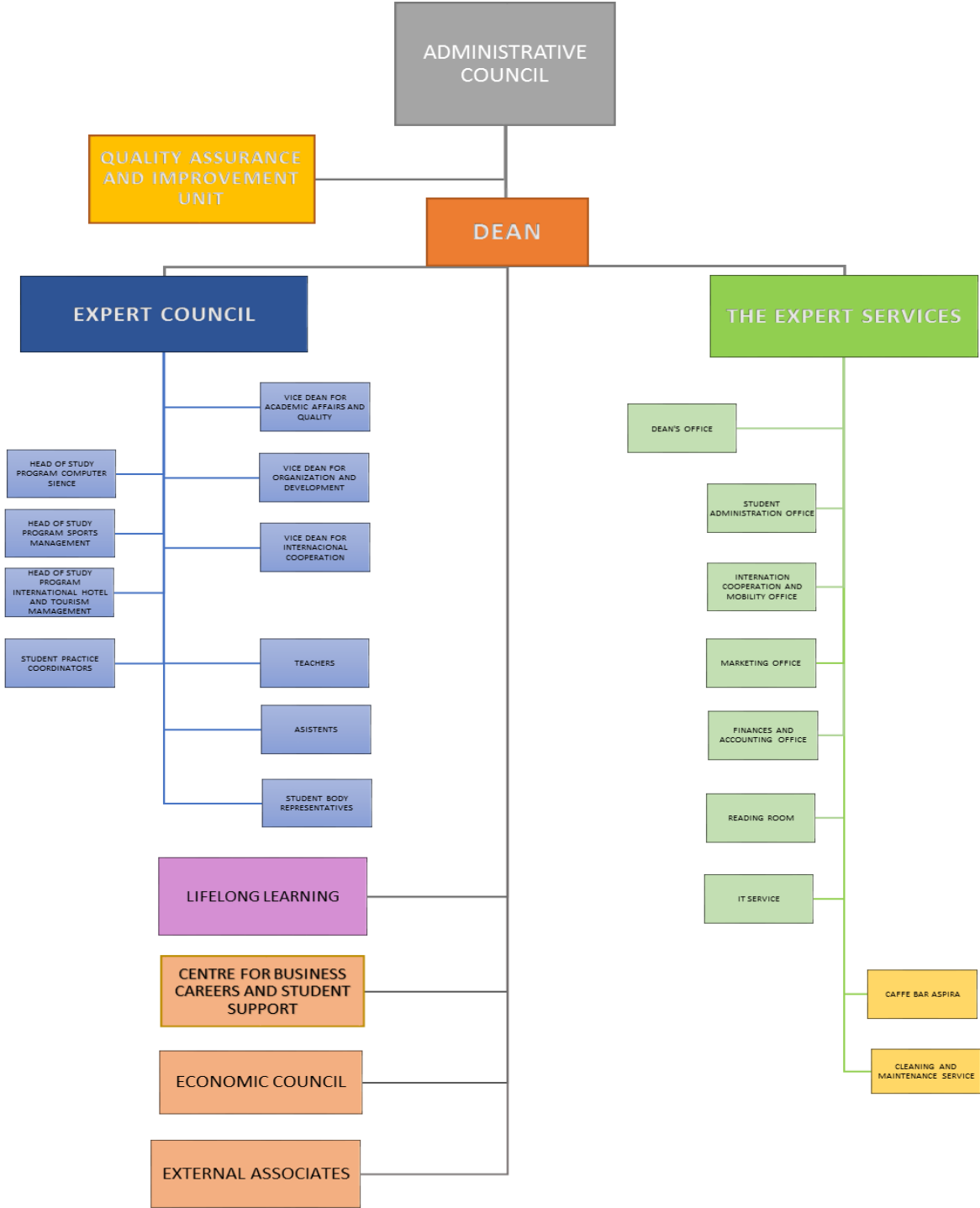
- Computing, Undergraduate professional study programme;
- International Management in Hospitality and Tourism, Undergraduate professional study programme;
- Sport Management, Undergraduate professional study programme;
- Hotel and Tourism Management, Specialist graduate professional study programme;
- Sport Management, Specialist graduate professional study programme.

### **NUMBER OF STUDENTS:**

- **Full time students:** 223
- **Part time students:** 193

**NUMBER OF TEACHERS:** 16

**ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE:**



## **SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATED HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION**

College of Management and Design Aspira was founded in 2008 in Split by Modern College in Split.

Considering that the Modern College is a founder of Maritime College Atlantis, these three institutions make up one of the largest private educational groups in Croatia. Modern College in Split is a private educational institution dealing with life-long learning. It implements training and specialization programs within almost all areas of human work. SUS has been implementing programs verified by the Ministry of Science and Education as well as numerous trainings in the field of management, entrepreneurship, communications, gastronomy and tourism for a long period of years. Internationally recognized maritime college and training centre Atlantis offers a wide range of maritime education and training programs in accordance with STCW Convention. Maritime College Atlantis won a certificate for quality management system CRS and Lloyd register. College of Management and Design Aspira, as a private college and non-profit organization, organizes and implements professional studies of Sports Management, Computer Engineering, International Hotel and Tourism Management and Hotel and Tourism Management. Apart from the abovementioned, College of Management and Design Aspira develops expert and scientific activity in accordance with the law. This higher education institution focuses on identifying actual and expected future and deficit occupations. Study specializations and programs are adjusted to the above mentioned. This is exactly how International Hotel and Tourism Management study, specialization Gastronomy, was established. It was a completely new study and it expanded higher education field in Croatia. Also, an important characteristic of our College is a dynamic adjustment of programmes and contents to real market needs. College Aspira is a legal person registered in the Court Register of Institutions and into the Register of Higher Education Institutions kept by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia, on 4 October 2010. It was registered pursuant to the temporary approval for the implementation of the specialized expert study. Permanent approval for the implementation of specialized expert study was issued by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport on 10 January 2011 after acquiring all defined requirements (Class: UP/I-602-04/07-12/00007, Reg. Number: 533-07-11-0021). Approval for the implementation of Specialized Graduate (Master) Study of Sports Management was obtained on 18 February 2013 (CLASS: UP/I-602-04/11-13/00204; REG. NUMBER: 533-20-13-0007). The approval for the implementation of specialized study programme of International Hotel and Tourism Management was obtained by the same Ministry on 6 May 2015 (CLASS: UP/I-602-04/13-13/00070; REG. NUMBER: 533-20-15-0006). In accordance with the work market needs, Expert Council of the College of Management and Design Aspira made an amendment decision (Class: 602-04/15-01; Reg. No.: 2181-214-15-270; of 21 December 2015) or a 2 Aspira College, Self-evaluation Report, 2019

decision on the amendment of the existing study program and on the implementation of the new study specialization of Gastronomy which continues to the existing study. As we noticed the need for expansion in the continental Croatia, on 6 July 2017, College of Management and Design Aspira obtained approval issued by the Ministry of Science and Education (CLASS: UP/I-602-04/16-13/00036; REG. NUMBER: 533-20-17-0006) as regards to the implementation of undergraduate specialized study of International Hotel and Tourism Management in Zagreb. Considering market needs and registered deficit of highly educated IT experts, the College of Management and Design Aspira started Computer Science – Computer Engineering study. On 6 July 2017, the College of Management and Design Aspira obtained the approval by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (CLASS: UP/I-602-04/16-13/00037, REG.NO. 533-20-17-0004) for the implementation of undergraduate specialized study of Computer Science – Computer Engineering. Furthermore, the College of Management and Design Aspira obtained the approval by the Ministry of Science and Education on 9 January 2019 (CLASS: UP/I-602-04/18-13/00010, REG.NO. 533-04-19-005) as regards to the implementation of specialized graduate study of Hotel and Tourism Management. The College is registered in accordance with the Higher Education Act and it is recognized as high quality institution with ISO certificate referring to teaching quality. The College Aspira cooperates with many organizations. The opinion of the organizations connected with the employment needs is extremely important. The opinion of such organizations is required for each study program. Therefore, those opinions are attached to the report. The opinions provided by reputable and relevant institutions indicate that the study programs provided by the College Aspira are justified and in accordance with the social and economic needs or market needs.

**Source: Self-evaluation Report**



## **BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES**

### **ADVANTAGES OF THE INSTITUTION**

1. Good network and cooperation with the business sector that supports the improvement of the curriculum and encourages adjustments to the market needs.
2. High employability rate of graduates from the tourism and hospitality study programme.
3. Availability of the teaching staff and their willingness to help the students.
4. Tutorial system fostering good cooperation among the students.
5. A great number of lifelong learning programmes adjusted to labour market needs.

### **DISADVANTAGES OF THE INSTITUTION**

1. Lack of a clear understanding of the competitive position.
2. Teaching staff insufficiently motivated for professional/scientific specialisation and mobility.
3. Limited quality assessment process for the selection of external associates.
4. Lack of courses taught in English.
5. Misleading information on the web page.

### **LIST OF INSTITUTIONAL GOOD PRACTICES**

1. Career day.

## **ANALYSIS OF EACH ASSESSMENT AREA, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND QUALITY GRADE FOR EACH ASSESSMENT AREA**

### **I. Internal quality assurance and the social role of the higher education institution**

#### **Analysis**

College Aspira has begun with the efficient practice of its internal quality assurance system which has been well documented in most of its processes, including the strategic planning. However, a big part of the HEI quality system documentation (i.e. the documents covering the prevention of unethical behaviour at the College) is not sufficient evidence of its effective implementation in practice. All strategic documents (such as the Regulation on the Quality Assessment and Improvement System at Aspira, Quality Assurance and Improvement Manual at College Aspira, Strategy of College of Management and Design, Action Plan for Quality Improvement) of the HEI should be more based on the feedback from the internal and external stakeholders, which has to be continually gathered and analysed. The best example of its good practice in that context are the HEI lifelong learning programmes which are entirely aligned with the needs of the labour market.

The core process of Aspira, the teaching process, is not sufficiently elaborated and measured by the KPIs, that should ensure the appropriate basis for constant improvements.

Aspira does not entirely ensure the availability of all the information on its important activities, such as the activities related to its social responsibility, which is at an enviable level.

#### **Recommendations for improvement**

The Expert Panel recommends to the HEI to systematically and entirely implement the documented activities and regulations in practice, and to continue with the satisfactory practice of developing its social role and benefits to the local and national community.

#### **Quality grade**

Satisfactory level of quality

### **II. Study programmes**

#### **Analysis**

The general goals of all study programmes are essentially in line with the mission and strategic goals, although the strategic goals are not clearly defined. The College has clearly

defined the learning outcomes of all study programmes. All learning outcomes at the course level have been redefined (at least 6 for each course) and the assessment process is linked with the learning outcomes. The aligning matrix of the learning outcome has been done for all study programmes. However, there is still a lot of room for enhancement to fully correspond with level 6 (for undergraduate studies) and level 7 (for graduate studies).

The changes in the study programmes have been done according to the suggestions from the Economic Council, especially in the field of student practice. According to the site visit, it can be proved that according to the feedback from employers the content of a certain number of courses has been changed. There have also been some changes regarding the defining and distributing ECTS credits in the last two academic years. However, the changes often result in the increasing number of credits because of the course importance (e.g. internship from 2 to 18 ECTS) not as a result of student workload. The student practice is an integral part of the study programmes and the number of hours and ECTS has been systematically increasing.

#### Recommendations for improvement

The Expert Panel recommends to consider an online study programme for Sport Management and continue with the improvement of learning outcomes. Furthermore, it is important to focus on balancing the students' workload and ECTS credits and link the topic of the final paper with the enterprise from student practice (applied research).

#### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

### III. Teaching process and student support

#### Analysis

College Aspira implemented some suggested changes from the previous reaccreditation procedures and it really affected the quality of student support. The admission criteria and criteria for the continuation of studies are consistently applied, but the Expert Panel thinks that the HEI provides misleading information on their web page for some of the study programmes which are not in line with the current Licence from the Ministry. The student support is done well, the College staff is always available to the students and are well connected. Students are really satisfied with the support they're given; the Business Careers Centre and Student Support are doing a good job of preparing and connecting students to the employers. Lectures for part-time students can be delivered via webinars and they can take their oral exams online through Skype calls. This is definitely a big advantage of a part-time study as it involves mostly students at the Sports Management who spend a lot of their time outside Split throughout the year due to intensive

preparations and training. On the other hand, the Rulebook does not clearly define how much of the activities as part of the part-time study can be delivered online, which is good and bad at the same time, because it is not clear how much of the activities can be delivered online without a license. The College does an amazing job of ensuring support to students from vulnerable and under-represented groups through many compromises they have made to make it possible for those students to have a motivational educational experience. Furthermore, the students should be better informed about the exchange program and more motivated than they currently are. The same goes for the foreign students. They should be informed in advance about the HEI conditions for studying at Aspira (not all classes are available in English).

### Recommendations for improvement

The Expert Panel suggests to Aspira that the misleading information on the webpage should be corrected. Moreover, the Rulebook should define which activities (classes, exams, etc.) can be delivered online and it should define their ratio. Also, the HEI should motivate and inform the students about the exchange program and resolve the issues with the courses that should be available in a foreign language.

### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

## IV. Teaching and institutional capacities

### Analysis

Currently, 124 people/personnel are involved in Aspira's operations: 24 full-time employees, 11 part-time employees and 89 external associates (not including guest lecturers). The qualifications of the faculty seem to be appropriate for the delivery of the existing undergraduate and graduate study programmes, and the ratio of the total number of employed teachers and associates to the total number of enrolled students is in line with prescribed recommendations. Moreover, Aspira's equipment and the entire infrastructure are appropriate for the delivery of study programmes and the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

However, the College has an excessive number of external associates who have a significant teaching workload (although their engagement is not fully transparent) and some of them might not have an adequate working experience and/or teaching quality. Rather, it seems like Aspira's primary motivation for engagement of external associates is their lower cost in comparison to full-time employed teachers.

Aspira's practice of teacher appointment and promotion is in line with the legislation and internal regulations: the teaching staff goes through the regular peer review, performance appraisal and evaluation/grading from students. However, it is not clear

how the professional or scientific activities are evaluated – since there is no or very little activities at Aspira.

Aspira teachers (full-time employees and external associates) have no (or have very limited) participation in mobility programmes, international projects, etc. One of the reasons for such a low participation is the teachers' work overload at their second job, since most of them are external associates working full time at other institutions.

### Recommendations for improvement

The Expert Panel suggests the improvement of quality selection criteria for hiring external associates. It would be advisable that all teachers (including external associates) have both academic background and work experience in that field and have done scientific and professional papers. Furthermore, Aspira needs to continue to expand the opportunities for the improvement of teaching competencies within and outside the institution.

### Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

## V. Professional and/or scientific activity

### Analysis

It can be summarised that the link between professional/scientific activities and achievements and teaching are very limited and rather ad-hoc than strategically developed and managed. Given ASPIRA's ambition to address all three university missions (teaching, research, entrepreneurial), the College's performance in this standard is unsatisfactory. The analysis of the Expert Panel confirms the statement in the Self-evaluation Report that Aspira has identified the need to get students more involved in projects and that plans were made to promote this. The Expert Panel encourages ASPIRA to put a special emphasis on this to promote practice-based learning, a key component of Aspiras's teaching and learning approach. Moreover, there is a problem with a lack of scientific/professional publications by ASPIRA teachers in the last 5 years. The Expert Panel believes that the participation of ASPIRA teachers in national and international conferences is very limited. While the HEI claims to fund all trips, no evidence was found that an extensive usage of these opportunities was made.

### Recommendations for improvement

The Expert Panel suggests to develop a strategy on how Aspira can align its professional/scientific activities and knowledge transfer to society. It is important to conduct interviews with teachers to identify how they can be motivated to increase the number and quality of publications.

Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

## **DETAILED ANALYSIS OF EACH STANDARD, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND QUALITY GRADE FOR EACH STANDARD**

### **I. Internal quality assurance and the social role of the higher education institution**

#### **1.1. The higher education institution has established a functional internal quality assurance system.**

##### **Analysis**

Although College Aspira has a transparent organisational structure, its organisational chart (provided in the Self-evaluation Report) is illogically consisted of both functions and organisational units. One of those units is the Unit for Quality Assurance and Improvement which is adequately “located” as an advisory body to the Management Board. The Unit for Quality Assurance and Improvement consists of the representatives of all the stakeholders, including the representatives of the professional organisations and two students, but is mostly run by the recently appointed Coordinator and the Head of the Unit (who is at the same time the Vice-Dean for Teaching and Quality).

College Aspira has officially implemented the quality assurance and management system in accordance with the requirements of the international standard ISO 9001:2015 (recertified in August 2018), but has not yet thoroughly implemented the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), as mentioned several times in Self-evaluation Report. According to the responses during the interview with the Quality Unit Coordinator, the higher education institution (hereafter the HEI) plans to carry out the complete revision of the current Quality Assurance and Improvement Manual of College Aspira in the future process of implementing the ESG standard by the end of the academic year 2018/2019, in order to cover all the process activities and to focus more intensively on the teaching process. As the teaching process is unquestionably the core process of College Aspira, it should be better determined by the appropriate (necessary!) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which should be periodically measured in order to keep the process under control.

Before the ISO recertification in 2018, College Aspira had revised its Quality Policy (which is only publicly published on the HEI website!), but not sufficiently informed its stakeholders about the importance of that strategic document, as it was noticed during the conversation with several groups of the different stakeholders (students, employees, associates, the Economic Council).

The HEI Strategy, which was revised in 2018, is aligned with the HEI Action Plan, but those documents do not completely rely on the gathered necessary feedback from all its stakeholders, as stated in the Self-evaluation Report. College Aspira systematically gathers and analyses the information about the satisfaction of its current students/participants of its lifelong learning programmes, but not about the satisfaction of all its stakeholders, that should be done thoroughly and regularly.

The Quality Assurance System of the HEI lacks in an efficient and consistent monitoring of the HEI process activities. However, the process of human resource management has been supported more thoroughly by the HEI Human Resource Strategy. Although the HR Strategy encompasses the management's commitment to the professional development of all the HEI employees, which is also defined in the Protocol for New Teachers, it is noticed (acknowledged) during the meeting with the HEI employees that their motivation and efforts are still at the minimum level, i.e. a low number of conference attendees, insignificant number of teachers' scientific and professional papers. The Strategy assures the rewarding of employees, but based only on the students' grades from the surveys. Furthermore, the Plan for Individual Development of Each Employee for the current academic year mostly consists of two workshops only.

### Recommendations for improvement

- To ensure that all the stakeholders of the College Aspira are informed about its Quality Policy.
- To integrate the ESG and ISO 9001:2015 standards into the unique quality management system of the HEI.
- To ensure the consistency in the use of quality assurance terminology (for instance, only one name for the Quality Assurance and Improvement Unit).
- To adjust the organisational chart in accordance with the existing organisational units (without the "function boxes"), including the missing units (for instance, the Office of Vice-Dean for Development).
- To systematically gather and analyse the information about the satisfaction of the representatives of professional organisations, alumni employers, associate teachers, etc.

### Quality grade

Minimum level of quality



## **1.2. The higher education institution implements recommendations for quality improvement from previous evaluations.**

### **Analysis**

According to the HEI Action Plan for Quality Improvement and the Report on the Action Plan Realization and the implementation of the Action Plan, the HEI has analysed the recommendations from the previous evaluations and has undertaken the following activities: redefining the HEI mission, creating the HEI development strategy and the Strategy for reducing student dropouts, formalised most of the quality assurance activities, began to maintain its quality assurance system with appropriate activities (such as reporting on implemented improvements), intensified the data gathering (but with still basic analysis), started transparently monitoring the process of oral and written examination, as well as introduced new evaluation tools for its employees (peer review, Self-evaluation).

The above mentioned activities are all documented, but not systematically and entirely applied in practice.

### **Recommendations for improvement**

- To ensure the systematic and thorough implementation of all the further improvements.

### **Quality grade**

Satisfactory level of quality

## **1.3. The higher education institution supports academic integrity and freedom, prevents all types of unethical behaviour, intolerance and discrimination.**

### **Analysis**

College Aspira ensures the academic integrity and ethical behaviour of all employees and students with the following mechanisms: Code of Ethics, Ethics Committee, Student ombudsman, Regulation on Disciplinary Liability of Educators and Associates, Regulation on Disciplinary Liability of Students, Regulation on Prevention of Plagiarism with anti-plagiarism software PlagScan (which has not been applied in practice yet), Regulation on Student Dress Code, Regulation on Teachers Dress Code, as well as Employee Code of Conduct.

College Aspira uses all the mentioned mechanisms effectively as a prevention measure, but also for sanctioning of unethical behaviour, an example of which had been documented and presented to the Expert Panel. During the site visit the Expert Panel did

not find the evidence of implementing the PlagScan programme in the teaching process of College Aspira.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- To open a digital repository within the DABAR system in order to use effectively the PlagScan programme.

#### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

### **1.4. The higher education institution ensures the availability of information on important aspects of its activities (teaching, professional and/or scientific and social role).**

#### Analysis

College Aspira provides transparency of the information on its study programmes (such as admission criteria, enrolment quotas, form of supports, learning outcomes) mostly through Merlin e-learning system, which could not be accessed by all the stakeholders. Aspira also provides most of the information on the study programmes in Croatian and English on its website and during the organised events, i.e. Open Days, International Week, Career Day, the latter of which was very successfully carried out last year, according to the feedback from the representatives of professional organisations and the potential employers of the HEI students.

The analysis data on admitted students, pass rates and drop-out rates, graduate employment and the outcomes of previous evaluations are not sufficiently communicated to external stakeholders.

College Aspira uses a systematic approach while planning its annual promotional activities provided within its marketing plan and reports on the marketing plan realization. However, the HEI publishes misleading information on its website regarding their lecturers (guest lecturers in fact), the incorrect name of the HEI and also publishes insufficiently the information on the social role of the Institution.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- To constantly emphasize publishing of all information on the HEI activities regarding its social role.
- To ensure that the information available on the website and other communication channels (i.e. social media accounts) of the Institution is always correct and updated.

### Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

## **1.5. The higher education institution understands and encourages the development of its social role.**

### Analysis

The higher education institution largely contributes to the development of its local community by promoting its social responsibility through different activities (as stated in the Self-evaluation Report and during the meetings of the Management Board and employees), such as its engagement in humanitarian projects and donations: the organisation of the event MOVEMBER in 2016 in cooperation with the County League against Cancer, the Project "Sinj u Sridu" to promote cultural heritage of the town Sinj, the organisation of a culinary class for children with disabilities of Juraj Bonači, the humanitarian handball game in cooperation with the Centre for Autism Split, the voluntary blood donation in the HEI premises, the scholarships given to the children of Maestral organisation and activities of other types for the benefits of different vulnerable and under-represented social groups.

The above named activities of College Aspira are a benchmark of social responsibility which might be an example not only to other higher education institutions, but also any other organisation.

### Recommendations for improvement

- To continue carrying out such social responsibility activities and regularly publish the information on the HEI social engagement in order to build a better public image, to gain positive publicity and strengthen its market position.

### Quality grade

High level of quality

## **1.6. Lifelong learning programmes delivered by the higher education institution are aligned with the strategic goals and the mission of the higher education institution, and social needs.**

### Analysis

The higher education institution offers a wide range of the lifelong learning programmes which are aligned with the mission and strategic goals of College Aspira, as well as the needs of the labour market, which is proved by the analysis regularly carried out after

the delivery of the lifelong learning programmes, results of the surveys on the participants' satisfaction and the lifelong learning programme syllabi.

