

Programme Accreditation
European College Dukagjini, May 2015

Evaluation Report

by the team of experts,

assessing three study programs of European College Dukagjini within the fields of

Economics and Computer Science

in the process of re-accreditation by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency

May 25, 2015

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1. Introduction

1.1. Preamble

The Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) is requested by the Minister of Education, Science and Technology of Kosovo to evaluate all private institutions of higher education which operate in Kosovo. According to this request it was decided that the bachelor programs and the master programmes of European College Dukagjini shall undergo a programme accreditation (or reaccreditation, as appropriate) at the site in Peja. In order to evaluate the study programmes the KAA established a team of experts (thereafter ET). The following experts were appointed to the team:

- Prof. Dr. Peeter Normak / Tallinn University (EE)
- Prof. Dr. Miha Skerlavaj / Norwegian Business School (NO) and University of Ljubljana (SI)

According to the Kosovar assessment regulations a site-visit of the European College Dukagjini (thereafter *Dukagjini* or *college*) by the team of experts is part of the evaluation process. Therefore a site-visit was organised by the KAA for May 5th, 2015. The team visited the Dukagjini and has met with management, programmes' responsible, faculty, and students respectively.

According to the Code of Good Practice for Site-Visits and the Guidelines for experts (Academic Programmes), edited by the KAA, the team of experts delivers the following evaluation report. The evaluation report is based upon a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) including a staff list and their CVs of the Dukagjini and the final evaluation reports that have been delivered in the process of previous accreditations, including numerous recommendations. The team of experts asked for additional documents. The requested documents were delivered and are listed in Annex of this report.

The frame of reference for the evaluation report are international standards of comparable institutions of higher education (benchmarks) and the standards, edited by the KAA (10.2013). This report will conclude with a number of recommendations concerning each of the course programmes proposed: they are the personal opinion of the expert team and are formulated with the experiences mentioned above in mind. The report is a collective document and represents the opinions of the whole team.

Many elements of programme structure, quality and implementation are uniformly regulated across all Dukagjini programmes (e.g., quality assurance, student management, staff management, research and internationalization strategy, etc.). All evaluated programmes share the same facilities / physical infrastructure. Hence the ET's assessment of these elements pertains to all evaluated programmes.

The team of experts was asked by the representatives of the KAA not only to evaluate the study programmes of the Dukagjini within the field of Economics / Business and Computer Science & IT but also to deliver a proposal for the decision of re-accreditation. The following programs have been assessed:

- Banking, finance and accounting (BSc, reaccreditation)
- Computer Science & IT (BSc, reaccreditation)
- Computer Science (MSc, accreditation)

This report could not have been written without the support of the staff of the KAA in the first place, and also without a number of helpful face-to-face contacts in the Dukagjini.

1.2. Strategic context

Dukagjini is the first private higher education institution in Dukagjini region. Since establishment in 2006, it has went through a serious of institutional transformations. In 2006, it started under the name of European Vision College, to be merged with Iliria College in 2009, and again regain independence in 2011 under the name European College Dukagjini. Last period is characterized also with change in ownership and strong ties to the Dukagjini Corporation. The Dukagjini also recently experienced change in management structure with the new rector appointed. While governance structure is dynamic, the number of students is stable across the years. It operates in a region with ca. 40% of the Kosova population and tradition in business and merchandise. From competitors, there is a recently established public university of Peja that offers programs in business and economics, however none in computer science and IT. Dukagjini currently offers five study programmes and has a favourable student-to-teacher ratio, 15 PhD candidates, as well as a large proportion of full-time teaching staff.

There are several strategic challenges that Dukagjini is facing. First, the mission statement is vague and unclear. On-site discussions revealed that management and faculty mostly agree that competitive advantages of Dukagjini derive from its size and user-orientation. Principles like "family", "second home", "quality" as opposed to large student numbers, "diversity" in teaching staff, "supporting students", "opportunities for job market", "tighter connections to business and regional development" were used in characterising Dukagjini.

