RIT KOSOVO (A.U.K) COLLEGE

INSTITUTIONAL RE-ACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

16th of May 2019, Prishtina

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: 15thth – 16th of May 2019

Expert Team (ET) members:

- Prof. Dr. Magdalena Platis
- Prof. Dr. Kristiina Tonnison
- Mr. Mikus Dubickis (Student Expert)

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 AUK 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 (Appendix 1).

Criteria used for institutional and program evaluations

- KAA Accreditation Manual

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1.2. Site visit schedule

15 May

19.45   Meeting at the Reception of the Hotel

20.00   Working dinner

16 May

08.30   Meeting at the reception of the hotel

09.00 – 10.20   Meeting with the management of the institution *(no slide presentation is allowed, the meeting is intended as a free discussion)*

10.20 – 11.20   Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative services

11.20 – 12.30   Lunch break

12.30 – 13.30   Meeting with the heads of study programs (Applied Arts and Sciences BSc)

13.30 – 14.30   Meeting with the heads of study programs (Professional Studies MSc)

14.30 – 15.10   Meeting with students

15.10 – 15.50   Meeting with graduates

15.50 – 16.30   Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders

16.30 – 17.00   Visiting tour of the facilities and infrastructure

17.00 – 17.10   Internal meeting – Expert Team and KAA

17.10 – 17.20   Closing meeting with the management of the institution

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1.3. A brief overview of the institution under evaluation

RIT Kosovo (A.U.K) College is a private and non-profit higher education institution, founded in 2003 and also supported by the U.S. Organization, "The American University in Kosovo Foundation Inc," registered in the County of New York, State of New York. It has developed study programs only in English; the partnership with *Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in New York* made RIT Kosovo (A.U.K) College to provide the same degree, the same syllabus, the same exams and grading standards to its students. Its institutional mission reveals the commitment to developing Kosovo's economy through education. RIT Kosovo (A.U.K.) provides seven concentrations, four minors, and four immersions. Students create undergraduate programs from two or more professional areas of study with a strong foundation in the social sciences, through RIT's innovative School of Individualized Study. Students can choose two out of seven concentrations, including: Economics and Statistics, Management and Entrepreneurship, Graphic Design & Multimedia, Web & Mobile Computing (IT), Public Policy & Governance, Peace and Conflict Studies, Energy Policy Studies (as mentioned in SER, page 6). In addition, students can choose one minor from the following areas: Economics, Public Policy, English, International Relations.

RIT Kosovo mainly offers a program at a bachelor level called *Bachelor of Science (BS) degree in Applied Arts and Science*, several master programs (over 70), as well as 6 PhD programs at RIT main campus; the university also offers an associate degree (AAS) called *Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree in Applied Arts and Science*. Guidance and support for the institution toward its mission are provided by the Board of Trustees; its members are responsible for reviewing all initiatives that relate to achievement of the organization's mission; securing the organization's assets; reviewing and approving the organization's annual operating budget, key policies and procedures of the organization, and its strategic plan; appointing and selecting the organization's authorized representative(s).

At the same time, the *Academic Senate* is committed to ensuring the academic integrity of the institution and enhancing the role of the faculty in academic and professional matters. The *Student Government* look for improving the quality of students' life at RIT Kosovo and fights to become a structure through which the student body may collectively influence decisions about student activities, roles, curricula, and other interests.

To be mentioned that the CAMPUS occupies 2.1 hectares (5.19 acres) in the Gërmia neighbourhood of the capital city, Prishtina, in Europe's youngest nation, The Republic of Kosovo (2008).

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2. INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

The institutional evaluation consists of 11 sub headings through which the administration, organisation and management of the institution, as well as teaching and research are assessed.

2.1. Public mission and institutional objectives

The institution has not defined a mission statement that would include the three main pillars: teaching, research and community service (S 1.1.). The information gathered during the evaluation visit confirms that the mission of the HEI has been defined and revised, based on a consultation process involving external and internal stakeholders (S 1.2.). Members of the academic community of the HEI (S 1.3.) recognize the mission, although, they agree that the institution is in the transformation process from being mainly a "teaching University". The institutional mission only partially guide strategic planning, decision making, and operations of the institution (S 1.4.). An emphasis on the research and the 3rd mission (service to society) would help strengthen the other pillars. At the same time, it should be noted, that the commitment of the academic community and quality of the publications indicate a very high research potential. University – Industry cooperation is based mainly on internships, therefore, similar can be said about strengthening of the University-Industry cooperation and collaboration potential – the HEI is exceptionally well recognized by the stakeholders. Medium and long term institutional objectives are consistent with and support the mission (S 1.5.), although some of them should be revised by applying SMART principles.

The institutional mission is brief, clear, measurable and partially reflects the uniqueness of the institution within the national higher education system and within the European Higher Education Area (PI 1.1.). In addition, the revision of vision statement: "RIT Kosovo (A.U.K) will be a leading international university whose excellence in academic programs, educational outcomes, and research best supports the professional achievements and personal growth of its students and the advancement of society in Kosovo, the region, and the world" should be considered. As it was noted, the particular HEI already is a leader in the region, thus it is still unclear whether it is reasonable goal of becoming a world leader, especially considering HEIs role in the perspective of RIT. Although the mission is periodically reviewed in the light of changing circumstances (PI 1.3.), the mission statement is not clear enough to ensure proper progress-evaluation towards the institutions' goals and objectives (PI 1.2.). Revision of the mission statement should be considered, so that it would also include aspects concerning both the research and the 3rd mission – service to society. In addition, emphasis on HEI's unique

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niche advantages would help guide it when allocating resources and making major program, project and policy decisions (PI 1.4.).