The programmes are in compliance with the HEI Regulation on Lifelong Learning Programmes and are a subject to the periodic revisions at College Aspira.

### Recommendations for improvement

- To continue creating lifelong learning concepts which are based on the analyses of the market needs.

### Quality grade

High level of quality

NAZIV PROGRAMA	RAZINA	KLASA	UR.BROJ.	DATUM	MIŠLJENJE
Menadžer/ica turističke destinacije	USAVRŠAVANJE	UP/I-602-07/12-03/00009	533-09-12-0005	25. travnja 2012.	MIŠLJENJE KI 602-07/11-02/74
Menadžer/ica prodaje hotela	USAVRŠAVANJE	UP/I-602-07/12-03/00009	533-09-12-0005	25. travnja 2012.	URBROJ: 332/1-06-02/2-11-2
Menadžer/ica hotela	USAVRŠAVANJE	UP/I-602-07/12-03/00009	533-09-12-0005	25. travnja 2012.	Zagreb, 16. lipnja 2011.
Administrator/ice u sportskim organizacijama	OSPOSOBLJAVANJE	UP/I-602-07/12-03/00009	533-09-12-0007	10. svibnja 2012.	MIŠLJENJE KI 602-07/12-02/35
Suradnik/ica u organizaciji turističke destinacije	OSPOSOBLJAVANJE	UP/I-602-07/13-03/00145	533-21-13-0002	01. kolovoza 2013.	URBROJ: 332-04-01/4-12-2 Zagreb, 12. travnja 2012.
Voditelj/ica obiteljskog i malog hotela	OSPOSOBLJAVANJE	UP/I-602-07/14-03/00020	533-25-14-002	28. siječnja 2014.	MIŠLJENJE KI 602-07/13-02/105
Voditelj/ica projekata financiranih iz EU fondova	USAVRŠAVANJE	UP/I-602-07/14-03/00020	533-25-14-002	28. siječnja 2014.	URBROJ: 332-04-01/5-13-2 Zagreb, 20. svibnja 2013.
Voditelj/ica prodaje	USAVRŠAVANJE	UP/I-602-07/14-03/00020	533-25-14-002	28. siječnja 2014.	MIŠLJENJE KI 602-07/13-02/105
Voditelj/ica poslova u odjelu hrane i pića	USAVRŠAVANJE	UP/I-602-07/15-03/00138	533-25-15-0002	29. travnja 2015.	URBROJ: 332-04-01/2-13-7 Zagreb, 18. rujna 2013.
Menadžer/ica matine	USAVRŠAVANJE	UP/I-602-07/15-03/00043	533-25-15-0002	13. veljače 2015.	MIŠLJENJE KI 602-07/15-01/67
Recepcionat/ka u marini	USAVRŠAVANJE	UP/I-602-07/15-03/00043	533-25-15-0002	13. veljače 2015.	URBROJ: 332-04-01/4-15-06 Zagreb, 10. travnja 2015.
Voditelj/ica poslova u charter tvrtki	USAVRŠAVANJE	UP/I-602-07/15-03/00043	533-25-15-0002	13. veljače 2015.	MIŠLJENJE KI 602-07/14-01/24
Internet marketing	OSPOSOBLJAVANJE	UP/I-602-07/16-03/00246	533-25-17-0002	09. prosinca 2017.	URBROJ: 332-04-01/6-15-13 Zagreb, 26. siječnja 2015.
					MIŠLJENJE KI 602-07/14-01/24
					URBROJ: 332-04-01/4-14-11 Zagreb, 22. prosinca 2014.
					MIŠLJENJE KI 602-07/16-01/40
					URBROJ: 332-04-01/3-16-07 Zagreb, 21. rujna 2016.

Source: Self-evaluation Report

## II. Study programmes

**2.1. The general objectives of all study programmes are in line with the mission and strategic goals of the higher education institution and the demands of the labour market.**

### Analysis

The general goals of all study programmes are essentially in line with the mission and strategic goals, although the strategic goals are not clearly defined. The justification for delivering study programmes is provided and some recommendations from professional organisations i.e. stakeholders, like private and public companies, are also obtained (Analiticom, Tourist board Splitsko-dalmatinska County).

Currently, the following study programmes are performed:

- Computing, Undergraduate professional study programme,
- International Management in Hospitality and Tourism, Undergraduate professional study programme,
- Sport Management, Undergraduate professional study programme,
- Hotel and Tourism Management, Specialist graduate professional study programme,
- Sport Management, Specialist graduate professional study programme.

The main goal of all study programmes is to provide students with the competencies necessary for a successful integration in the national labour market.

Part-time students from the Sports Management study programme often take some online courses (e-courses), which are available through the Merlin system. This is an example of good practice to enable top athletes to complete some courses (or even a semester) abroad. By completing the course in such a way, the school does not record these activities as a distance learning. The Study Rules and Regulation does not address such situations. To achieve the study programme goals, it is recommended to formalize the online study programme in Sport Management and obtain a licence.

The college Aspira received the licence for conducting all study programmes for English Programme from the Ministry of Science and Education. At the moment there are no English books in the Library that can cover all curricula. To achieve the goals of all study

programmes it is necessary to adjust the syllabus and define the literature in the English language. The Aspira school should provide the obligatory literature in their own Library.

Evidence:

- List of study programmes – Self-evaluation Report,
- Recommendations from professional organizations (letters from 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018),
- Results from the alumni questionnaire,
- Notes from meetings with the dean and vice-deans.

### Recommendations for improvement

- Consider an online study programme for Sport Management,
- Adjust the enrolment quotas with strategic goals and define it for Croatian and English language programmes,
- Equip the Library with appropriate literature for the English programmes.

### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

**2.2. The intended learning outcomes at the level of study programmes delivered by the higher education institution are aligned with the level and profile of qualifications gained.**

### Analysis

The College Aspira has clearly defined the learning outcomes of all study programmes. In November 2018, the College has accepted the Regulation on Defining Learning Outcomes. According to these Regulations, all learning outcomes at the course level have been redefined (at least 6 learning outcomes for each course) and the assessment process is linked with learning outcomes. Furthermore, workshops on learning outcomes have been organized for full-time employees and associates. During the last academic year, 18 individual meetings have been organized regarding the explanation and assessment of learning outcomes.

Additionally, the aligning matrix of the learning outcome has been done for all study programmes. Analysis had proved that sometimes learning outcomes at the level of study programmes (IU 01 – 75) are not sufficiently covered with the content of obligatory courses (e.g. Learning outcome IU27). Preparing financial statements in accordance with Law and IFRS should be covered by two courses: Introduction to Accounting and Student practice II. By analysing syllabuses during the visit, it became apparent that this learning outcome (IU27) is not fully covered with these two courses. Therefore, it is recommended

to constantly improve the levelling matrix and learning outcomes, by defining specific, generic and general learning outcomes for each study programme.

It is necessary to emphasize that according to the report from the first re-accreditation process (in 2013) a big improvement has been done regarding the learning outcome implementation, but there is still a lot of room for enhancement to fully correspond with level 6 (for undergraduate studies) and level 7 (for graduate studies).

Collaboration with industry is a crucial goal in the HEI's strategy. Therefore, the formation of the Economic Council as a permanent advisory committee was an important initiative to start cooperation with employers and to receive feedback on student competencies. During the site visit, the opinions of all study programmes have been analysed and it proved that the study programmes are justified with socio-economic needs. The changes in the study programmes have been done according to the suggestions from the Economic Council, especially in the field of student practice (mostly by increasing the number of ECTS; in the new Study programme of Computer Engineering the practice I and II has been introduced in 2nd and 4th semester with 2 ECTS)

According to the discussion with the Alumni and members of the Economic Council, employers are generally satisfied with the graduates' competencies.

An important fact is also that the College of Algebra participates as a partner in the project "Implementation of CROQF in Professional Computer Engineering Studies". In order to align with the CROQF this should contribute to further development of the Computer Engineering study programme.

Evidence:

- Notes from the meeting with the Alumni and the Economic Council,
- Notes from the student's meeting,
- The study programme syllabus and curriculum,
- Matrix of learning outcome alignment.

### Recommendations for improvement

- To continue with the improvement of learning outcomes and define specific, generic and general learning outcomes for each study programme,
- Adjust the Study Rules and Regulation of enrolment in e-courses or even on-line study programmes (70% absence for part time students).

### Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

### **2.3. The higher education institution provides evidence of the achievement of intended learning outcomes of the study programmes it delivers.**

#### **Analysis**

From the academic year of 2018/19 all syllabuses have been changed and adjusted to a new assessment model e.g. evaluation criteria – elaboration by learning outcomes. In accordance with the adjustment of the syllabuses, both the written and oral exam and mid term exam (colloquium) have been reviewed.

Content changes of the syllabus are controlled, depending on the type of changes made; small changes can be proposed by the teacher himself, while major changes are regulated through the Revision process. All changes are presented and approved at the session of the Academic Council.

The achievement of the learning outcomes is checked via project assignments, seminar papers, written and oral examination, case studies and presentations. Learning outcomes for individual courses are continuously tested and assessed during the semester and the final exam provides the basis for the final grade. Examples of written and oral exams for different courses are provided and analysed during the visit.

Evidence:

Seminar papers, written and oral exams, case studies

Syllabus for different study programmes

Final thesis

#### **Recommendations for improvement**

- Continually prove the practical relevance of the programme with all stakeholders;
- Make changes in the learning outcomes and the teaching process i.e. “close the loop” and improve the process according to the feedback from the Economic Council and the students.

#### **Quality grade**

Satisfactory level of quality

### **2.4. The HEI uses feedback from students, employers, professional organisations and alumni in the procedures of planning, proposing and approving new programmes, and revising or closing the existing programmes.**

#### **Analysis**

The College Aspira has made the Regulation on the procedure for evaluating the new study programmes in December 2017. This document regulates the procedures for



evaluating the new study programmes and consider the Croatian labour market, benchmark of international good practice and teaching resources.

In accordance with the Strategy of the College, one of the strategic goals is related to the cooperation with representatives from the labour market. The College Aspira strives to achieve maximum compliance of teaching and professional practice of the study programme. Based on the recommendations and feedback from the members of the Economic Council, the Experts Board of the College passes the decision to make amendments in the form of Revision, with the purpose of achieving competitiveness of graduates on the labour market.

By analysing the site visit, it can be proved that according to the feedback from employers the content of a certain number of courses has been changed: Market Research in Sport Management, Business Statistics, International Hotel Management, International Destination Management Companies, Professional Practice III (increased the number of ECTS from 2 to 18).

There have also been some changes in the curriculum regarding the foreign languages: students choose another foreign language in the first year; in addition to English and in the second year they have the opportunity to choose a third, facultative language.

There is also a change in the process of choosing the Major: with the purpose of early orientation and adaptation to the labour market, when entering the second year of studies, students will choose Hotel Management or Management of Destination Organizations and Companies. This results in the transit of some courses in different semesters.

However, based on the discussion with the dean and the vice-deans, the Expert Panel did not get clear evidence that the implemented modifications have resulted from a student's feedback.

Evidence:

Decision on revision of study programmes,  
Notes from the meeting with the dean and the vice-deans,  
Record of changes in the syllabi – for all study programmes,  
Up-to-date version of the study programme.

### Recommendations for improvement

- Continue with proactive communication and improvement of the study programme based on the stakeholders' and students' feedback.

Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

## **2.5. The higher education institution ensures that ECTS allocation is adequate.**

### **Analysis**

The topic of defining and distributing ECTS credits is one of the constant topics of discussion at the Aspira College. In this way, based on the data obtained from the analysis of the student survey on evaluation of teaching work, the students' assessment of study and professional services and the peer review, the College comes with relevant data on the compliance of students' workload and ECTS credits of a particular course. One of such examples is the Computational English Language 1 + 2. Considering the student workload, this course carries 4 instead of 3 ECTS credits from academic year 2018/19.