Secondly, probably due to experienced lack of stability in institutional development, there are several internal systems that need to be institutionalized, regulated and consistently implemented. Among them, ET would like to emphasize the process of curricula development which seems to be in past a centralized process detached from faculty implementing the courses, quality assurance that does not connect program delivery and evaluation to the learning outcomes, to name just two priorities to be handled immediately.

Thirdly, with Dukagjini's aspirations to offer new Master programs in the future, the research output is too modest and financial support for conducting research is insufficient. With addition to PhD candidates, Dukagjini needs to develop systems to provide and gradually increase institutional support and requirements for research of faculty at all career levels. Students should be involved in research as well.

Recommendations:

1. **Mission statement and long-term strategy:** Through an intensive set of strategizing, Dukagjini should develop a clear and compelling mission, vision, and organizational value statement to be followed up with a clear 5-year strategy in all key areas of study offer, research, quality and other relevant fields. All major stakeholder groups (students, employers, owner, management, teaching staff, and administrative staff) should be involved and concrete measures (implementation projects, resources, responsible people and deadlines) should be planned.
2. **Regulations and processes:** Dukagjini should revise (in a participatory manner) its quality assurance system in order to guarantee the high quality of study programmes, staff development and their adequate promotion.
3. **Institutional research strategy:** Dukagjini should determine its priority research areas, elaborate a non-formal development plan and foresee necessary financial means for its implementation.

2. Banking, Finance and Accounting (BSc, reaccreditation)

Banking, finance and accounting (hereafter BFA) is a three-year, 180 ECTS program at the BSc level. It is one of the most frequently offered programs in the context of Kosovar higher educational system and has a regional competition at the public university in Peja. Nonetheless, Dukagjini is able to accept a stable number of students across years (around 60 per year) and reports even exceeding number of applicants. BFA is a program with most tradition at Dukagjini, since it has been running in one format or another from the very beginning of the institution. It has 18 full time and 6 part time faculty staff.

2.1. Academic programme and student management

Academic programme

ET does think that the existing programme corresponds to the overall institutional purpose, although the mission statement of Dukagjini does not specify any academic areas. The programme's quality, range, and academic aims are appropriate for the academic degree. However, there are issues related to its structure and several other opportunities for its improvement, both in terms of design as well as delivery. First and most, it seems that eight key learning outcomes (SER, pg. 15-16) are more pro-forma as they are used in programme implementation. No measurement of learning outcomes attainment at the programme-level exists and courses seem to be run in relatively isolated fashion.

Secondly, the fact that students have freedom to choose a relatively big part of courses raises a question whether achievement of all expected learning outcomes is guaranteed. For example, an Optional course (SER, p. 21-22) can be taken each semester. There are no requirements about matching of the aims and expected outcomes of these courses to the aims and expected learning outcomes of the whole study programme. The same applies to elective courses. For example, how will the elective course *Media presentation management* contribute to the achievement of the programme's learning outcomes?

Thirdly, the previous problem is partly caused by the fact that the share of electives (40%) is relatively big.

Recommendations:

1. **Programme's structure.** ET recommends increasing the share of compulsory courses through the following changes:
 - Principles of management should be a compulsory course in semester two.
 - English II should be a compulsory course in semester three.
 - Financial management should be a compulsory course in semester four.
2. **Learning outcomes.** ET recommends harmonizing the expected learning outcomes of the courses with the expected learning outcomes of the whole study programme. For that purpose, Dukagjini needs to develop a system of measuring learning goals and outcomes attainment at programme level, where AACSB methodology can be considered as a viable option.

Student management

Students are treated in an obviously user-friendly manner. BFA program educates for jobs such as accountants, loan officers, and financial planners typically. In their alumni survey, According to the Dukagjini career office, 55% BFA programme graduates are employed, 14% are taking master programme and 31% are unemployed. This is less than the overall unemployment rate in Kosovo among young population.