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *To revise the statements of mission and vision, and implement accordingly;*
2. *To apply SMART principles in the revision of HEIs objectives.*

2.2. Strategic planning, governance and administration

The HEI has a strategic plan for a period of five years (S 2.1.). Considering the information gathered during the evaluation visit, expert team believes that the strategic plan is drafted in close consultation with the academic community at the institution. However, it is not the case with the external stakeholders (external stakeholders who participated in the evaluation visit confirmed that they were not involved in the design of the strategic plan) (S 2.2.). As it can be seen in the sample Annual Implementation Plan, strategic plan is integrated with annual and longer term budget processes that provide for regular adjustments (S 2.3.). The strategic plan rather takes full and realistic account of aspects of the internal and external environment affecting the development of the institution (S 2.4.). The SER and information gathered during the visit confirms that the implementation of the strategic plan is monitored on a short and medium term targets, and outcomes are evaluated on a regular basis (S 2.5.). During the visit, expert team also found out that

- the institution has a decision making system and internal operating regulations in conformity with current legal provisions (S 2.6.);
- the election criteria and processes of the decision makers and other elected positions are clear, transparent and published in institutional regulations (S 2.7.);
- the responsibilities of the decision making bodies are defined in such a way that the respective roles and responsibilities for overall policy and accountability, the senior administration for management, and the academic decision making structures are clearly differentiated and followed in practice (S 2.8.).

Student representative – usually the president of the students' self-government, is a member of all decisional, executive and consultative bodies. Expert team did not find evidence of any violations of students' rights to represent their interests; however, as in other HEIs with a small

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number of students, it is always a challenge to engage them into representation of students' academic interests equally to social life activities (S 2.9.). The HEI has an administration that is rather effective in terms of organization, staffing levels and qualifications, and functions rigorously (S 2.10.). The responsibilities of administrative staff are clearly defined in position descriptions, and based on what expert team observed during the visit, responsibilities match the qualifications of the individual very well (S 2.11.).

The strategic plan is elaborated for short, medium and long terms, and is updated regularly based on operational developments, formative evaluation, and higher education context (PI 2.1.). Expert team did not find that the strategic plan would be directly linked to the information management systems that provides regular feedback on current activities, as well as progress in strategic initiatives through key performance indicators (PI 2.2.). At the same time, the team identified that the risk assessment is an integral component of planning strategies with appropriate mechanisms developed for risk minimization (PI 2.3.). The mission and strategic objectives are reflected in detailed planning and activities (PI 2.4.), however, considering the need to revise institutions mission and vision, objectives should also be revised accordingly. Expert team was assured that

- the decision making bodies regularly review their own effectiveness through internal audits, and implement plans for improvement in the way they operate (PI 2.5.);
- the main governing body establishes sub-committees (including members of the governing body, academic and administrative staff, students and external stakeholders) to give detailed consideration to major responsibilities such as finance and budget, staffing policies, strategic planning, quality assurance, facilities, etc. (PI 2.6.).
- administrative staff ensures that actions needed in their area of responsibility are taken in an effective and timely manner, anticipate issues and opportunities, and exercise initiative in response (PI 2.8.);
- administrative staff encourage cooperation in achievement of institutional goals and objectives within their areas of responsibility, provide leadership, and encourage and reward initiative of team members (PI 2.9.), although the recognition usually is non-financial;
- administrative staff work cooperatively with colleagues in other sections of the institution to ensure effective overall functioning of the organisation (PI 2.10.)

Student representatives do not make up for at least 25% of all decisional, executive and consultative bodies across the institution (PI 2.7.). Although, as by definition this is a challenge,

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HEI should move towards higher engagement of students in their academic life at the institution.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *To involve the external stakeholders in the strategic planning (so they are aware of that).*
2. *To establish the information management system that would provide regular feedback on activities, as well as progress in strategic initiatives through KPIs.*
3. *To assure student representation up for at least 25% of all decisional, executive and consultative bodies across the institution.*

2.3. Financial planning and management

Although the institution is aware of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, it can demonstrate that it has sufficient financial resources in the short (one year) and medium term (five years) to reach its mission as well as objectives set out in the strategic plan (S 3.1.). Another question is whether those relatively optimistic forecasts in the plan will be fulfilled, although, in addition to regular income, the HEI can be considered as being very successful at fundraising activities, grants, and projects (PI 3.1.). It has a potential to capitalize on the potential of external stakeholders even further.

The HEI has a realistic annual budget and a five-year budget, as well as financial policies, which address its financial sustainability (supervised by the Board of Trustees) (S 3.2.). Oversight and management of the institution's budgeting and accounting functions are carried out by a specialised office assigned to a senior administrator (Finance Director with oversight by Executive Director) (S 3.3.). There is an accurate monitoring of expenditure and commitments against budgets with reports prepared quarterly (S 3.4.). The procedure involves the following stakeholders – The Board of Trustees, Finance Committee and Executive Director. Considering the information gathered during the visit, as well as the sample audit report, expert team believes that the HEIs accounting systems comply with the accepted professional accounting standards and as far as possible attribute total cost to particular activities – the institution is audited twice a year by external auditors (S 3.5.).