In this academic year (2018/19) additionally several changes in ECTS credits have been made. However, the changes result often in the increasing the number of credits because of the course importance (e.g. Internship from 2 to 18 ECTS) not as the result of students' workload.

The Expert panel did not get any evidence that students are provided with feedback on the results of the analysis of gathered information and the implemented changes. Therefore, the College should continue with the student surveys on teaching processes and working hours needed to successfully master the learning outcomes, focusing on detecting some course imbalances, to be able to implement changes and adjust the workload with ECTS. Namely, the decision on the number of ECTS for individual courses was made mostly based on the experience of the teachers.

Evidence:

Revision from Academic Council sessions,  
Student feedback form questionnaires,  
Syllabi for the academic year of 2018/19,  
Professional practice syllabus.

### **Recommendations for improvement**

- Continue with students' questionnaires,
- Focus on balancing the students' workload and ECTS credits,
- Give the students feedback about the implemented changes.

### **Quality grade**

Minimum level of quality

## **2.6. Student practice is an integral part of the study programmes.**

## Analysis

Since the first academic year (2009/2010) the student practice is an integral part of the study programmes at the Aspira College. The number of hours and ECTS has been systematically increasing, as employers have demonstrated the need for a greater share of practice in order to better prepare students for their work. The student practice is regulated by a Rulebook on Professional Practice (accepted in October 2017).

Currently, 89 contracts have been signed for Tourism studies, 38 for Sports Management studies and 12 for Computer Engineering studies. Therefore, student practice can be organized in respectable international institutions, organizations, hotels, sports facilities, restaurants, numerous sports and travel agencies and IT companies. Student practice has 2 ETCS in the first and second year and in the third year 18 ECTS (640 hours). For all study programmes, the Heads of Study Programme and Coordinator of Student Practice are appointed, and they are in constant communication with students and employers. Thus, the Expert Panel recommends ensuring good feedback and a better organization of the student practice at the level of each study programme.

The professional practice programme is proposed by the coordinator in the agreement with the companies in which the internship will be performed. Admission of students to a professional practice is carried out by a company representative (Mentor) on the basis of the Professional Practice Guidelines. After a successful completion, the mentor issues a signed Confirmation of Professional Practice and completes the Questionnaire regarding the student evaluation. Students have an oral conversation with the mentor.

The example of good practice is the Centre for Business Careers and Student Support, whose goal is creating a student's profile for the labour market, consulting, making CVs, applying for a variety of useful workshops, and creating a contact database for companies that students can use for student practice. The central event of the Careers Centre is the Career Day that brings together more and more employers each year and through which students can directly establish a contact with employers. The Career Day was mentioned many times during the meetings with employers as a useful and excellent event. They also commend the motivation and good preparation of students.

Feedback from employers is also provided through the Employer Career Day Survey and from this academic year the College Aspira will start with a Survey Questionnaire for Students regarding the feedback on student practice. During the site visit the Panel visited three partners (hotel, sport association, IT company) and checked the documentation and student practice process with mentors. It can be concluded that the College Aspira has developed the student practice to an enviable level.

## Recommendations for improvement

- To prepare guidance for the Report on Evaluation of Student Practice,

- Link the topic of the final paper with the enterprise from student practice (applied research).

### Quality grade

High level of quality

## III. Teaching process and student support

### **3.1. Admission criteria or criteria for the continuation of studies are in line with the requirements of the study programme, clearly defined, published and consistently applied.**

#### Analysis

The Regulations on the Admission Examination and Enrolment Procedure of the College Aspira (adopted on 21 January 2019) define the admission criteria for the study programmes and they are available on the website of the College under the section Regulations. The admission quotas for all study programmes are defined and published within a public call for enrolment which is published on the website of the College Aspira and so are the admission regulations and criteria for all study programmes. Although all the criteria for admission are published and defined, the members of the Expert Panel found misleading information on the College Aspira website within the admissions section. It is stated on the website that enrolment into ALL study programmes is allowed although there is no licence for them.

The process of applying under the public call for enrolment to the first year of undergraduate study programmes is done via the [www.postani-student.hr](http://www.postani-student.hr) website i.e. the National Information System for Applications to Higher Education Institutions (NISpVU), a system used by candidates to apply for the State matura exams and for enrolment to the study programmes of their choice, which ensures consistent and fair criteria for every person that applies.

Following an appropriate admission procedure, enrolment to specialist graduate professional study programmes is allowed to candidates who have previously completed an undergraduate professional or university study programme or hold a master's degree, or a degree of another higher education institution. The admission procedure to a specialist graduate professional study programme includes the evaluation of the applicant's achievements at the previous level of higher education and an interview to assess the applicant's motivation for a particular study programme.

The selection of the candidates is based on the results of the state matura exams. For candidates applying for enrolment to an undergraduate professional study programme

without having passed the state matura exam, the admission procedure includes the evaluation of the applicant's secondary school achievements and of the admission examination results consisting of a written general knowledge test and an interview to assess the applicant's motivation for a particular study programme. The admission examination is conducted by a special Admission Examination Committee appointed by the Dean from the teaching staff and associates of the College. Prospective applicants who hold foreign secondary school or higher education diploma are required to undergo a process of recognition of their educational qualifications with the Ministry of Science and Education.

The transfer from related colleges, faculties and polytechnics is regulated by the College Regulations on the Admission Examination and Enrolment Procedure (Article 6), which is published on the College website. The Decision to approve the transfer is adopted by the Vice-Dean for Education and Quality in cooperation with the course leaders, taking into consideration the similarity of the respective study programmes and the content of courses within the study programme. The feedback from students on their experience in the case of continuation of studies is obtained only in an interview with the Vice-Dean for Education and Quality.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- Adjust and correct the information that is shared on the College website.

#### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

### **3.2. The higher education institution gathers and analyses information on student progress and uses it to ensure the continuity and completion of study.**

#### Analysis

A variety of analyses and reports that are regularly created by the Student Administration Office in cooperation with the Unit for Quality Assurance and Improvement exist to monitor student progress, including an Analysis of enrolled, graduated and dropped out students, Student Pass Rates Analysis, Report on high school grade point average, Report on the grade point average of College's students by academic year based on grades in individual courses, Report on the ratio of enrolled and dropped out students, and Analysis of student attrition. Evidence of such analyses and reports was provided through links to online documents as well as in-text graphics and additional text in the Self-evaluation Report. In addition, the Tables 3.4 and 3.5 from the MOZVAG database were provided in the Analytical Supplement. The Self-evaluation Report also specifies that the College's Unit for Quality Assurance and Improvement prepares analyses of study success for each study programme. The procedures for monitoring student progress were confirmed

during the site visit. The Head of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Unit detailed the responsibilities of this process. The leaders of the study programmes are in charge of the monitoring, and of the individual teachers in the programme that contribute to the gathering of the data. The teachers are then responsible for ensuring the engagement of assistants. During internships, student progress is documented through a form that is provided at the end of each internship.

The information on student progress is gathered and analysed each academic year. This statement from the Self-evaluation Report was orally confirmed during the site visit. ASPIRA makes use of a variety of analyses (see above). During the Visit, the Expert Panel was able to gather further insights and examples of the usage of the results. Using the analyses and reports created the leader of each study programme engages with the Dean to derive recommendations and actions. No documentation, however, exists regarding the changes in the curricula. These can only be recognised by comparing different versions of the course syllabi. The changes to the curricula are discussed by the Professional Council. As an example of actions taken based on the analysis results, ASPIRA developed a strategy in 2016 to address the very high dropout rates that can be found in Table 3.5 (Completion of the study programme “Sports Management” in the years of 2009-2015). New evidence showing that the dropout rates have significantly dropped in the last years have been provided during the site visit, indicating that the strategy and the related actions have made an impact. During the site visit, the management board mentioned that calling up students was one successful action that was implemented.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- Document the changes to syllabi that result from student progress analyses and reports,
- Document and make available all procedures for monitoring student progress and the usage of the results (including information on responsibilities of certain stakeholders in the process).

#### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

### **3.3. The higher education institution ensures student-centred learning.**

#### Analysis

Full-time and part-time studies are the main forms of programme delivery, with lectures and practical classes, field work, traineeships, laboratory work and practicums being core elements. Online learning also plays a major role at Aspira, not only for athletes but also dislocated students. The extent to which online learning is used remains vague as

discussions highlighted the usage of online learning for athletes and student from far-off places whereby it was not clear which courses and exams could be performed online, and under which circumstances this is allowed.

The Self-evaluation Report refers to seminar papers, case studies, visits to fairs and other events such as congresses, scientific/expert conferences, seminars and panel discussions. External teachers that were interviewed during the site visit also highlighted (and thus confirmed) a variety of teaching methods applied at Aspira, including various workshops formats, World Café, field work, diary writing, interviewing, event organisation and running dictation, simulation and gamification (quiz / polls on mobile phones). A review of around 25 course syllabi (for courses in the study programmes BA in Computer Engineering, BA in International Hospitality and Tourism, BA in Sports Management, and MA in Sports Management.) that were provided during the site visit, confirmed some of the teaching methods (PowerPoint presentation, discussion, video clip, case study, conversation, field work, visit to company). Overall, the teaching methods applied were found to be engaging (as stated by students). Research-based learning, however, was not found to be central, pointing towards an area for improvement.

Partial evidence was found (through examples) that teaching methods are aligned with the study programme goals/learning outcomes. Online learning is used when beneficial for students.

The Self- Evaluation Report states that webinars are used by students from far-off places, top athletes, students who travel frequently or all those wishing to study at any time from any place. This adaptation of the teaching methods is welcomed to support the needs of these diverse student groups. However, except studying of top athletes which is governed by the Regulations on the Status and Special Studying Conditions of Top Athletes, it is unclear how the online delivery of course contents is governed for the other groups named before (e.g. can all courses be studied online if students demand it?). The site visit also revealed that ASPIRA provides flexibility in their study programmes with respect to internships (e.g. if an internship is supposed to take place in May, students can ask to perform it earlier or later if this is requested by the company). Both teachers and students confirmed the support of teachers for students with disabilities (e.g. sign language support for two students with hearing disability).

The site visit confirmed the existence of modern lecture halls. Computer rooms are well equipped and up-to-date cooking studios for gastronomy students exist. Students mentioned that the usage of modern information technologies varies significantly from teacher to teacher. For example, while some use gamification approaches (through mobile phones), others do not integrate any new technologies.

Students interviewed during the site visit stated that teachers are always available (physically and online) and they are very committed to support their students. The Expert Panel perceived this feedback as extremely positive. Interviews during the site visit confirmed the information in the Self-evaluation Report that every teacher is required to hold consultations at least twice a week (morning and afternoon).

Individual and group solving projects, assignments and seminar papers that have to be presented are examples of methods applied at ASPIRA which foster creative and critical thinking and help to produce self-reliant and responsible students. Students met during the site visit emphasized exercises in lectures and especially internships as key elements of their studies driving autonomy and responsibility. These activities were highly valued by students, due to the practical nature of the work and the learning effects that they provided. One representative of the external stakeholders highlighted the self-organisation skills that the students have developed.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- Ensure that the syllabi are up to date regarding the teaching methods used;
- Foster research-based learning;
- Create and publish a clear policy on the usage of online learning;
- Encourage the usage of new technologies, especially in the Computer Engineering study programme.

#### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

### **3.4. The higher education institution ensures adequate student support.**

#### Analysis

Through meetings and interviews with the students and the staff of the College Aspira, the members of the Expert Panel were able to confirm the statements of the Self-evaluation Report regarding the student introduction to the College and all of the opportunities that are given.

Prior to the start of a new academic year a working meeting is organised by the College Aspira in order to introduce new students to the necessary rules and provide them with the Information package, i.e. a bag containing a student guidebook, passwords for Merlin e-learning system along with the course schedule for the first month, academic calendar and an offer of sports activities available to them. The College provides student guidance and counselling on career opportunities through study programme supervisors, mentors and student tutors. The general regulative act for this purpose is the Regulations on Study



Programme Supervisors, Mentors and Student Tutors. A supervisor monitors and supervises the student's academic and scientific work, facilitates their adjustment to the institution's organisation structure, supports the student's study progression and reports on it to the Expert Council. A tutor is a senior year student who helps new students to adjust to the student way of life, to fit in within the academic community and adapt to studying and completing their obligations. New student tutors are elected each academic year.

