RIINVEST COLLEGE

MANAGEMENT/ MA

REACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

June 2019, Prishtina

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: 6th of June 2019

Expert Team (ET) members:

- Prof. Dr. Milan Pol
- Prof. Dr. Magdalena Platis
- Prof. Dr. Vassilis Tsiantos
- Ms. Keti Tsotniashvili

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- Avni Gashi, Acting Director of KAA
- Shkelzen Gerxhaliu, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring
- Arianit Krasniqi, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Accreditation

Sources of information for the Report:

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER) submitted by Riinvest College;
- Information obtained during the site visit;
- Meetings conducted with the management of the institution, teaching staff, students, graduates, external stakeholders and employers of graduates;
- Supplementary documents requested by the ET.

Criteria used for institutional and program evaluations

- KAA Accreditation Manual

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1.2. Site visit schedule

6 June

08.30 Meeting at the reception of the hotel

09.00 – 10.30 Meeting with the management of the institution *(no slide presentation is allowed, the meeting is intended as a free discussion)*

10.30 – 11.30 Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative services

11.30 – 13.00 Meeting with the heads of study programs

13.00 – 13.50 Lunch break *(to be served at the institution)*

13.50 – 14.20 Visiting tour of the facilities and infrastructure

14.20 – 15.00 Meeting with teaching staff

15.00 – 15.50 Meeting with students

15.50 – 16.30 Meeting with graduates

16.30 – 17.10 Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders

17.10 – 17.25 Internal meeting – Expert Team and KAA

17.25 – 17.40 Closing meeting with the management of the institution

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1.3. A brief overview of the institution and program under evaluation

Riinvest College is a relatively young institution, founded in 2007 from members of Riinvest Institute in cooperation with a team of experts and academics, specialists in research and computers science from Austria. In SER, it is stated that:

- *The MA Management Program has 11 years of experience and is dedicated not only to new students graduated in the field of management but also to other graduates who are ambitious to study or practice management or leadership in organizaitons. The programme attracts in particular those in middle management who seek to advance in their career, who work in financial institutions, enterprises and public or private institutions, local or international and in marketing, and information companies and alike.*
- *The current program in MA Management contains two profiles: 1. Management and Marketing, and 2. Management of Financial Systems and Information Technology. The number of courses has been decreased from 13, as it used to be, to 11. Out of these, the first three courses are mandatory in every profile, in contrast to four that were in the previous program, and one of two elective courses.*

Riinvest College has a a lot of information available on the website at: https://www.riinvest.net/en/. Students can acces an institutional platform called My Riinvest based on a username and a password (https://my.riinvest.net/Login.aspx).

Riinvest College has developed a professional environment where students can benefit from a specific learning experience; the College is considered a small one, consisting of only 2 Departments and 3 programs, as the management of the institution is looking for qualitative development and not quantitative aspects of the activity.

The master program submitted for reaccreditation is very much connected to the bachelor program: Business Management, but clearly, the level of qualification, being different, many particularities can be identified.

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2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

2.1. Mission, objectives and administration

As stated in SER (pages 5-6):

- *The aim of the program is to provide advanced and contemporary studies of management, an approach that will enable students to apply their knowledge, skills and research methods as well as strategies within contemporary business organizations.*
- *The Program will provide analytical and strategic skills using academic literature in the college and independent learning by developing an independent, analytical and creative approach toward managerial problems within organizations and to face problems and challenges in the Kosovar and global setting.*

The mission of the college is described on the website (https://www.riinvest.net/en/about/):

The mission of Riinvest College is to provide high quality studies and research that develop experts for the benefit of Kosovo's development needs, with the capacity to compete globally.

In addition, *the vision of RIINVEST is to become a benchmark University in the region that offers programmes globally recognized for quality, development, and personalized educational services in Albanian and English in Economics, Business, ICT and governance. Riinvest will be recognised as an institution which cultivates creativity and entrepreneurship and ensures high employability of graduates; staff and students will represent a diverse cultural environment not only of Kosovo, but from other countries as well; attractive cultural and sports life of students supported by the infrastructure developed at campus that responds to the complex needs of the modern studying.*

Therefore, the mission of the master program is in compliance with the overall mission statement of the institution, paying a lot of attention to create through teaching and research a huge connection to local development in the context of the global competition. Relevant academic and professional advice has been considered in the process of defining learning outcomes of the program; the institution has developed good relationships with the private sector and business community. The research interest of the college is proven by the staff

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implication in projects: https://www.riinvest.net/en/projektet/. Here the current projects are described: *Entrepreneurial Universities for Industry Alliances / EUFORIA* (*The purpose of the project is to increase co-operation with businesses in order to influence how universities work and enable them*); *Sustainable Development Society, CONSUS* (*Connecting Science Society Collaborations for Sustainable Innovations*) - *This network aims to co-operate between the main "scientific" and "social" actors towards a more sustainable social, economic and environmental development in Kosovo, Albania and the wider Balkan region.*

Formal policies regarding the admission process of the students are publicly available, including: frequently asked questions, applications for bachelor studies, for transferred students, documents required for admission and funding possibilities.