Funds provided for particular purposes are used for those purposes and the accounting systems verify that this has occurred. In addition, for Cost Accounting purposes each department of the

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HEI has its particular account and Profit and Loss report can be generated accordingly (PI 3.2.). Any discrepancies from expenditure estimates are explained and their impact on annual budget projections are assessed – each expense at the HEI is initiated by the Department Supervisor and approved by the Finance Director and if necessary by the Executive Director. Any discrepancy of expenses is compared to the approved budget, while is addressed to respective authority according to the Authority Matrix, depending on the percentage of the deviance (PI 3.3.). Interviews with the representatives of HEI confirmed that sufficient delegation of spending authority is given to managers of organizational units within the institution for effective and efficient administration (PI 3.4.).

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations: -

2.4. Academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability

The expert team believes that, the institution fulfils values of academic freedom, institutional autonomy and ethical integrity (S 4.1.) through different RIT established policies including Principles of Academic Freedom (guided by the principles of academic freedom as articulated in the American Association of University Professor's, 1970), Compliance Policy and Code of Ethical Conduct, 2011) and Program Quality Assurance (n.d.). Meanwhile the team believes that further revision and/or adaptation of these documents should be considered. Accordingly, the code of ethics requires all internal stakeholders to act consistently with high standards of ethical conduct and to avoid plagiarism in research, teaching, performance evaluation, and in conduct of administrative duties, as well as to avoid conflicts of interest (S 4.2.). The expert team did not find any evidence that the standard 4.3. (The code is enforced through clear processes and mechanisms, and it applies to all staff and structural units in the institution) would be breached. The HEI has established a designated structure – the Conduct Committee, responsible for the analysis and resolution of any potential breaches in the code of ethics (S 4.4.). Expert team during the visit found, that the institution is applying the code of ethics and its associated processes and mechanisms on all activities related to management, administration, teaching and research. However, the results of its application are not made public (S 4.5.). Overall audited financial statements (https://kosovo.rit.edu/home/financial-statements.html) and some policies (https://kosovo.rit.edu/home/auk-policies.html) are made

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publicly available, meanwhile there are no self-evaluation reports and decisions of governing bodies available online (S 4.6.), while the Quality Policy is non-existent. The institution in its website is publishes clear, accurate, objective, relevant, accessible and detailed information regarding its academic staff, its research and academic activities, the programs it offers, the number of students enrolled, the intended learning outcomes of its programs, the qualifications they award, the diversity of teaching, learning and assessment methods, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to its students, graduate employment information, scholarship opportunities, as well as tuition and administrative fees (S 4.7.).

The processes and mechanisms for ethics and academic integrity are not regularly reviewed and modified (PI 4.1.), however, during the visit, it was confirmed that where possibilities of conflict of interest exist or may be perceived to exist, the persons concerned declare their interest and refrain from participation in decisions (PI 4.2.). The institution has an internal audit that is conducted by an external party (PWC) (PI 4.3.). The institution provides evidence of the internal and external auditing of its financial affairs; findings are made publicly available (https://kosovo.rit.edu/home/financial-statements.html) (PI 4.4.).

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Further revision and/or adaptation of RIT policies should be considered.*
2. *To make public (available online) the results of the code of ethics application, self-evaluation reports and decisions of governing bodies.*

2.5. Quality management

The HEI has a variety of documents related to quality assurance, while there is no actual Quality Policy that would describe the institutional quality assurance system, its processes, mechanisms, instruments, reporting, data collection, timeframes, quality cycle, responsibilities of all individuals and units involved in these processes (S 5.1.). Considering the specifics of the assessed HEI, the overall quality assurance framework is rather extraordinary. At the same time, during the visit experts were assured, that for the leadership and management of quality assurance processes there are adequate human, financial and material resources provided (S 5.2.). Both self-evaluation report and information gathered during the visit confirms that one of the strengths of the institution is its capacity to recognize mistakes and weaknesses and to use them as a basis for further planning of improvement (S 5.3.). It can be affirmed that quality

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assurance functions throughout the institution are integrated into normal planning and development strategies in a defined planning, implementation, assessment and review cycle, while the quality assurance system covers the whole range of institutional activities (S 5.4.). Despite the fact that additional materials on performance indicators used for the evaluation and benchmarking (and accordingly evaluation reports) were not provided, considering the collected information throughout interviews, the expert team believes that

- regular evaluations are carried out (S 5.5.),
- all the elements of the logic model are taken into account, and there is a continues improvement in performance (S 5.6.).