During the meeting with the students they said they find the above-mentioned guidance very helpful and many of them choose to become student tutors for the same reason. Their teachers are always available and ready to help, and that reflects on the academic atmosphere and how students talk about the College.

The Centre for Business Careers and Student Support offers the database containing information necessary for students and provides them with career counselling and career development services to help them develop their profiles.

The College recently hired a new Head of Business Career and Student Support Centre and during the meetings with the staff the Expert Panel had the opportunity to check the information that is stated in the Self-evaluation Report. The Head of Business Career also talked about the Career day project organized at the College in order to connect the students with the employers, which has proven to be an excellent solution. Before the organization of the Career Days the Centre intensively works on preparing the students for the job interviews, and according to the feedback we received from the students and the employers it was a really educational and helpful event that established a good cooperation between the College and the local employers. The purpose of the Centre is to truly provide the students with an effective and functional support system in accordance with the constitutional principle of equality of all students.

The College has a functional support system that enables participation in outgoing and incoming mobility programmes through the International Cooperation Office led by the Coordinator for International Cooperation and the Erasmus Coordinator.

Also, the College has established an Economic Council the role of which is, among other things, to provide students with practical work opportunities, to assist in the organisation of public lectures and forums, and to develop joint projects with the College and its students. A Reading room has also been established with the purpose to fully and effectively provide the conditions for achieving the objectives of scientific-research, teaching and educational activities. Users have access to the reading room, the internet (they have 3 computers available inside the reading room) and the possibility to borrow specific literature. In addition to the reading room, students and teachers have the right to use the services of the University of Split Library with which Aspira has signed a contract. Students stated that they often use the University of Split Library when they write their seminars and are well informed on how to use it.

Part-time students often fulfil their obligations using webinars. During the meetings, teachers and students stated that they often use webinars to catch up with the missed lectures or to consult with their teachers. Webinars are often used to help acknowledged athletes finish college because their career obligations make it difficult for them to attend classes. However, they are still obligated to attend some of their classes and take their exams at the institute and even though there is an option to take oral exams using Skype, the Expert Panel agrees that students can't do so many things online because the College doesn't have the permit to conduct an online study. Expert Panel suggests that the College Aspira apply for a permit to conduct their courses online (Sports Management is a priority) or that it defines in the Regulations which activities (lectures, seminar paper presentation, exams, etc.) and in which ratio can be conducted online within the part-time study.

During the admission process the College gets informed about students with special requirements and prepares in advance to help those students adjust to the institution and the academic community. For example, there were two students with hearing disability and they were provided with a translator to help them follow the lectures and students with reading disorders are given extra time for writing their exams.

The College Aspira has a sufficient number of employees to cover all their needs and sectors. During the meeting with the students, they said that teachers and other staff of the College are always available and ready to help. As stated in the Self-evaluation Report, working hours are indicated on the doors of the respective offices and are publicly available to all students through the Merlin e-Learning system, under the Student Administration Office subsection. Teacher consultation hours are regulated in the syllabus for each particular course and available through the Merlin system, whereas each teacher is also required to inform the students on his/her consultation hours at the introductory lesson, and those teachers who have their own offices are required to display the consultation hours in a prominent place.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- Consider an online study programme for Sport Management.

#### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

### **3.5. The higher education institution ensures support to students from vulnerable and under-represented groups.**

### Analysis

As stated in the Self-evaluation Report and at the meetings with the HEI staff, the College monitors various needs of students from vulnerable and underrepresented groups. The monitoring is conducted during the admission process and everything is prepared in advance to help students adjust to the academic community and their obligations as students.

In order to assist under-represented and vulnerable groups in higher education (students whose parents have lower levels of education, students with disabilities, students with children, students of the Roma minority, students with a low socioeconomic status (candidates from low-income families), students from single-parent families or children of Homeland War Veterans) the College grants scholarships or, upon request submitted by students themselves, reduces the amount of tuition fees due to financial circumstances. Two deaf students (whose identity is protected by the GDPR) were assisted during the entire course of their studies (throughout all academic years) by a translator from the Association of Deaf and Hard-of Hearing Persons of the City of Split and the County of Split-Dalmatia. Members of the Expert Council and teaching staff are familiar with the difficulties experienced by students with dysgraphia and dyslexia (1 student) and have been asked to devote more time to such students to help them master the study materials. Also, the Centre for Business Careers and Student Support is available to help any student with difficulties.

According to the information gathered during the meeting with the Dean and in the Self-evaluation Report, in order to increase the accessibility of the institution's facilities to persons with disabilities, the College is planning to install an elevator and thus facilitate the attendance of classes for students with disabilities. Furthermore, within the planned expansion of its business premises, the College intends to add toilets adapted to people with physical disabilities.

### Recommendations for improvement

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### Quality grade

High level of quality

## **3.6. The higher education institution allows students to gain international experience.**

### Analysis

As stated in the Self-evaluation Report, for the purpose of promoting the mobility of students and developing their international experience, the College established the International Cooperation Office. Based on the transparency and availability of its information as well as regular informing of its students, the College is working to

encourage its students for international mobility and studying abroad. Also, the staff and students of the College regularly visit international educational institutions and participate in relevant international events.

However, after talking to students and reviewing all the documents and the information provided, the Expert Panel has concluded that students are not informed adequately and are not inspired to become part of the exchange program. The number of outgoing Aspira's students that used the exchange program to take some of the classes at a host university is considerably low and we think that extra measures should be taken to inform students about the exchange program and to motivate them to apply.

According to the information received during the interview with the Head of International Cooperation Office, the HEI Aspira helps students by guiding them through the applying process (filling out documents, preparing necessary information for the other institution) as well as contacting the institution the student wants to visit and attend classes in. If needed, they also provide support with finding accommodation in the city where the foreign institution is located and providing a small allowance for their basic needs.

During the meeting with the students, one of them claimed that all of her ECTS credits that she gained at another HEI were recognised whenever it was possible considering the similarities of the courses she was attending. The College staff also confirmed this information and stated that they don't recognise the credits only if the student was attending one of the elective courses that they don't have or can't be associated with any other they do teach.

During the meeting with the staff, we interviewed the Head of International Cooperation Office and she stated that they use surveys to check the satisfaction of students with the support regarding practical matters of student mobility, but they don't collect and analyse the information as they should be. The process is still not formalised, and they said they plan to do it in the future.

As stated in the Self-evaluation Report and confirmed by the students during the meeting, the College often provides students with foreign guest lecturers that interact with students and prepare them for the international business market. Gastronomy students are visited and have the opportunity to learn from top international Michelin-star chefs, who have been hosting regular visiting workshops for students within the culinary practicum since 2017.

### **Recommendations for improvement**

- Motivate students to participate in the exchange programme;
- Consider surveying students and analysing information on why they are not willing to study abroad;
- Consider new ways of informing students about studying abroad.

## Quality grade

Minimal level of quality

### **3.7. The higher education institution ensures adequate study conditions for foreign students.**

#### Analysis

In order to increase incoming mobility, the College printed leaflets and brochures in English and produced an English Language Student Guide which contains all the necessary information for international students, including details on the study programmes, practical advice on studying and living in Croatia, etc. All important information is also published in English on the College website.

Another good initiative is the organization of the International Week event, attended by representatives of partner educational institutions with lectures and workshops for students. Moreover, the College developed the Internationalization Strategy with a list of activities aimed at approaching foreign students. However, considering the small number of foreign students that studied at Aspira, the Expert Panel would advise developing new and more efficient ways of attracting foreign students to come to Aspira those ways should be made more transparent and visible to potential foreign students.

The College has obtained a licence from the Ministry of Science and Education for carrying out the existing study programmes in English. All teachers and students of the College have been made familiar with the option of carrying out courses in the foreign language. Also, the Self-evaluation report claims that all courses are available in English for foreign students. During the meeting with the students, the Expert Panel interviewed two foreign students and they said that they were not able to attend some of the courses they applied for because they were not available in English. The College did manage to compensate the ECTS for the students through an investigation seminar.

Foreign students interested in studying at Aspira College apply by filling out an online form on the English version of the College website. After receiving the form, the International Cooperation Office contacts the interested candidate by e-mail. During the staff meeting, the Head of the International Cooperation Office confirmed this information and stated that they help foreign students with finding their accommodation. She also said that the entire study plan is made and sent to the student in advance. A preparatory program for foreign students has also been drafted, which includes intensive three-month English language courses, math repetition, cultural studies with an emphasis on Croatian culture and a course on successful study and presentation skills. The College collects feedback on the satisfaction and the needs of foreign students through a satisfaction questionnaire (Interview).

In addition to the satisfactory questionnaire, foreign students also fill out an online survey form on the teaching process and teaching contents. The Expert Panel advises to consider collecting this data for an extended period of time and to analyse it, since it was stated at the staff meeting that the information is not saved and analysed.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- Ensure that all courses are available to foreign students in English;
- Collect and analyse the information about exchange student satisfaction and their needs;
- Consider new ways of attracting foreign students to Aspira.

#### Quality grade

Minimal level of quality

### **3.8. The higher education institution ensures an objective and consistent evaluation and assessment of student achievements.**

#### Analysis

The criteria and methods for evaluation and grading are transparent and available to the students. Course syllabi that were reviewed during the site visit clearly stated which activities of the students are evaluated, to which % each activity is taken into account in the final evaluation and how the evaluation activities are linked to the learning outcomes. Lastly, a table highlight how many points/what percentage needs to be achieved to be evaluated as excellence (5), very good (4), good (3), pass (2) or fail (1). Students interviewed during the site visit confirmed that the evaluation and grading is clear and that all information is available to them through ASPIRA's online platform.

Good alignment of the evaluation criteria and methods with the teaching methods used has been found, based on the Syllabi provided and analysed during the site visit.

Teachers confirmed during the site visit that they received support in regards to updating their skills on testing and assessment methods. The extent of this support, however, can be regarded as rather low, especially with respect to the frequency of workshops taking place. This is especially worth mentioning as ASPIRA works with a large number of external teachers (associates) and also works with a lot of employed teachers that have joined the institution within the last 1.5 years. ASPIRA also claims to fund a lot of conference attendances, however, no evidence has been found on how many conferences are used to update knowledge on assessment methods.

Double marking by an assistant as well as a professor is applied in some courses. Given that ASPIRA has only a very limited number of professors, the number of courses with double marking can be expected to be very low. In addition to double marketing, the Self-evaluation Report highlights that ASPIRA obtains student feedback on objectivity and consistency of the grading implementation through surveys and interviews. There is no evidence on evaluation of grading.

A variety of reasons for which ASPIRA examination procedures are adapted exist, including students residing in distant places, top athletes, or those unable to attend an exam (e.g. health or family issues). This has been confirmed by teachers and students during the site visit, both stating examples of deaf students as well as a student with graphical dyslexia in which evaluation procedures have been adjusted.

Students have the right to access their exam documentation. Students confirmed during the visit that they are able to get feedback (on request) and that the teachers are committed to support their improvement by giving individual advice.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- Offer workshops on testing and assessment methods every semester (either internally hosted, or externally provided);
- Given the small class sizes and the generally very individual learning approach taken by ASPIRA, consider systemizing feedback giving on evaluation results.

#### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

### **3.9. The higher education institution issues diplomas and Diploma Supplements in accordance with the relevant regulations.**

#### Analysis

After receiving a copy of Diploma Supplement the Expert Panel agreed that the total number of ECTS should be adjusted to 180 to adjust the stress on the students and teachers. The documents are appropriate. Diploma Supplement is available in both languages and paid by the College of Aspira.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- Consider lowering the total ECTS to 180.

#### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

### **3.10. The higher education institution is committed to the employability of graduates.**

#### **Analysis**

Telephone surveys have been used to investigate the employability of ASPIRA's graduates with a survey questionnaire being in place since 2017/2018. In addition, an employer survey has been created to gather feedback from companies and other organisations, replacing the prior feedback mechanism (insights gained through the College's Economic Council). The Self-evaluation Report presents a number of figures on the employment status of ASPRIA graduates from different study programmes as evidence.

During the site visit, the Head of the Centre for Business Careers and Student Support confirmed that the admission quotas are based on data received from the employment office, including recommendations for the next years.

ASPIRA provides students with links to job portals, information on current job opportunities as well as a variety of activities to find jobs, with the most important being the College's Career Day. The Career Day has been mentioned by students, alumni, employers and teachers alike as a very successful event format that provides concrete results. With regards to continuing education opportunities, ASPIRA does not provide any formalised service, but supports students on individual request.

No specific services regarding future career planning are offered. The College, however, offers a variety of workshops and support for finding jobs, including CV construction workshops, and workshops on the usage of LinkedIn.

ASPIRA has an active Alumni Club, performing a variety of engagement activities which benefit students and employers alike. Events are taking place at least twice a year with feedback of Alumni indicating that more meetings are wished.

#### **Recommendations for improvement**

1. Gather more detailed data on the employment of graduates, including if the graduate works in the field for which (s)he studied, and if the job level is in line with the degree obtained;
2. Provide students with opportunities for further studies, especially when ASPIRA doesn't offer a complementary master course;
3. Provide career planning workshops already in the first semesters so that students can build their profiles and become attractive for the targeted job market.

#### **Quality grade**

Satisfactory level of quality



## IV. Teaching and institutional capacities

### 4.1. The higher education institution ensures adequate teaching capacities.

#### Analysis

Aspira College undergraduate study programmes are in three fields (MOZVAG, Table 3.1):

- Sports Management - with 17% of enrolled students,
- International Hotel and Tourism Management - with 72% of enrolled students (13% in Zagreb, 59% in Split),
- Computer Engineering - with 11 % of enrolled students.

Aspira has only one currently operating graduate study programme - Sports Management, with 26 enrolled students (MOZVAG, Table 3.1).

The Aspira College currently has 25 employees, all elected to teaching titles: 12 lecturers, 8 senior lecturers, 1 professional associate, 3 college professors and 1 college professor – permanent title (MOZVAG, Table 4.1b). Out of those 25 full-time employees: 18 teachers are elected in the field of social sciences, sub-field of economics; 2 are in the field of technical sciences, computing field, 2 teachers are elected in the field of social sciences, sub-field of kinesiology, 1 is in the field of art history, 1 in the field of philology and 1 in the field of social sciences, sub-field of legal studies (MOZVAG, Table 4.3). During the conversation with the teachers, it was found that one of them does not work as a teacher, but rather as an administrative employee. Therefore, there is a discrepancy between the MOZVAG table, the Self-evaluation document and the actual state.

Furthermore, out of 25 full-time teachers 7 of them (28 %) have been employed in Aspira for 1 year or less, and another 5 have been employed in Aspira between 1,5 and 2 years. In other words, 12 teachers (48 %) have been working for Aspira 2 or less years. The College plans to further expand its teaching staff number as its current computer engineering student body progresses to a third year of undergraduate programme.

The qualifications of the teaching staff seem to be appropriate for the delivery of existing undergraduate and graduate programmes, as well for intended learning outcomes for the current number of enrolled students. However, the College has 89 external teacher associates (out of which 44 assistants) which is significantly higher than full-time faculties, technical, administrative and support staff together (MOZVAG, Table 4.1.b).

It would be advisable to increase the number of teaching staff in the vocation of a college professor.

The ratio of the total employed teachers and associates (24) to the total number (319,5) of enrolled students (where the number of part-time students is multiplied by coefficient by 0,5) is 1:13,3 which is in line with prescribed recommendations (less than 1 to 30) in the Ordinance on the Content of a License and Conditions for Issuing a License for Performing Higher Education Activity, Carrying out a Study Programme and Re-accreditation of Higher Education Institution.

Data from MOZVAG (Table 4.3) shows that employed teachers' workload is in line with relevant legislation and policies – all of them have less than 540 standardized teaching hours. However, significant teaching workload is transferred to external associates whose teaching hours data is not fully transparent.

The number of courses per teacher in one study programme vary from 1 to 8 (MOZVAG Table 4.4). In International Hotel and Tourism Management programme one teacher in the field of economy teaches 8 courses although there are 15 other teachers in the same field (economy) averaging 1-2 courses.

12 faculty members (of total 123 full-time and part time faculty, administration and support staff) have got PhDs and 6 are currently enrolled in PhD programmes. However, the Expert Panel is not fully convinced that some external associates that are responsible for mandatory courses have adequate quality. It would be advisable that all teachers have both academic background and work experience in that field and have done scientific and professional papers.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- The Expert Panel suggests continuing with the high level of teachers' qualifications, with solid academic and business background.
- Enable more time for conducting professional/scientific activity and personal development for full-time teachers.
- Hire more full-time teachers.

#### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

#### **4.2. The higher education institution ensures appropriate quality of external associates.**

#### Analysis

The external associates carry a significant amount of teaching effort at Aspira, but the amount of teaching hours is not fully transparent. More specifically, Aspira has a list of 89 external associates (not including foreign Guest Lecturers) from different professional backgrounds in the industry and academia, and most of them have some work experience. In general, this contributes to the richness and the quality of the programmes with relevant work experience. However, the Expert Panel is not convinced that some of external associates' work experience is relevant for the courses they teach (e.g. Sport Management).

External associates come from different background and work experiences, but the Hotel and Tourism Management study programme has the most relevant external associates. However, out of 89 external associates for a majority of them (here not including foreign Guest Lecturers) there is very little evidence that they have access to and use of latest research, trends and labor market findings.

Moreover, the Expert Panel concluded that external associates are insufficiently involved in relevant conferences, and they do not generate enough professional and scientific papers where latest research, trends and labor market findings would be collected and analyzed. Rather, it seems like Aspira's primarily motivation for the engagement of external associates is their lower costs in comparison to full-time employed teachers.

During a visit to the Aspira's library, the Expert Panel gained an insight into all final and graduation theses, and it was apparent that external associates are participating in the supervision of those. However, there were a few theses with insufficient quality and quantity content.

There are examples of good cooperation between Aspira and business organizations/institutions where external associates are employed. The professional practice for Aspira's students is especially developed for the Hotel and Tourism Management study programme.

### Recommendations for improvement

1. The Expert Panel suggests improvement of quality selection criteria for hiring external associates.
2. Educate external associates on how to help students with the quality and quantity content improvement of final and graduation theses.

### Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

**4.3. Teacher recruitment, advancement and re-appointment is based on objective and transparent procedures which include the evaluation of excellence.**

## Analysis

Based on an overview of available documentation and discussions with the Aspira Management, the Expert Panel concluded that the practice of teacher appointment and recruitment is in line with the legislation and internal regulations (Croatian Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education, Decision on requirements for evaluation of teaching and professional activities in the process of election to teaching titles, etc.).

Teachers go through the regular peer-review, performance appraisal and evaluation/grading from students. The peer-review and performance appraisal process involve assessment of teaching practice and supervisor's feedback and evaluation. Students evaluate each teacher through a regular survey.

However, it is not clear how the professional and research activities of teachers are evaluated since there is no or very little professional/research activity at Aspira.

Employment of new teaching staff is carried out in accordance with the needs of the study programmes. However, since Aspira recently employed teachers with a very wide range of different teaching, research and working level experience the selection criteria is not fully clear.

With regard to general hiring procedure, Aspire posts job advertisement at the National Gazette, Aspira web-page, and the Croatian Employment Service. Then, CVs are reviewed, and the selected ones are invited for the second round – evaluation of candidates (Self-evaluation, p. 74). Every potential candidate has the opportunity to personally present its qualifications. The best candidates are offered an opportunity to hold a pilot lecture for the students.

College staff go through the peer-review and the performance appraisal process with the Aspira Management. Moreover, Aspira allows the teacher promotion even before regular five years schedule from the last election, if they have achieved exceptional work results (published papers, positively evaluated teaching activities by students etc.) (Self-evaluation, p. 74). But, it is not clear how exceptional work results are measured/scored and taken into account in the promotion of teachers into higher grades (e.g. successful projects vs. authorship of textbooks vs. publishing activities vs. teaching)?

Indicators of excellence do include professional and teaching activities, but it is not clear for scientific activities.

Promotion of teachers into higher grades reflects the strategic goals of Aspira.

### Recommendations for improvement

1. The Expert Panel suggests improvement of internal policy and standards in hiring, retaining and promoting teacher's excellence;
2. Make clear guidelines how to measure and compare important achievements in different areas when considering promotion of the teachers into higher grades (research, publishing, teaching).

### Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

#### **4.4. The higher education institution provides support to teachers in their professional development.**

### Analysis

Aspira Management claims that "there is unlimited budget" for supporting professional development of teachers in different ways from financing various activities to providing support for attending external conferences. However, according to the financial report for 2018 (MOZVAG, table 4.12.) Aspira's expenditures for Professional Training were only 6.664,42 HRK.

Aspira faculty are encouraged to improve their teaching competencies based on the peer-review recommendations and the results of student satisfaction surveys.

Aspira teachers (full-time employees and external associates) have no or very limited participation in mobility programmes, project, etc. One of the reasons for such a low participation response is due to teachers' work overload with their second job, since most of them are external associates that are working at other institutions full time.

### Recommendations for improvement

- The Expert Panel suggests to continue to expand development opportunities for the improvement of teaching competencies within and outside the institution.
- Although there is a Management's claim that they encourage Aspira's teachers to use different opportunities for the development and participation in scientific or professional projects, it should put more emphasis on building relationship and seize opportunities for teaching mobility within EU, based on ERASMUS+ program.

### Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

**4.5. The space, equipment and the entire infrastructure (laboratories, IT service, work facilities etc.) are adequate for the delivery of the study programmes and ensure the achievement of intended learning outcomes and the implementation of professional and/or scientific activity.**

#### Analysis

Aspira made significant efforts to ensure the facilities and infrastructure can support new study programmes' curricula and learning outcomes (e.g. Gastronomy and Computer Engineering), providing distinguished educational environment (computer hardware and software, kitchens for practical gastronomy classes) in line with strategic goals. Besides its facilities in Split, Aspira recently opened its state-of-the-art premises in Zagreb. However, as requested by the teaching staff and students there is a strong demand for more parking spaces.

Aspira Management has plans for additional expansion of its infrastructure capacity in order to address the planned increase of enrolled students in new study programmes.

Both locations (Split and Zagreb) have 1.181 m<sup>2</sup>: with 12 classrooms, 3 teacher labs/practicums, 3 computer rooms (with 64 computers), 3 rooms for students' activities and 8 teaching-shared offices (MOZVAG, Table 4.8). Moreover, both locations have quality professional kitchens for gastronomy classes. Therefore, the Expert Panel's conclusion is that the equipment and the entire infrastructure are appropriate for the delivery of study programmes and ensuring the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

The space, equipment and the entire infrastructure of Aspira is satisfactory.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- The Expert Panel suggests maintain the same high level of quality of provided infrastructure.

#### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

**4.6. The library and library equipment, as well as access to additional resources ensure the literature necessary for ensuring high-quality of study and scientific and teaching activity.**

#### Analysis

At the Split location there is a library, whose size is 30 square meters (MOZVAG, Table 4.10). In addition to that library, students and teachers are also entitled to use the

University of Split Library to enhance their scientific research work (Self-evaluation, p. 82).

However, students at the Zagreb location do not have adequate access to library and library equipment, thus the Expert Panel suggests improvement in this area.