The practical component should be increased in the studies to enhance the skills' set of the students. While students were in general unwilling to express critical concerns or ideas for improvement (beyond those suggested by the school, such as need for new master programs), they did argue that more practical skills are needed in the program.

On the positive side, internships are offered to all students and it seems functioning very well.

Recommendations:

1. **Work-based learning.** Support and expand learning opportunities in real work situations, such as already existing internship. Internship needs to be upgraded with plan of activities developed upfront between student and both mentors (academic and business-one).
2. **Skills.** More opportunities to gain transversal skills could foster students' employability. This is especially the case for language and social skills. Skills development could be intensified, e.g. by providing access to case studies and online simulations (e.g. via The Case Center or Harvard business school publishing). This requires significant financial investment per student.
3. **Student representation in management.** Include students in university, institutional and programme management bodies by providing the students union an active role in democratic processes.
4. **Feedback from the graduates.** Elaborate a regular feedback system from the graduates about the competences needed in their professional activities.

2.2. Staff

For the BFA program, Dukagjini provided updated and KAA approved list of faculty showing 18 full-time employed staff members and 6 part-timers with adequate workload. It is encouraging that most of the staff is full-time, there is a significant portion of PhD candidates with active role in the programme, and teacher-to-student ratio is very good. Based on the CVs and on the discussions conducted during site-visit, it is evident that Dukagjini has competent and proactive staff with desire to contribute to student learning.

However, there are also significant challenges: 1) research has relatively low priority in Dukagjini, 2) relatively modest international cooperation (competences in banking, finance and accounting are an international). Staff development should strive both towards stronger research activity and output as well as extensive international cooperation. Both of these are long terms processes that require both pull and push from institution, individual

responsibility, as well as critical mass of the staff.

Recommendations:

1. **Staff development.** Elaborate and implement a long-term staff development plan, paying special attention to research and international cooperation.
2. **Trainings.** Organise staff training in research methodology, modern teaching methods and in writing scientific papers.

2.3. Research and International Co-operation

Dukagjini is predominantly a teaching institution that has an ambition in developing a research component. Currently the teachers have a modest publication record that almost exclusively consists of conference proceeding publications and some lower ranking research journal publications. It is important that creating favourable conditions for conducting research will be the priority in the new research strategy of Dukagjini.

ET recognizes the desire of Dukagjini to strengthen both research and internationalization component. These are very much valued by students as well – the students did express the desire for having more opportunities to study abroad, e.g. semester long.

Recommendations:

1. **Research quality indicators.** Set up outcome-based quality indicators for research, prioritising publications in high-ranking international peer-reviewed journals (preferably in journals included in the Thompson Reuters Master Journal List).
2. **Research funding.** Increase considerably research funding and participation in international R&D cooperation projects.
3. **Student mobility.** Students should be actively supported in abroad mobility at all levels, including short-time mobility and internships.

2.4. Finances and Infrastructure / Space and Equipment

The financial background seems to be sufficient, as it is provided in the SER. The institution has the financial possibilities to develop facilities and staff, as well as supporting measures for students. While the tuition fees are relatively high, students seem to be satisfied with value for price.

Space and equipment for BFA program is adequate, even though there might be more space for permanent faculty offices and student teamwork. There are sufficient books in the field of BFA in terms of titles, but enough copies. However, the faculty does not have access to a single journal or financial secondary data database which is a most troublesome and prohibitive condition to do any kind of research.

Students are supported in their learning by a feasible online platform, where lecturers also provide needed literature and learning materials. The buildings of Dukagjini are adequate, seminar rooms and rooms for lecturers are available and the number seems suitable for the number of students. However, rooms do not seem to be equipped well to use them for using modern learning methods. There are also not enough smaller rooms for conducting group work.