All academic and administrative units within the institution (including the governing body and senior management) participate in the processes of quality assurance and contribute to its continuous improvement (S 5.7.). There is no quality management office in the institution's central administration, however, expert team during the visit was assured that its functions are performed very well (their activities are clearly specified and effectively coordinated under the supervision of a representative of institutional management (S 5.10.)) and sufficient staff, resources, and administrative support are provided for fulfilling these functions (S 5.8.). There is no separate quality committee in the institution (S 5.9.), which should be established and involve all types of members of the academic community, including students. Common forms and survey instruments are used for similar activities across the institution (academic activity, student services, administration, and responses are used in the analysis of results including trends over time. Survey data is collected from students, staff, graduates, and employers; the results of these surveys are discussed, but not available online (S 5.11.). The expert team was not provided with the additional materials on performance requested during the visit, therefore it is not possible to assess whether the standard 5.12. (statistical data is being retained in an accessible central database and provided routinely to departments and units for their use in the preparation of reports on indicators and other tasks in monitoring quality) is met. The institution in the self-evaluation report asserts that only enrolment data are collected and retained in an accessible central database. At the same time considering the information gathered during the visit, there is a reason to believe, that the collected quality assurance data, is further used to guide enhancements and as a base for improvements (S 5.13) and the quality assurance arrangements are themselves regularly evaluated, reported on and improved (S 5.14.). Additionally, here the importance of RIT in quality assurance at RIT Kosovo should be mentioned – accordingly, the advantages due to validated knowledge transfer and disadvantages, due to rather limited autonomy for the RIT Kosovo.

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The information gathered during the visit confirms that the institution is supporting and facilitating training in the field of internal quality management for its entire staff regularly (PI 5.1.), improvements in performance and outstanding achievements are recognized (PI 5.2.), but – non-financially. As mentioned before, the institution during the visit was asked to provide the expert team with additional materials on performance indicators to assess whether:

- the objective measurement is identified for monitoring and evaluation of the performance of different units within the institution and of the institution as a whole and the format for specifying indicators and benchmarks is consistent across the institution (PI 5.3.).
- benchmarks for comparing the quality of performance are established for the institution as a whole, as well as for academic and administrative units, and these benchmarks include the past performance of the institution as well as include appropriate external comparisons (PI 5.5.).

As the information requested was not provided, the expert team cannot confirm that performance criteria 5.3. and 5.5. are met. The expert team finds that the overall information gathered during the visit, gives sufficient evidence to the fact that the students are involved in the design and implementation of quality assurance processes, mechanisms and instruments rather formally (PI 5.4.). As it has been mentioned before, this is a widely spread problem, especially in relatively small HEIs.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *To design a policy for quality assurance that would be also made public and form part of the HEIs strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders (see more: https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf).*
2. *A Quality Committee that would involve all types of members of the academic community, including students should be established.*
3. *To engage students in participating in the design of their academic life.*

2.6. Learning and teaching

Several policies have been adopted in quality assurance which apply to all academic programs and state clear regulations on learning and teaching, being requirements for delivering RIT

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programs in Kosovo. They all are developed, based on the same standards that are offered in the main campus, in Rochester. More than this, the university ensures that a range of quality indicators are monitored and measured to identify differences in quality between and within programs, and even between RIT Kosovo and other RIT campuses. Several policies available at https://kosovo.rit.edu/home/auk-policies.html describe processes related to teaching and learning areas, including the development of the curriculum; these policies are:

- *RIT Kosovo (A.U.K) Faculty and Staff Fund Policy;*
- *Whistleblower Policy;*
- *Adjunct Teaching Assistant Policy;*
- *Academic Program Profile;*
- *Curriculum Development Policy;*
- *Faculty Hiring Policy;*
- *Faculty Portfolios;*
- *General Education SLOs;*
- *University Housing Policy;*
- *University Writing Policy and Writing Across the Curriculum at A.U.K;*
- *Visiting Scholar Policy.*

Study programs are developed on clear learning outcomes and objectives. Interesting mapping among the program goals, the objectives and the learning outcomes is publicly available at https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/sois/sites/rit.edu.academicaffairs.sois/files/BS%20PLO.pdf.

The curriculum include subjects' weight expressed in credits which are not ECTS credits and disciplines distributed over the study period reflect only the American version.

In the SER, the self-evaluation team (page 45) showed that:

- *Program offered at RIT Kosovo is a US based degree which does not fall under Framework for Qualifications of European Higher Education Area but are harmonized and credits can be easily transferred within QF-EHEA.*
- *RIT Kosovo program falls within the framework identified in Kosovo Law of Higher Education, article 3 section 1.16, where it recognizes Middle States Commission on Higher Education, as part of US CHEA, and therefore is consistent within the National Framework for Qualifications.*

Nevertheless, the credit allocation for different subjects is presented in SER for the Bachelor program (pages 146-149) with ECTS credits in the curriculum design of the program. Syllabuses include learning outcomes, but competences achieved by a discipline are not stipulated; they are all very clear in terms of students' behaviour during teaching and exams,

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but not in terms of cognitive, technical or professional and affective-value competences achieved by a discipline. The university recognize (SER, page 51) that an extra step should be made to convert GPA based credits to ECTS during student exchange with Europe.