Through the University of Split Library, Aspira's students and teachers have access to databases and journals (e-sources): Embase, MEDLINE, Food Science and Technology Abstracts (FSTA), American Journal of Gastroenterology, Evidence-Based Practice, HeinOnline izdavača William S. Hein & Co., Project Muse: Basic Research Collection, RSC Gold, Cambridge Journals and Taylor & Francis Subject Collections, APS Journals, EBSCO Database Package (Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, SocINDEX with Full Text, CINAHL with Full Text, Master File Premier), EconLit, Emerald eJournals Premier, Evidence Based Medicine Reviews (EBMR), IOPscience extra, MathSciNet, Scopus, WoS Core Collection, WoS Citation Connection, WoS ESCI Backfiles, JHCD, ProQuest Central and SciTech Premium Collection.

The same should be provided for students and teachers in Zagreb.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- The Expert Panel suggests to ensure the same access to library and library equipment for students in Zagreb.

#### Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

### **4.7. The higher education institution rationally manages its financial resources.**

#### Analysis

Aspira is a private higher education institution, which does not receive state budget funding, and almost all of the funding is secured through tuition income (from both College study programmes and Life-long-learning programmes). As stated in MOZVAG table 4.11, it has been operating profitably for the last few years.

Based on the collected documents and Management interviews, there is evidence of Aspira's financial sustainability and efficiency in all aspects of its activities.

Aspira as a private higher education institution has the right to retain some information regarding its business/financial performance. The Expert Panel has no reason to suspect anything different than that Aspira manages its financial resources transparently, efficiently and appropriately.

Aspira has no significant income from additional public sources of funding; from national budget income, or another public budget income (local) in 2017 and 2018 (MOZVAG, Table 4.11).

Some limited additional sources are secured through cooperation with the industry and local community, as described in the Self-evaluation document pg. 85.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- The Expert Panel suggests additional efforts to increase funding through national and EU projects.

#### Quality grade

Satisfactory level of quality

### V. Professional and/or scientific activity

**5.1. Teachers and associates employed at the higher education institution are committed to the achievement of high quality and quantity of professional and/or scientific research.**

#### Analysis

A very low publication record is accounted, evidenced in the Analytic Supplement of the Self-evaluation Report (Table 5.1 based on MOZVAG data) which presents statistics on various types of publications by ASPIRA teachers in the last 5 years. For example, there are only 0,14 peer-reviewed publications from scientific and professional events/conferences/in proceedings of scientific and professional events/conferences per academic per year. Even fewer professional papers are published (0,07 per year and employee). A larger amount of publications is stated in the Self-evaluation Report (74 publications). The Report refers to a mismatch between the numbers as the MOZVAG data does not take into account publications from lectures. No time frame is provided for the statistics in the Report, so that the Expert Panel was not able to validate the claim.

ASPIRA claims that there is no budget restriction with respect to conference attendance by teachers. It seems, however, that this does not incentivise teachers to attend conferences and take opportunities to publish papers at these events. In order to address this issue, the College leadership promotes publications through its Human Resource Development Strategy, and it also awards the best scientific work per year. In addition, a Commission for Scientific Research and Professional Activities of the Teachers was established at the end of 2018. Overall, however, these structures, procedures and



incentives do not yet provide results that can be expected from a College so that the efficiency of the instruments should be reviewed.

ASPIRA promotes publications independently of the study programme/discipline. No evidence has been found that the College keeps records on the distribution of publications by study programme/discipline.

The Self-evaluation Report highlights a number of national and international conferences at which teachers have published professional and scientific papers. The extent to which conferences are used for the promotion of professional or scientific achievement can be considered as very low, given the size of the overall teaching team (teachers and associates).

#### Recommendations for improvement

- Conduct interviews with teachers to identify how they can be motivated to increase the number and quality of publications.
- Review existing measures that aim to incentivize publications.
- Promote attendance of and publications at national and international conferences.

#### Quality grade

Unsatisfactory level of quality

### **5.2. The higher education institution proves the social relevance of its professional and/or scientific research and transfer of knowledge.**

#### Analysis

While the Self-evaluation Report only vaguely presents evidence on ASPIRA's considering of the needs of society, local community and the labour market, strong evidence was found during the site visit that the HEI does not only monitor needs, but also uses the obtained information to enhance its study programmes. With respect to the usage of these needs for professional and/or scientific research and knowledge transfer, however, no evidence was found, potentially reflecting the very limited activity in this field. In this respect, one external stakeholder stated the wish that ASPIRA should publish industry reports to drive the industry.

Cooperation with reputable IT companies is mentioned in the Self-evaluation Report as ASPIRA's way of ensuring knowledge and technology transfer. In addition, the dual roles of external associates (some of them being company owners) support the transfer of results to industry as well. All the information given in the Self-evaluation Report, however, are focused on knowledge and technology transfer in IT (respectively the

Computer Engineering study programme). No evidence of ASPRIA's other programmes/fields of activity (e.g. Sports Management) has been found. Overall, the transfer activities can be regarded as very limited and too focused on the two mentioned channels. This limited transfer activity has been confirmed in a meeting with external stakeholders that were not able to mention contributions of ASPIRA beyond the education of the workforce of tomorrow.

ASPRIA participates in 7 international organisations with further active roles in national and international professional organisations being taken by the College's teachers. The teachers engage in a variety of activities, including round tables, public discussions, and interviews in the media, radio and TV. During the site visit, this activity was confirmed by some external stakeholders who mentioned the involvement of ASPIRA teachers in committees and other formal bodies (e.g. in the IT group at the Chamber of Commerce).

#### Recommendations for improvement

- Built upon the successful approach that is used to adapt study programmes to external needs to develop a strategy on how ASPIRA can align its research and knowledge transfer to the needs of society.
- Communicate to teachers the various channels that exist for professional and scientific research and the transfer of knowledge (e.g. contract research, collaborative research, involvement in committees, joint publications, joint ventures, etc.).

#### Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

### **5.3. Professional and/or scientific achievements of the higher education institution have been recognized in the regional, national and international context.**

#### Analysis

The Self-evaluation Report presents 17 awards and recognitions given to ASPIRA teachers and associates. It has to be noted though that 8 of these were awarded before the foundation of ASPIRA. In other words, these are linked to the individual working at ASPRIA, but have not been a result of the work at the institution. Considering the size and age of the institution, the number of awards is considered relatively low.

The Self-evaluation Report presents 9 projects of ASPIRA with only one of these having been active during the time of the site visit. Generally speaking, ASPIRA engages in social projects, international projects (e.g. Interreg, a project with the U.S. Embassy) as well as national projects. During the site visit, the limited engagement in projects has also been

mentioned by the ASPIRA leadership as well as increasing efforts to enlarge the number of projects. Especially given the institution's ambition to drive research and entrepreneurship in addition to the core mission of teaching (see mission statement), more efforts are required in this respect.

Teachers and associates take part in national and international conferences.

Separated by study programmes, the Self-evaluation Report highlights a number of conferences and trainings at which ASPIRA teachers have taken part in the past 5 years. During the site visit, the Expert Panel also received an extensive list of all event participations of ASPIRA teachers. This list, however, also included many events that have taken place before the foundation of ASPRIA College. Overall, the Expert Panel considers that the participation of ASPIRA teachers in national and international conferences is very limited. This evaluation was confirmed by teachers during the site visit. While the College claims to fund all trips, no evidence was found that an extensive usage of these opportunities was made. This is also reflected in ASPIRA's budget which only accounts around € 900 in Training costs.

17 memberships of APIRA teachers and associates exist, in addition to editorships in 8 national and international journals. The 8 editorships are held by 4 members of the ASPRIA teaching team with one tenured professor accounting for a large share of the editorships.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- Increase/incentivize activities for the acquisition of publicly or privately funded research projects (e.g. build relationships to join projects as partner, not leader);
- Promote the recognition of ASPIRA activities.

#### Quality grade

Minimum level of quality

### **5.4. Professional and/or scientific activities and achievements of the higher education institution improve teaching.**

#### Analysis

The Self-evaluation Report highlights that Computer Engineering students are working with Raspberry Pi to learn programming. Given the low research activity at Aspira, research equipment is also limited.

According to the documentation submitted by Aspira, students are involved in joint publications with the College staff. With respect to publications, the Report presents 7 co-authored papers since 2013 with 2 more in progress. Given that the data represents the

last 5 to 6 years and the entire student base, the Expert Panel considers this activity as very limited.

Likewise, evidence of student integration in ASPIRA's publicly funded projects is very limited. Only one thesis has been presented to be linked to a publicly funded project.

Both, teachers employed at ASPIRA as well as external teachers confirmed that an award exists for the best scientific work.

Overall, it can be summarised that the link between professional/scientific activities and achievements and teaching are very limited and rather ad-hoc than strategically developed and managed. Given ASPIRA's ambition to address all three missions (teaching, research, entrepreneurial), the College's performance in this standard is unsatisfactory. The analysis of the Expert Panel confirms the statement in the Self-evaluation Report that ASPIRA has identified the need to get students more involved in projects and that plans were made to promote this. The Team encourages ASPIRA to put special emphasis on this to promote practice-based learning, a key component of ASPIRA's teaching and learning approach.

#### Recommendations for improvement

- Develop procedures to integrate students in publicly and privately funded projects (the institution may even consider integrating students in the writing of proposals);
- Increase engagement with internship providers (e.g. consulting, research projects, creation of joint industry reports) and use the results to enhance teaching;
- Consider an award for professional/scientific achievements specifically for junior teachers.

#### Quality grade

Unsatisfactory level of quality

## APPENDICES

### 1. Quality assessment summary - tables

<i>Quality grade by assessment area</i>				
<i>Assessment area</i>	Unsatisfactory level of quality	Minimum level of quality	Satisfactory level of quality	High level of quality
<i>I. Internal quality assurance and the social role of the higher education institution</i>			X	
<i>II. Study programmes</i>			X	
<i>III. Teaching process and student support</i>			X	
<i>IV. Teaching and institutional capacities</i>		X		
<i>V. Professional and/or scientific activity</i>		X		

<i>Quality grade by standard</i>				
<i>I. Internal quality assurance and the social role of the higher education institution</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>Minimum level of quality</i>	<i>Satisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>High level of quality</i>
1.1. The higher education institution has established a functional internal quality assurance system.		X		
1.2. The higher education institution implements recommendations for quality improvement from previous evaluations.			X	
1.3. The higher education institution supports academic integrity and freedom, prevents all types of unethical behaviour, intolerance and discrimination.			X	
1.4. The higher education institution ensures the availability of information on important aspects of its activities (teaching, professional and/or scientific and social role).		X		
1.5. The higher education institution understands and encourages the development of its social role.				X
1.6. Lifelong learning programmes delivered by the higher education institution are aligned with the strategic goals and the mission of the higher education institution, and social needs.				X

<i>Quality grade by standard</i>				
<i>II. Study programmes</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>Minimum level of quality</i>	<i>Satisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>High level of quality</i>
2.1. The general objectives of all study programmes are in line with the mission and strategic goals of the higher education institution and the demands of the labour market.			<b>X</b>	
2.2. The intended learning outcomes at the level of study programmes delivered by the higher education institution are aligned with the level and profile of qualifications gained.		<b>X</b>		
2.3. The higher education institution provides evidence of the achievement of intended learning outcomes of the study programmes it delivers.			<b>X</b>	
2.4. The HEI uses feedback from students, employers, professional organisations and alumni in the procedures of planning, proposing and approving new programmes, and revising or closing the existing programmes.			<b>X</b>	
2.5. The higher education institution ensures that ECTS allocation is adequate.		<b>X</b>		
2.6. Student practice is an integral part of the study programmes.				<b>X</b>