Recommendations:

1. **Textbooks.** Ensure having necessary quantity of basic textbooks in the library.
2. **Databases.** Obtain access to online research databases. These include both journal databases as well as secondary databases in the fields of banking, finance, and accounting (e.g. *ScienceDirect, Web of Science, EBSCOHost, Bloomberg* etc.).
3. **Electronic learning content.** Obtain access to case studies and online simulations relevant to the BFA program.
4. **Using referencing tools.** Library should train students and faculty in using referencing tools such as *Endnote* or *Mendeley*.
5. **Classrooms.** Set up facilities for group learning activities. Take this into account in planning the new building.

2.5. Quality Management

Dukagjini has extremely unclear processes of internal quality assurance that mostly exist on paper. Missing are clear regulations for instance how curricula are developed, implemented, and continuously improved. What is sorely missing is a clear focus on the overall program level and connection between stated learning goals and program delivery. As previously noted, Dukagjini should employ learning outcome – course matrix to get overview of learning outcome attainment overall the program, and introduce required changes.

Quality feedback loop needs to be institutionalized using e.g. steering committees at program levels, composed of representatives of faculty, students, and employers to review finding and suggest improvement on e.g. annual basis. A proper competence-oriented approach in teaching and learning processes has not been developed yet.

Recommendation:

1. **Quality assurance of study programmes.** ET advises Dukagjini to develop learning outcome – course matrix, measure learning goals in accordance to e.g. AACSB assurance of learning methodology, and organize program-level steering committees.

3. Computer science & IT (BSC, re-accreditation)

This programme has been accredited in May 2012. The following recommendations of improvement were proposed (grouped by the sections of the report of 2012):

1. Academic Programmes and Student Management:

- learning outcomes should be reviewed to ensure that they are well defined and are measurable
- compulsory course learning outcomes should be mapped to their respective program learning outcomes to ensure that each of the program learning outcomes are achievable by students
- the proportion of compulsory courses should be increased
- detailed descriptors/syllabuses for Internship and Practical Work course and the Diploma Thesis should be made available. These should include subject specific learning outcomes
- the number of compulsory courses aimed at developing students' programming and systems development skills should be increased and introduced earlier in the program
- the content of the two Mathematics courses should contain only materials directly relevant to the program's focus on software development and information systems, and should be included in the compulsory element of the program
- the course syllabi should be rigorously evaluated and their accuracy validated
- a strategy for attracting female students to the program should be developed
- The College should require all programs to provide annual cohort retention and achievement statistics as a key performance indicator.

The situation in 2015: The recommendations are in general taken into account; there are still three aspects that do not confirm with the recommendations:

- 1) The main programming course is taught on 4th semester. Although there are some courses with some elements of programming in earlier semesters (Internet with Web Design – 2nd semester; Algorithms with Principles of Programming – 3rd semester), systematic development of programming skills takes place on the 4th semester.
- 2) The descriptions of mathematics courses (Mathematics I and Mathematics II) contain the following sentence: "The course will provide students with an introduction to mathematical concepts and quantitative methods required in **business management**."
- 3) Although there was no strategy for attracting female students to the program developed, the share of female students reached up to 30%.

2. Staff:

- The Faculty should ensure that staff receives training in the writing of learning outcomes and their use in teaching, learning and assessment.

The situation in 2015: Although it is not yet in place, the staff training is planned. It is appropriate to mention here that the college participated on the recently completed Tempus project "Encouraging the process of curriculum development based on learning outcomes and research guided teaching in the private higher education institutions of Kosova".

3. Finances and Infrastructure/Space and Equipment:

- The College should develop an urgent plan to significantly increase, over a period of 3 years, the number of networked computers available to students in general, and computer science students in particular, and to significantly reduce the student to computer ratio. This might include such initiatives as the one proposed by the computer science staff and moving to

increased College opening hours to give greater access to the College's computer facilities • The College should develop an urgent rolling plan to significantly increase the library's physical book stock to support the computer science programs.

The situation in 2015: The student-to-computer ratio is still relatively low and recommended literature is only partly available in the library (this topic is also commented below).