Teaching staff at the university is qualified for their specific teaching responsibilities and capable to use teaching strategies in concordance with the defined learning outcomes. Teaching staff is also involved in activities dedicated to improve their teaching effectiveness, especially through the Faculty Development Centre; its purpose *is to build an inclusive and sustainable teaching and learning environment by addressing faculty needs and interests in the areas of teaching effectiveness and professional development*, as clearly stated on the website - https://kosovo.rit.edu/home-fdc.html. Students have opportunities to study in flipped classroom, equipped with adequate technology, using web-based platforms, such as Pearson Education. Different quality surveys help the university management to identify proper improvement directions.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Involve students and partners in the curriculum design; the Curriculum Committee could have one student-member;*
2. *Revise all the procedures or up-date them, at least every 3-5 years (most of them were approved in 2011);*
3. *Revise the syllabuses as to express learning outcomes in the form of cognitive, technical or professional and affective-value competences achieved by every discipline.*

2.7. Research

In the SER is mentioned that:
- *RIT Kosovo is primarily a teaching institution;*
- *Professors are evaluated annually based on three pillars: teaching effectiveness, scholarship, and service to community;*
- *Research (as part of scholarship) is an integral part and are required to show evidence of professional development that may include, but is not limited to publication in refereed journals and/or through recognized publishing houses, presentations at professional meetings, juried and invited exhibitions or recitals;*

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- *Professional development may additionally include attendance at workshops or conferences, or other activities, such as reading or research that engage the faculty member in her or his area(s) of teaching;*
- *RIT Kosovo has established a Faculty Development Center that holds a series of academic activities to encourage self-development for faculty.*

The university does not have a research development plan being a primarily teaching higher education institution; therefore, indicators and benchmarks for research-performance targets are not yet developed. A formally adopted research budget to enable the achievement of its research plan is going to be adopted in the future. Nevertheless, in terms of equipment and facilities, the university provides proper conditions for further research development and staff engagement. In the Faculty Development Center (https://kosovo.rit.edu/home-fdc.html) established in 2015, the main goal is to develop new teaching approaches to academic staff for the purpose of meeting their students' learning needs; once the submitted program to the Senate will be approved, called *Faculty Professional Development Program* (SER, page 52), research will be integrated in the scholarship dimension of it; till that time, research area is not a central point of the current state of the institution.

Sufficient resources are available for achieving the proposed research objectives, not very ambitious at present; in the 2018 Annual Report available at https://kosovo.rit.edu/images/reports/RITK-Annual-Report--FY18.pdf the allocation of fund is exposed – only 17% for projects, the rest for staff and administration (35%) and instruction faculty (42%).

Research is validated through scientific and applied research publications. In additional documents provided after the visit to the expert team, all the publication from the college were presented at https://kosovo.rit.edu/faculty-publications.html; only 9 professors have recently been included with their publications. Therefore, there is no clear evidence that each academic staff member has produced at least an average of one scientific/applied research publication or artistic outcome/product per year for the past three years. The data base dedicated to research production has just started. Some teaching staff has included in their CV's information about their research experience, such as Albina Balidemaj (experience as research manager), but not all of them.

There is an interest in generating ethical preoccupation, as mentioned in the *Academic Program* at https://kosovo.rit.edu/doc/senate/Academic%20Program%20Profile.pdf where one of the five essential program outcome is ethical reasoning, meaning: *the ability to understand the ethical dimensions of thought, knowledge and behaviors; the ability to make positive contributions to our personal, professional and social lives; the ability to understand*

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that behavior has consequences for others; the ability to identify complexities of choices and behaviors beyond the simple categories of "right and wrong."

At the institutional level, *Whistleblower Policy* states rules for protection of individuals, including penalties for false reports, inappropriate conduct etc (https://kosovo.rit.edu/doc/policies/AUK%20Whistleblower%20Policy.pdf), approved by the Board of Trustees in 2012. There is no institutional structural unit to observe and evaluate the implementation of ethical principles in research activities. In addition, being part of RIT community, RIT Kosovo adheres also to its policy on Intellectual Property. - https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/policiesmanual/c030 .

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Elaborate a research development plan, considering the current potential of the academic community, with clear research indicators;*
2. *Create a budget allocation mechanism and formally adopt an annually research budget;*
3. *Revise Whistleblower Policy and create a specific procedure to ensure the safeguarding of ethical principles in research;*
4. *Create an institutional committee to evaluate and monitor the implementation of the ethical principles in research.*

2.8. Staff, employment processes and professional development

The university mentioned in SER (page 58) the existence of a set of HR procedures available for all employees; the access is restricted (the expert team did not have access to it), being regulated through a shared drive in campus server. Nevertheless, the university has adopted in 2011 a *Faculty Hiring Policy*, approved by the Senate, which is publicly available at https://kosovo.rit.edu/doc/senate/Faculty%20Hiring%20Policy.pdf*;* this document describes general standards and procedures for full-time faculty and part-time faculty, as well as concrete hiring procedures. At https://kosovo.rit.edu/doc/senate/Faculty%20Portfolios.pdf, the *Faculty Portfolios*, describe how administrative decision-making processes concerning employment and promotion are managed; every year, professors have to submit the following elements of their portfolio:

- *Current CV;*

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- *Statement of Teaching;*
- *Statement of Current Research Interests/Projects;*
- *Representative student evaluations from courses taught within the last calendar year;*
- *Syllabi of all courses taught in preceding year;*
- *Faculty member's written self-evaluation and evidence of performance; this includes a plan of work for the coming year and a discussion of the achievement of goals in the previous plan of work;*
- *Observations/past teaching.*