Several regulation are publicly available, from the college Statute, to regulation for bachelor and master program, all being adopted in 2017, which shows that there is an institutional interest to update these documents: https://www.riinvest.net/en/about/rregulloret/.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

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2.2. Quality management

Quality monitoring and assurance is done by the quality office at the institutional level with the involvement of the department head. As mentioned in SER:

- *In Master studies, the office coordinates and maintains, in cooperation with the program leader, the entire process of quality assurance, conduct of lessons and the successful conduct of the program studies.*
- *With the aim of increasing the quality, after every module, the module and the teachers are evaluated by the students, whereas the results are analysed by the program leader and it is acted based on the needs emerged by the evaluation.*
- *The entire evaluation is done online, thus ensuring absolute anonymity and privacy to students.*

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- *Once the quality office has processed the evaluations, they are sent individually to professors and the program leader who then analyses them and consults with the professors for the necessary improvements. Additionally, survey data are collected by students, graduates, employers and are made public on the college webpage.*
- *Every module has its syllabus which includes the purposes, objectives, contents, tasks, and evaluation methods.*

Therefore, it is clear that staff participate in the evaluations and cooperate with reporting and improvement processes in their sphere of activity; in addition, there is a huge interest of the college in quality assurance issues. Evaluation processes are part of a planning process meant to generate improvement in teaching and cooperation with students.

A special questionnaire is designed for alumni and a set of questions are addressed to companies involved in internship programs with students; the feedback is integrated in pertinent changes.

Quality assurance is mostly managed at an institutional level: https://www.riinvest.net/en/zyra-cilesise/. Some results of the most evaluated professors are publicly available on the website, as well as the most evaluated students. There is an annual review of the program, based on students and staff (both academic and administrative) responses to questionnaires. Several examples are provided in SER in the introductory part.

The validation of the program is based on a program review which is done every three years. The procedures for reviewing are similar to those of drafting new programs, but suggested changes can be done directly: https://www.riinvest.net/en/zyra-cilesise/#1519657558256-4a23c9da-3ac2

There is a Quality Report annually elaborated with recommendations at the end structured for three levels: module, program and institutional, but there is no evidence what happens after the report is finished. The entire quality assurance process is self - monitored, through this report, but progress should also be part of the next report. The quality reports are presented at the Academic Council meetings 2 times a year for each semester; academic community formulate recommendations which are then integrated in the final quality reports for each program; comparative studies are generated over the years. Based on recommendations the improvement plan is designed.

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In 2015, the Guide on Quality Assurance was revised and renamed as Quality Assurance Regulation this document was revised 2018 and adopted in 2019, in accordance with the new Accreditation Manual by KAA and the new Administrative Guide 15/2018.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

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2.3. Academic staff

Teaching staff involved in teaching at MA is qualified in the field of lecture; most of them had graduated from an international university.

In SER it is mentioned that:

- *As needed, trainings and seminars are organized for the purpose of exchanging knowledge and increasing teaching capacities, whereas student evaluation is done after every module.*
- *In contrast to part-time staff, the full-time staff is engaged in broader academic activities, availability for consultations, organizing conferences, seminars and discussions.*

Therefore, discussion with the teaching staff revealed that at Riinvest College, what particularities are to be considered include the following ones: experienced professors, preoccupation in research ability to speak foreign languages, existence of international cooperation, academic freedom*, academic integrity and even staff loyalty.*

Students have appreciated how fast professors respond to their messages and requests, their availability for consultations, the quality of the teaching materials.

Community service is considered part of the work load of the entire academic community; studying the provide table, only few of the professors (7 out of 35 professors) deal with community engagement and the job is reflected in the distribution of time. As community

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service is the third mission of the university, the community should much more consider such activity.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Increase the motivation of faculty staff to get involved in research and community service.*

2.4. Educational process content

The study program is described, in SER, as following:

- *Teaching is conducted mainly through regular lectures and tutorials, which are realized through students' engagements with their seminar papers, individually or in groups, case studies from literature or real life as well as from their engagement in research work in projects or academic research.*
- *The program provides 120 ECTS credits, whereas the distribution of hours and ECTS construction is presented in the syllabus of every module.*
- *A number of teachers are continuously engaged in research projects in Riinvest Institute as well as other developmental and academic projects. This presents a good opportunity to share their experience with their students and to engage students in concrete projects.*
- *While writing the diploma thesis, in cooperation with the student, every student is appointed a mentor with whom they work on the thesis. With the aim of helping in writing the thesis, two guides have been designed, which help students with drafting proposals and the diploma thesis. The college continuously provides support for students during the process of writing their thesis, providing free seminars and trainings on writing, data analysis and presentation of work progress. Once the thesis is written, it is sent to the official in charge who checks the thesis for technical and structural issues in accordance with the guide before the thesis is sent for evaluation to the relevant commission.*

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The study program is modelled on qualification objectives. These include subject-related and interdisciplinary aspects as well as the acquisition of disciplinary, methodological and generic skills and competencies; the set of learning outcomes are divided into general ones, meaning more soft skills or transversal ones and specific to the study profile. Several efforts are made to increase students' employability - Career counselling: https://www.riinvest.net/en/karriera/ and business incubator: https://www.riinvest.net/en/inkubatori-i-biznesit-2/ . The study program complies with the National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