### *Quality grade by standard*

<i>III. Teaching process and student support</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>Minimum level of quality</i>	<i>Satisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>High level of quality</i>
3.1. Admission criteria or criteria for the continuation of studies are in line with the requirements of the study programme, clearly defined, published and consistently applied.			<b>X</b>	
3.2. The higher education institution gathers and analyses information on student progress and uses it to ensure the continuity and completion of study.			<b>X</b>	
3.3. The higher education institution ensures student-centred learning.			<b>X</b>	
3.4. The higher education institution ensures adequate student support.			<b>X</b>	
3.5. The higher education institution ensures support to students from vulnerable and under-represented groups.				<b>X</b>
3.6. The higher education institution allows students to gain international experience.		<b>X</b>		
3.7. The higher education institution ensures adequate study conditions for foreign students.		<b>X</b>		
3.8. The higher education institution ensures an objective and consistent evaluation and assessment of student achievements.			<b>X</b>	
3.9. The higher education institution issues diplomas and Diploma Supplements in accordance with the relevant regulations.			<b>X</b>	
3.10. The higher education institution is committed to the employability of graduates.			<b>X</b>	



<i>Quality grade by standard</i>				
<i>IV. Teaching and institutional capacities</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>Minimum level of quality</i>	<i>Satisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>High level of quality</i>
4.1. The higher education institution ensures adequate teaching capacities.			X	
4.2. The higher education institution ensures appropriate quality of external associates.		X		
4.3. Teacher recruitment, advancement and re-appointment is based on objective and transparent procedures which include the evaluation of excellence		X		
4.4. The higher education institution provides support to teachers in their professional development.		X		
4.5. The space, equipment and the entire infrastructure (laboratories, IT service, work facilities etc.) are adequate for the delivery of the study programmes and ensure the achievement of intended learning outcomes and the implementation of professional and/or scientific activity.			X	
4.6. The library and library equipment, as well as access to additional resources ensure the literature necessary for ensuring high-quality of study and scientific and teaching activity.		X		
4.7. The higher education institution rationally manages its financial resources.			X	

<i>Quality grade by standard</i>				
<i>V. Professional and/or scientific activity</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>Minimum level of quality</i>	<i>Satisfactory level of quality</i>	<i>High level of quality</i>
5.1. Teachers and associates employed at the higher education institution are committed to the achievement of high quality and quantity of professional and/or scientific research.	X			
5.2. The higher education institution proves the social relevance of its professional and/or scientific research and transfer of knowledge.		X		
5.3. Professional and/or scientific achievements of the higher education institution have been recognized in the regional, national and international context.		X		
5.4. Professional and/or scientific activities and achievements of the higher education institution improve teaching.	X			

## 2. Site visit protocol

**Reakreditacija**  
**Visoke škole za menadžment i dizajn**  
**"Aspira"**

**Re-accreditation of the**  
**College of Management and Design**  
**"Aspira"**

### ***Edukacija Stručnog povjerenstva***

### ***Training of Panel members***

	<b>Ponedjeljak, 8. travnja 2019.</b>	<b>Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> April 2019</b>
<b>11:00 – 14:30</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predstavljanje AZVO-a</li> <li>• Predstavljanje sustava visokog obrazovanja u RH</li> <li>• Postupak reakreditacije</li> <li>• Standardi za vrednovanje kvalitete</li> <li>• Kako napisati Završno izvješće</li> <li>• Priprema povjerenstva za posjet Visokoj školi (rasprava o Samoanalizi i popratnim dokumentima) – <i>prvi dio</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation of ASHE</li> <li>• Overview of Higher education system in Croatia</li> <li>• Re-accreditation procedure</li> <li>• Standards for the evaluation of quality</li> <li>• How to write Final report</li> <li>• Preparation of the expert panel members for the site visit (discussion on the Self-evaluation report and supporting documents ) – <i>part 1</i></li> </ul>
<b>14:30 – 15:30</b>	<b><i>Ručak</i></b>	<b><i>Lunch</i></b>
<b>15:30 – 18:00</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nastavak pripreme povjerenstva za posjet – <i>drugi dio</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation of the expert panel members for the site visit – <i>part 2</i></li> </ul>

**PROTOKOL POSJETA**

Utorak, 9. travnja 2019.

*Mjesto događanja:*

**Domovinskog rata 65, Split**

**VISIT PROTOCOL**

Tuesday, April 9<sup>th</sup> 2019

*Venue:*

**Domovinskog rata 65, Split**

	Utorak, 9. travnja 2019.	Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> April 2019.
<b>09:00 – 10:00</b>	Sastanak s dekanom i prodekanima	Meeting with the dean and vice-deans
<b>10:00 – 11:00</b>	Sastanak članova Stručnog povjerenstva ( <b>Analiza dokumenata</b> )	Internal meeting of the panel members ( <b>Document analysis</b> )
<b>11:00 – 11:55</b>	Sastanak s nastavnicima (u stalnom radnom odnosu koji nisu voditelji studijskih programa i nisu na rukovodećim mjestima)	Meeting with full-time employed teachers that are not heads of study programmes and part of the management of HEI (open meeting)
<b>12:00 – 12:55</b>	Sastanak sa studentima (otvoren sastanak za sve studente)	Meeting with the students (open meeting for all students)
<b>13:00 – 13:45</b>	Sastanak s Alumnijima	Meeting with Alumni
<b>14:00 – 15:30</b>	Radni ručak Stručnog povjerenstva	Working lunch of the panel members
<b>15:45 – 16:45</b>	Sastanak s vanjskim dionicima - predstavnicima strukovnih i profesionalnih udruženja, poslovna zajednica, poslodavci, stručnjaci iz prakse, organizacijama civilnog društva	Meeting with external stakeholders - representatives of professional organisations, business sector/industry sector, professional experts, non-governmental organisations
<b>16:45 – 17:30</b>	Sastanak s vanjskim nastavnicima	Meeting with external lecturers
<b>17:30 – 18:30</b>	Organizacija dodatnog sastanka o mogućim otvorenim pitanjima <b>prema potrebi</b>	Organisation of additional meeting on potential open questions <b>if needed</b>

Meeting room is reserved from 18.00 till 21.00h

Rasprava članova stručnog povjerenstva, refleksija o prvom danu i priprema za drugi dan / Discussion between members of the expert panel, reflection on the first day of the site visit and preparation for the next day

**PROTOKOL POSJETA**  
**Srijeda, 10. travnja 2019.**

*Mjesto događanja:*  
**Domovinskog rata 65, Split**

**VISIT PROTOCOL**  
**Wednesday, April 10<sup>th</sup> 2019**

*Venue:*  
**Domovinskog rata 65, Split**

	<b>Srijeda, 10. travnja 2019.</b>	<b>Wednesday, 10th April 2019</b>
<b>09:00 – 10:00</b>	Sastanak članova Stručnog povjerenstva ( <b>Analiza dokumenata</b> )	Internal meeting of the panel members ( <b>Document analysis</b> )
<b>10:00 – 10:45</b>	Sastanak članova Stručnog povjerenstva s:  voditeljem jedinice za osiguravanje i unapređenje kvalitete, voditeljem centra za poslovne karijere i podršku studentima voditeljem odjela za cjeloživotno učenje voditeljem ureda za međunarodnu suradnju ECTS koordinatorom	Meeting with the:  Head of Quality Assurance and Improvement Units, Head of Business Careers Centre and Student Support, Head of Lifelong Learning Department, Head of International Cooperation Office, HEIs ECTS coordinator
<b>10:50 – 12:00</b>	Sastanak s voditeljima studijskih programa	Meeting with Heads of study programmes
<b>12:00 - 13:30</b>	Radni ručak Stručnog povjerenstva	Working lunch
<b>13:30 – 15:30</b>	Obilazak visokog učilišta (knjižnica, IT učionice) i prisustvovanje nastavi. Obilazak poduzeća u kojima studenti obavljaju praksu u pratnji koordinatora stručne prakse s Visokog učilišta. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>hotel Radisson Blu Split</b>, Put Trstenika 19, Split</li></ul>	Tour of the HEI (library, IT services, classrooms) and class attendance. Visit to the companies that host students' traineeship - panel members will be accompanied by the coordinator for students' traineeship from HEI. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>hotel Radisson Blu Split</b>, Put Trstenika 19, Split</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Rugby klub Nada</b>, Zrinsko-Frankopanska 17, Split</li> <li>• <b>Sedam IT</b>, Smiljanićeva 2, Split</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Rugby klub Nada</b>, Zrinsko-Frankopanska 17, Split</li> <li>• <b>Sedam IT</b>, Smiljanićeva 2, Split</li> </ul>
<b>15:30– 16:00</b>	<i>Interni sastanak članova Stručnog povjerenstva</i>	<i>Internal meeting of the panel members</i>
<b>16:00 – 16:30</b>	<i>Organizacija dodatnog sastanka o mogućim otvorenim pitanjima <b>prema potrebi</b></i>	<i>Organisation of additional meeting on potential open questions <b>if needed</b></i>
<b>16:30 – 17:00</b>	Završni sastanak s dekanom i prodekanima	Exit meeting with the dean and vice-deans

Meeting room is reserved from 18.00 till 21.00h

Rasprava članova stručnog povjerenstva, refleksija o drugom danu i **ocjenjivanje standarda** / Discussion between members of the expert panel, reflection on second day of the site visit and **grading the Standards**

	<b>Četvrtak, 11. travnja 2019.</b>	<b>Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> April 2019</b>
<b>10:00 – 13:00</b>	Rad na Završnom izvješću	Drafting the Final report
<b>13:00 – 14:00</b>	Ručak	Lunch

Odlazak nakon ručka / Departure after lunch

## SUMMARY

College Aspira has begun with the efficient practice of its internal quality assurance system which has been well documented in most of its processes, including the strategic planning. However, the great amount of the quality system documentation is not a sufficient evidence of its effective implementation in practice. All strategic documents of Aspira should be more based on the feedback of its internal and external stakeholders, which has to be continually gathered and analysed. The best example of its good practice in that context are the lifelong learning programmes which are entirely aligned with the needs of labour market.

The general goals of all study programmes are essentially in line with the mission and strategic goals, although the strategic goals are not clearly defined. Nevertheless, a lack of a strategy plan hinders to assess whether the alignment of the study goals and the strategic goals could be improved. All learning outcomes at the course level have been redefined and linked with assessment process. However, there is still a lot of room for enhancement to fully correspond with level 6 (for undergraduate studies) and level 7 (for graduate studies). The changes in the study programmes have been done according to the suggestions from the Economic Council, especially in the field of student practice. The student practice is an integral part of the study programmes and the number of hours and ECTS has been systematically increasing. Furthermore, the Business Careers Centre and Student Support are doing a good job of preparing and connecting students to the employers.

In general, the student support is done well and the College staff is always available to the students. Part-time students can take online courses, but it is not clear how much can be done online without a formal regulation and permit. However, the students should be motivated and better informed about the mobility programmes. The College does an amazing job of ensuring support to students from vulnerable and under-represented groups through many compromises they have made to make it possible for those students to have a motivational educational experience.

Aspira's equipment and the entire infrastructure are appropriate for the delivery of study programmes and the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Moreover, the ratio of the total number of employed teachers and associates to the total number of enrolled students is in line with prescribed recommendations. However, the teaching staff is the weakest point. The College has an excessive number of external associates who carry significant teaching workload (although their engagement is not fully transparent) and some of them might not have an adequate working experience and/or teaching quality. Rather, it seems like Aspira's primary motivation for the engagement of external associates is their lower costs in comparison to full-time employed teachers. Furthermore, Aspira's teachers have a very limited participation in mobility programmes, international project, conferences, etc. One of the reasons for such a low participation

response is due to teachers' work overload at their second job, since most of them are external associates that are full time working at other institutions.

The link between professional/scientific activities and teaching are very limited and rather ad-hoc than strategically developed and managed. Given Aspira's ambition to address all three missions (teaching, research, entrepreneurship), the College's performance is unsatisfactory. The analysis confirms that the College has identified the need to get students more involved in projects and that plans were made to promote this. Moreover, there is a problem with a lack of scientific/professional publications by Aspira teachers and their participation in international conferences in the last 5 years.