4. Quality Management:

• The College should seek to establish a library web portal that provides unified access to all potential sources of library materials • The College should devise quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that the information it produces is accurate and consistent.

The situation in 2015: the recommendations are in general taken into account.

The following bases on the documents presented to the expert team, on the site visit and on discussions with some staff members: Assistant Professor Florinda Imeri, Assistant Professor Mefail Tahiri, Assistant Lavdim Beqiri, Lecturer Rifat Osmanaj, Senior Lecturer Eija Vieri, Assistant Professor Basri Ahmedi, Assistant Professor Valbon Ademi, and Assistant Professor Sali Kelmendi. However, as the person in charge for the study programme – Associate Professor Faruk Belegu – did not take part on the discussions, some questions raised during the discussions were answered only partly. Note that B.Ahmedi and V.Ademi were not listed in the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) among the teachers of the assessed programme.

3.1. Academic Programmes and Student Management

- Does the academic programme correspond to the institution's mission statement and principles of operation?

The mission statement does not specify any subject area of the college. The administration of the college described the identity of the college by keywords "second home for the students", "quality", "diversity", "supportive". Therefore, although not explicitly stated, the programme could be considered as corresponding to the mission of the college.

- Are the programme's quality, range and academic aims appropriate to the academic degree?

The programme is declared to have two specialization profiles (each student is supposed to take both specializations): 1) *Computer Science* and 2) *Applied IT*. However, the courses were not divided into two groups, and therefore these specializations were in fact not specified – it was not clear which modules form these specializations.

The rationale of the programme and most of the expected learning outcomes are adequate. Each student has to take 20 compulsory (including the Bachelor thesis and Internship & practical work) and 10 elective courses. The fact that the students have enough opportunities to take elective and optional courses from other institutes is certainly strength of the programme.

However, there are some aspects that the college should pay attention in further development of the programme:

- 1) Achievement of the expected learning outcome "Operate in a competitive business

environment” of the programme is not guaranteed because the Internship & practical work module is relatively small (4 credits). The explanation of the staff that this outcome is adequate because each student is already employed on the final year of their studies is not quite accurate – university studies should be a full-time undertaking and it cannot be expected that every student has a parallel adequate employment.

- 2) Similarly, achievement of the learning outcome “Lead and guide intensive projects” cannot be guaranteed: the programme does not contain an obligatory course in project management (this course is elective).
- 3) Recommended literature in the module descriptions is not always quite adequate. For example, the purpose of the book “Applied Software Project Management” by Andrew Stellman and Jennifer Greene in the module *Application Software* is questionable; or the book “Architecting the Internet of Things” of Dieter Uckelmann, Mark Harrison in the description of the module *Internet with Web Design* (Internet of Things is not mentioned in the module description).
- 4) There are also some other problems in the descriptions in the SER of the whole programme and of some modules that cause confusion. For example, there is an exemplary syllabus of the module *XML based multimedia technologies* of Arianit Kurti on the pages 210-212. However, neither the bachelor nor master study programme contains this module (there is *Multimedia based technologies* of Florenda Imeri in the bachelor programme, page 70 of the SER). On the other hand, instead of a *Multimedia based technologies* module description, there is a description of the *XML based multimedia technologies* module (page 100 of the SER) that in turn is completely different from that on pages 210-212.
- 5) Due to the fact the module descriptions are composed by different people, these are partly of very different quality: some describe thoroughly different aspects of a module while some others are quite formal.

Despite of these problems, the programme’s quality, range and academic aims are appropriate to the academic degree.

Recommendations:

1. Reformulate the expected learning outcome “Operate in a competitive business environment” or increase the volume of the module “Internship & practical work”.
2. Remove the expected learning outcome “Lead and guide intensive projects”.
3. Develop guiding materials about composing course descriptions and set up a relevant quality assurance system.
4. Compose a syllabus for the module “Bachelor thesis” describing all aspects related to the selection of the topic and the supervisor, as well covering all other aspects that are in regular course descriptions.
5. Revise the literature lists in the course descriptions and assure that all items of these lists are available in college library.
 - Is the programme based on an overarching didactic concept that has been adequately communicated to and adopted by the teaching staff?