Candidates for employment are provided with clear descriptions and conditions of employment, all opportunities being available on the website, at: https://kosovo.rit.edu/home/employment-opportunities.html. Several activities carried out by the Faculty Development Centre include effective orientation to teaching staff, such as:

- *Collegial conversations;*
- *Lunch-time "collegial conversations";*
- *Friday "professional development morning sessions"*
- *Faculty "on-boarding";*
- *Faculty recognition and awards;*
- *Profiles of Faculty scholarship.*

Staff employed in the institution hold a relevant qualification so that they are able to effectively manage processes they are involved in. Most of them have either studied or travelled abroad for educational purposes, aspect revealed during the meeting with the teaching staff. The student to faculty ratio at RIT Kosovo does not exceed 20:1, being comparable to other RIT campuses and the Universities in the United States. Superiors, especially deans provide continuous feedback to the employee on their performance and the faculty portfolio is the main set of documents.

As mentioned in SER (page 59):

- *Academic staff is evaluated by students for their teaching in every course and by the supervisor annually;*
- *The student evaluations are made available to the faculty after the submission of the grades of the course;*
- *Faculty are required to submit an annual report that is evaluated by the dean of faculty. In addition, faculty submits portfolio of performance for the period of re-appointment prior to contract renewal.*

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Academic staff evaluation does not yet include a peer evaluation, and the results of the evaluation are not made publicly available. They are included in a report and the report is only submitted to the dean of the faculty. The institution has no clear plan for all staff professional development, in a structured approach based on identifying their needs, in order to allocate appropriate resources for its implementation.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:
1. *Reconsider the teaching load, as to integrate and stimulate the research activity;*
2. *Create a methodology for the staff evaluation, including all the components: self-evaluation, students, peer and superiors, including the description of its implementation;*
3. *Create a plan for the development of all staff, including resources.*

2.9. Student administration and support services

Admissions requirements at RIT Kosovo are clearly specified and appropriate for the institution and its programs. They are consistently and fairly applied for the prospective students. All students enrolled in the BSc study program possess a high school graduation diploma or other equivalent document of study. The successful completion of the following exams is required for admission: TOEFL/IELTS and the Institutional Math, or alternatively the SAT or ACT. Documents required for admission are: an online application, motivational essay, two recommendation letters, high school diploma and transcripts, and a copy of ID or passport. Complete information about the institution, including the range of programs and courses, program requirements, services, scholarship opportunities, tuition and administrative fees and other relevant information are made publicly available prior to application for admission. All interviewed students and alumni agreed that they had all information they needed for applying as well as during the studies.

A comprehensive orientation program is organized for all starting students. RIT Kosovo organizes an orientation week for all freshmen students to be acquainted with the range of services and facilities available to them. Various workshops are organized during the orientation to which all freshmen students need to attend. In these workshops students learn about policies and procedures of the institution, and about the rights and responsibilities that are enshrined also in the Student Academic Bulletin. During this orientation each student is

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assigned an academic advisors and they meet on one to one basis to plan the learning schedule for the semester. In addition, they become familiar with all the technology available to them, both at RIT Kosovo and access to RIT main campus resources. Each student will receive their email accounts, a personalized laptop customized to education needs with all required software to support their course of study while attending RIT Kosovo.

A range of scholarships and financial support are available to students to both stimulate and reward performance, while also financially supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds. These two categories and their criteria are operated separately, but merit scholarships and financial support can be cumulated. Every year RIT Kosovo awards about 40% of its freshmen class with scholarships based on merit and need in the range of 20% to 100% of tuition fees. The Scholarship Opportunities for Freshmen student are public and published in the website.

There are effective processes in place to collect and analyze reliable data referring to the profile of the student population, student progression, students' satisfaction with their programs, career paths of graduates, etc.   RIT Kosovo makes use of RIT main online platforms including Student Information System (SIS) which is a management information system for education establishments to manage student data. Registrar's Office at RIT Main continuously compiles data by their Department of Institutional Research. RIT Kosovo's Academic Affairs Office uses this data for analysis of local students such as the profile of the student population, student progression, success and drop-out rates students' satisfaction with their programs, learning resources and student support available and career paths of graduates. RIT Kosovo makes also use of two additional surveys: Class Survey and Senior Exit Survey. The statistical data is used for quality assurance purposes, as well as in supporting decision-making. Also services are modified and improved in response to evaluation and feedback.

A student handbook called Academic Bulletin is made available within the institution, covering all information required for all phases of the student „life cycle". It includes all information on admission, progression, recognition and certification, containing also concerning regulations, the rights and responsibilities of students, actions to be taken for breaches of discipline, responsibilities of relevant officers and committees, and penalties that may be imposed.

Student appeal procedure is specified in Academic Appeals section of the same Academic Bulletin. It makes clear the grounds on which academic appeals may be based, the criteria for decisions, and the remedies available. The appeals procedures guarantee impartial consideration by persons or committees independent of the parties involved. The same document covers thoroughly also appropriate academic policies and procedures in place to deal

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with academic misconduct, including plagiarism and other forms of cheating (in the section RIT Kosovo Policies and Procedures).