The student-teacher relationship is a partnership in which each assumes the responsibility of reaching the learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are explained and discussed with students from the perspective of their relevance to the students' development, at the beginning of each class and semester. Some characteristics are to be considered:

- *The program is based on a modular teaching, where professors look for applying contemporary research methods. There is a Free Access to international digjital libraries with over 12 million academic titles*
- *Interrelation of theory with case studies in local companies is really important;*
- *Close cooperation professor-students* means that the management should be strong enough to fight for a developing relationship with students, *regular supportive seminars for research.*

Teaching strategies are fit for the different types of learning outcomes programs. There are different teaching strategies from classical to online. Strategies of teaching and assessment are explained and incorporated in syllabi. All students in this program have the opportunity to participate in research projects at the Riinvest Institute as well as other developmental and academic projects. This is a good opportunity to share their experience with students and engage students in concrete projects.

Compliance level: 100 % Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

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2.5. Students

Students' recruitment is managed on the basis of clear procedures available at: https://www.riinvest.net/en/pranimi/. Scholarships are provided and described at: https://www.riinvest.net/en/pranimi/bursat/; unfortunately, the information is not in English. In SER is mentioned that:

- *Applicants have the opportunity to apply online or personally at college.*
- *Admission requirements are clear and publicly available;*
- *Students' previous experience count*
- *Relationships and experience in the industry are a strength of the college*
- *International experience is beneficial for the program development*
- *Speaking English staff and students open the research possibilities*
- *Employment rights after graduation appear.*

The study groups are dimensioned so as to ensure an effective and interactive teaching and learning process; at the master program, there is studying one groups of 50 students. Feedback is provided to students on their progress and success; effective procedures are being used to ensure that work submitted by students is original: the staff uses for the students' work the ACAEMIA plagiarism software.

Transfer of students is also regulated, the information being publicly available at: https://www.riinvest.net/en/pranimi/transferet/. Rights and obligations for students are important to be available in both English and Albanian.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Create an alternative option (probably a formal internal procedure) for students with special needs in order to respect the deadlines and the formal requirements.*
2. *Make visible the students' rights and obligation in both languages – Albanian and English.*

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2.6. Research

Libraries at Riinvest College represent an adequate environment for research and developing of the Riinvest Institute Database. Students get a lot of support from the academic staff in using international databases. There is an interest in fighting against plagiarism, so the college has provided the *ACADEMIA* software.

The research plan is adopted at institutional level; at the study program level, clear research objectives should be deducted from the main research direction of the program. This would mean that academic staff will be mainly supported in developing research activities in a focused area, with more clear and pertinent results.

Research is very much considered as an important obligation of the academic staff. The level of engagement of the staff in research is different, as incentives for research represent a weakness of the institutional context, due to the high competition. The set of the 12 case studies prepared by the academic staff is used in teaching. The Office of Riinvest Consulting is working great with businesses willing to cooperate with academics in research subjects, mainly in preparing a clear and functional business plan. Students provide in many cases desk research for different research projects. Riinvest provides training to students on project management, but during the discussion with the employers, it was revealed the need for the graduates to know much more in this area.

The program encourages staff and students to publish their research, to also participate in local and international conferences by supporting them financially. In addition, the college has also provided access to the JSTORE digital library which possesses more than 12 million articles which can be accessed for free by all students and staff.

Besides, policies should be clear for ownership of intellectual property and for commercialization of ideas developed by staff and students. There is a lot of room for improvement in this area.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Extend the training program for academic staff on project management to increase the success rate in research applications;*

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2. *Identify 3-5 research objectives correlated among them to reflect the main direction of research for the study program.*

2.7. Infrastructure and resources

At Riinvest College, regarding the infrastructure, some issues are important:

- *Modern rooms for lectures*
- *Electronic equipments*
- *Online electronic sources and systems*
- *Consistent fund of books*
- *Location in the centre of the city*

The existing resources are sufficient for the current need of the program, the infrastructure is elegant and adequate. There is a lot of room of improvement in the area of physical and digital resources for students with special needs.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. Create an investment plan for resources (physical and digital) for students with special needs.

3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

The program submitted might be a very successful one for a long term in the case of clear messages to the potential candidates. As it is right now, the program described in the SER looks more like a copy/paste program of the bachelor one, already existing. This is not because several set of standards could not have been evidence-based on the program achievements, but because many common issues are considered in both SER. The main recommendations are:

1. Identify 3-5 research objectives generated from the mission program statement;
2. Elaborate a program-based SWOT analysis for the master program (not on standards) in order to find out the differences between BA and MA;
3. Consider the standard– based recommendations.

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In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the study program *Management/MSc*, offered by **Riinvest College** is *Substantially compliant* with the standards included in the *KAA Accreditation manual* and, therefore, recommends *to accredit* the study program for a duration of *3* years with a number of *50* students to be enrolled in the program.

Expert Team

	Magdalena Platis	**24 of June 2019**
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

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