The SER does not describe any overarching didactic concept (in fact, the SER does not

contain the word “didactic” at all). The teachers had also difficulties in explaining the overarching didactic concept. However, it came out during the discussions that the learning and teaching is based in general on sound principles: discussions and case studies during the lectures and analyses during the exercises, using elements of project-based learning etc. The high quality of teaching was repeatedly also mentioned by the students while meeting with the Expert Team. They even said that the college should more advertise the good work of the teachers.

- Does the academic degree correspond to international standards?

The scope of the programme is relatively wide as it is internationally a general practice for the first cycle higher education degree programmes: focusing on software engineering, but also having courses on computer networks, information systems and some other topics. Demand on the graduates is high: about 81% of the graduates are working on the profession. As a whole, the academic degree corresponds to the international standards, although the study programme does not directly base on curricula recommendations of international professional organizations and frameworks (ACM, SWEBOK of IEEE).

- Does the structure of the programme give sufficient opportunity for independent study, reflection and analysis? (e.g. what is the proportion of independent study time compared to online/distance teaching and classroom units?).

An average course has weekly four hours learning in the classes (in total $15 \times 4 = 60$ hours). Taking into account the fact that the modules have in average 6 credits, the number of hours for independent work of the students during a course should normally be about 90. Therefore, supervision and support of independent work of students has important role. The students commented that availability of and good contacts to the teachers are the strengths of the studies.

- Is the allocation of ECTS appropriate and justified?

The principle that the programme contains a relatively small number of relatively big modules (fast majority of modules have 6 credits) is appropriate and justified.

- Is the workload required for the academic programme manageable for students?

The number of lectures is adequate. As to the exercises, some courses that are aiming at development predominantly skills of learners (especially courses on software engineering), could have more hours for exercises. This is actually stated in the syllabi (for example, if the ratio between the lectures and exercises is 1:1, then the ratio between theory and practice is sometimes even 30:70) but no details are provided. It should be mentioned here that the text in the SER is confusing in this matter: “Every year it is required to earn 60 ECTS credits or 1500-1800 hrs per year” (at the beginning of page 64), “total engagement of the student for one academic year” is 1200 hrs (at the bottom of page 64).

- Are the teaching methods and content of teaching units sufficient for the successful achievement of the programme’s goals and outcomes (competences and qualifications, knowledge and skills)?

The programme’s goals and expected learning outcomes are well described. The comments and recommendations on two expected learning outcomes are presented above. Concerning the teaching methods, the SER uses standard formulations in most cases: either “Lectures, student presentations, discussions, seminars, research projects, group projects” or

“Students will be exposed to a variety of information and experience through reading the text, articles on mathematical concepts and quantitative methods, and group exercises. Lectures, student presentations, discussions, workshops, research projects, group projects, case comparisons and case analysis”, with some modifications in few cases and with no further explanations. For example, how look research projects like? This question is especially justified because research projects start already from the very beginning of studies while there is no module on research methods in the whole study programme. In general, the teaching methods and content of teaching units are sufficient for the successful achievement of the programme’s goals and outcomes. The college uses an e-Learning platform for supporting studies. However, the possibilities of this platform are only partly used and the usage of this platform by students is very scanty: fast majority of students have never logged in to the courses.

Recommendation:

Organise staff training in using the e-learning platform and guarantee the proper usage of the platform in supporting the studies.

- Is the overlap of academic content between the various parts of the curriculum comprehensible and transparent?

There is no other division into parts of the curriculum as division to semesters. There seems to be no considerable overlap between the different courses.

- How do the admission criteria and admission procedures measure up to international standards?