The range of services provided and the resources devoted to students reflect all requirements of the student population. RIT Kosovo provides a range of services and resources to help students meet their graduation requirements, e.g. academic services, undergraduate services, academic support center, co-op and career services, media center, scholarship services, etc. The College employs two Academic Advisors, and one supervisor, which provide intensive advising support through regular contact with their advisees regarding student program requirements, among others. RIT Kosovo advisors undergo training in continual basis from RIT main campus to become familiar with all future changes. RIT Kosovo also employs one Co-op and Career Coordinator and in charge of advising students in matters related to their employment and career goals. Psychological counselling is made available to students, through outsourcing services to therapist. The effectiveness and relevance of student services is regularly monitored. There are constant plans and ideas how to improve these services.

Opportunities are provided through appropriate facilities and organizational arrangements for extracurricular activities for students. RIT Kosovo prepares the grounds that students can establish student clubs on a wide range of activities. There are currently 14 active clubs operating under the by-laws of the student government. In addition, there are several proposed clubs and annual activities in proposal. The student government regulates and maintains a budget for club activities. Student Clubs together with faculty club advisors organize various extracurricular activities throughout the year, including participation in Model United Nation, Study Visits, Charitable work, etc.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. To look for additional external possibilities/ donors for offering scholarship for the (prospective) students.
2. To look for possibilities to attract additional foreign students from closer neighbouring countries as well as through various international schemes additional exchange students.

2.10.   Learning resources and facilities

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RIT Kosovo has an adequate financial budget and financial planning system. There are designated budgets for equipment, services and system development. There are resources for acquisition of library materials for both physical and digital collections, and electronic keys for variety of Online Labs. Electronic collection at RIT Kosovo is closely developed in collaboration with RIT main campus, who per request enables access to additional electronic resources needed for our educational programs in Kosovo.

Physical collections hold materials that are available in English, Albanian and Serbian. Since RIT Kosovo is an English language teaching institution, most of the materials are in English. Other two languages are covered in materials in general education, language learning, or fiction as subjects.

All staff and students have reliable access to relevant online databases, research and journal materials. Subscriptions to the foreign publications and periodicals are covered though RIT common electronic databases, e.g. JSTOR, EBSCO, ProQuest Complete, SAGE Journals online, Academic Search Elite, etc.They are also available to students off campus via laptops they obtain by RIT Kosovo. The collection development of the physical collection aims specifically in developing book stocks so it follows the overall curricula of the institution. Every year, 60% of the acquisitions budget is at disposal to faculty to suggest the latest professional literature which cannot be obtained electronically. RIT Kosovo library adds between 100 to 200 new titles each academic year to its physical collection. At the moment the physical library has 11808 items and 8818 bibliographic records. Also up to date computer equipment and software are provided by RIT Kosovo to support electronic access to resources and reference material.

Library and associated facilities at RIT Kosovo are also available for extended hours beyond normal class time. Library is open 8 – 20h Monday to Friday, and on Saturdays from 10 – 15h during the semester. In the two weeks preceding finals (final exams) week, library is open Monday to Sunday 8 – 21h with possibility to extend the closing hours as long as required by students. This arrangement continues until the last day of the finals week.

For recording loans and returns, Irwin Metzger Library uses integrated library system KOHA. Automatic messaging ensures that students are first sent two reminder emails that their item(s) will be due soon (three and one day before the due date), and then, they are notified when their item(s) enters the overdue.

The institution provides an adequate, clean, attractive and well maintained physical environment of both buildings and grounds. The main administrative and faculty building was completely renovated in 2005, including teaching space with a total of 1589 m2 and the library and reading space with a total of 425 m2. Student canteen is also available and was completely

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renovated in January 2019. It has over 290 square meters available for providing its services, which has indoor and outdoor space for student use. At the RIT Kosovo, students can use also a football field with natural grass, 2 basketball pitches and indoor recreational space equipped with table tennis, table football, chess board game etc. Also student dorm is part of RIT Kosovo campus. The Dorm has seven apartments equipped with 21 single beds.

Monitoring buildings quality and adequacy, equipment and overall infrastructure is a continuous process. Every nonconformity or defect may be reported in four possible ways. Every classroom or other space that is used by students or instructors is equipped with emergency contact information sign including contact information for IT department and Maintenance department. Every student or instructor can report nonconformity via e-mail at helpdesk@auk.org; second way and the most applicable way to report is calling directly to maintenance or IT office from VOIP phones installed at every classroom. All smartphone users can report infrastructural damages at RIT Kosovo App (iOS and Android). The last way to report failure is the physical information in the IT or Maintenance offices.

Both buildings have staircase access and suitable sloped ramp for all for students and staff with physical disabilities or other special needs. Academic building is also equipped with elevator that enables access to the upper floors. Complete inventories are maintained in the inventory database managed by logistics office and asset counting is performed on annual basis. Space utilization is monitored and can be viewed by all Faculty and Administrative Assistants of the institute.

RIT Kosovo has 5 Computer Labs. All undergraduate students are equipped with a laptop and all necessary software by the college as a technology tool for completing their education. All classrooms are equipped with networked desktop computer, sound and projector to support interactive learning. Technical support is available in two main ways: via in-class Telephone to Technical Support or via requests for support to be placed with helpdesk ticketing system that tracks steps until issues are resolved.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. To try to seek for additional funding for infrastructure improvement as planned in RIT Kosovo strategic plan.

2.11. Institutional cooperation

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RIT Kosovo has not drafted a separate internationalization strategy or policy document, but it is a logical part of its five-year strategic plan as part of Goal One: "Academic Excellence" and Goal Four: "Strategic Enrollment Management". Based on the interviews with the management, RIT Kosovo is dedicated to institutional cooperation and to expanding exchange opportunities. They have already joined the IIE Generation Study Abroad Initiative for increasing student, staff and faculty mobility.

The RIT Kosovo has assigned the Admission Director as the responsible person to oversee institutional cooperation and internationalization. Faculty members are also assigned to assist in this process. In addition to already established exchange opportunity within RIT own system, RIT Kosovo has a number of memorandums of understanding (MOU) with foreign institutions around student and faculty exchange both within Europe as well as in the US (full list is provided in SER Appendix A7).

RIT Kosovo takes part in international projects mostly together with RIT Main campus, such as those conducted through the Center for Energy and Natural Resources. Hence, taking part in international projects could be much higher. Without RIT main campus support, this criterion would not be fulfilled. On the other hand, RIT Kosovo itself is rather active in organizing different events of international visibility and outreach, e.g. regular international summer program Peace and Conflict.

RIT Kosovo encourages the exposure of its students, staff and faculty through collaboration with other universities outside of RIT network. Also RIT strategy calls for global campuses to participate in research collaboration and student/faculty exchange between all campus locations across the globe. Then again, the direct support for collaboration activities it rather limited – ca 10 000 euros for whole institution. The staff is encouraged to find additional financial support for conferences and workshop participations and there have been some major projects that also include some travelling and conference budget lines (Grant on Human Right, Grant for Faculty Development Center, Norwegian grant, etc). Engagement in international cooperation and contributions to the community are included in promotion criteria and staff performance review and according to the management this criterion will become even more important in the future.

Mechanisms are established to provide support to students and faculty to collaborate with international learning community. Various MoU's and research activities have been established. RIT Kosovo also support individual faculty that might pursue research collaboration for own personal growth. The College itself is providing *ca* 20 000 euros annually for research. All faculty and staff are also encouraged and promoted to participate in forums

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organized by other faculty to discuss and contribute to the plans for community development. Such activities are considered as Service and are prone to performance evaluations.

There are specific relationships established with local industries and employers to assist program delivery, e.g. mostly through co-op framework. A 'Co-op' is a cooperative education work experience (internship) in a private or governmental organization in Kosovo or abroad. A Co-op is defined as a paid professional experience of 400 hours to be completed within 3 months (full time) or 6 months (part-time). The office of Co-Op and Career Services establishes relationships with local industries and employees to ease the transfer of students to Co-Op (internships). Many of these partners are also invited to the college as quest lecturers or advisers to the program. All degree programs offered by RIT have an established advisory committee that participate in review of the programs. Furthermore, RIT Kosovo in its strategic plan development has integrated the input of the local business community and is in process of establishing an Academic Advisory Committee consisted of local industry, business and educational leaders in Kosovo. In addition, a Presidential Advisory Council consisting of prominent alumni, business and community leaders, and friends of higher education and the college is being established as well to provide wide-ranging advice and counsel twice a year. Regular contact is maintained with all alumni and an Alumni Association is supported by the college. Regular weekly communication with Alumni has been established and an annual Homecoming event is held every summer. A closed social media group exists and is actively used by Alumni. Alumni actively participate in campus events, activities, and serve on various committees. In addition, two Alumni members serve on the Board of Trustees.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

1. To look for additional cooperation possibilities and funding.

3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND JUDGEMENTS OF THE ET

The SER prepared by the self-evaluation team was very clear and well structured. Relevant evidence was provided by different documents or links to them. The site of the institution is very complex, full of procedures and examples of how things are done. It was a useful tool for the ET to support comments and provide evidence. Entire staff was aware of what they were

doing and confident in their results. They showed a lot of interest in the university future and they proved that they have benefited from an entire professional experience of teaching and learning in a proper environment.

The organization of the visit was very well managed, all the participants to meetings being on time and willing to add examples and to contribute with relevant practices to the raised issues.

Main recommendations:

1. Revise all the policies at least every 3-5 years;
2. Allocate resources and develop a proper research plan, objectives and disseminate the research results;
3. Look for possibilities to attract additional foreign students from closer neighbouring countries as well as through various international schemes additional exchange students;
4. Establish a Quality Committee that would involve all types of members of the academic community, including students;
5. Take into consideration the specific recommendations for each set of standards.

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that: The RIT KOSOVO (A.U.K) COLLEGE is *Substantially compliant* with the standards included in the *KAA Accreditation manual* and, therefore, recommends *to accredit* the institution.

4. APPENDICES *(if available)*

The document requested after the visit (to be considered for the institutional evaluation): List of publications – most recent of the academic staff:
https://kosovo.rit.edu/faculty-publications.html.

Expert Team

Chair

	Magdalena Platis	**2nd of June 2019**
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

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Member

	KristiinaTonnisson	**2nd of June 2019**
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

Member

	Mikus Dubickis	
		2nd of June 2019
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

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