From the SER (page 68): “The Dukagjini College organises a written enrolment exam that checks the minimum knowledge requirements for students to be enrolled in this Program. Students can participate in this exam if they have completed at least 12 years of previous education and have received a diploma of secondary school”. This is a common practice internationally.

- Is the ratio of academic/artistic staff to students appropriate?

According to the SER (page 132), there are 77 students and 12 teachers on the study programme. The student-teacher ratio is completely acceptable. Even more, there is some room for more students.

3.2. Staff

- Does the institution have an adequate proportion of permanent staff and appropriate proportions of permanent and external staff?

The proportion of permanent staff is relatively high, much higher than it is normally in other private colleges in Kosovo.

- Does the academic staff demonstrate proven ability at a high academic and didactic level and are their qualifications appropriate to the positions they hold within the institution according to the basic criteria?

About 30% of the full-time teaching staff holds a PhD. This is acceptable, especially if taking into account the fact that no university in Kosovo offers a PhD in computer science. The teachers are well devoted, and attach great importance to the quality of teaching.

3.3. Research and International Co-operation

- Is the teaching staff involved in research activities inside or outside the institution, and do these research activities feed back into teaching/course contents?

The teaching staff is involved in research inside the institution – the college organizes yearly scientific conferences where the teachers have actively published. However, there is no research group formed in ICT in the college. The only internationally well visible teacher – A.Kurti – has all his significant publications published under the name of Linnaeus University (Sweden). His research is directly related to the courses he teaches; this link is much weaker or even non-existent for other teachers.

- Is the extent and the quality of international cooperation in research and teaching adequate?

There are no evidences presented about participation of the college in international research projects. Some individual teachers are employed also by a foreign university and conducting their research there, but not under any cooperation agreement with the college. As to the developmental projects, participation on TEMPUS and Erasmus+ projects was presented. There is some international cooperation in teaching. Teachers indicated that there is a lack of financial support for participating on international research conferences.

- Are students involved in research and cooperation projects?

Students are conducting research primarily in the course of preparing their bachelor thesis. No evidences about student involvement in research and cooperation projects were presented.

3.4. Finances and Infrastructure/Space and Equipment

- Does the institution have an adequate budget plan?

The SER had a separate section "Financing, Market research and financial plan" that contained incomes and operational expenses for academic years 2006/2007 – 2012/2013 as well the projected operational expenses for academic years 2014/2015 – 2016/2017. Concerning the budget, the following comments can be made:

- 1) Income from the students form in average about 98% of the budget. Even bigger share is planned for coming years.
- 2) Expenses of research related activities fluctuates a lot: 11000€ in 2010/2011, 61000€ in 2011/2012 and 2012/2013, and 8000€ in 2014/2015.

Recommendation:

Allocate beyond the already calculated budget plan additional financial means for supporting research related activities of the academic staff.

- Does the institution have adequate buildings and specialized infrastructure for the requirements of the programme?

Currently there is a lack of space: while the number of big whole-group classrooms seems to be sufficient, there is a lack of small rooms for group work activities. However, a new building is already planned in an adjacent land. There is only one computer lab that satisfies the current minimal requirements, but would not be enough for bigger study groups.

3.5. Quality Management

- Are the institution's programmes assessed regularly within the context of internal evaluation processes?

Importance of quality seems to be recognized on all levels in the college, from the students up to the upper management. The college has a Quality Assurance Office. The main quality instruments of the studies seem to be reports from the teachers and students. No evidences were given about feedback from the alumni and employers. The process for starting a new academic programme is well described. However, this process does not guarantee high quality and continuous improvement of the programmes – it seems that there are no real responsibilities set and employers are not involved in the process. For example, although a person in charge for a study programme is nominated, no word about his role is devoted to this topic in the SER.

Recommendation:

Set up study programme committee and agree on its responsibilities in assuring programme quality.

4. Computer Science (MSc, accreditation)

A previous master programme "Master in Computer Science and Applied IT" has got one-year (conditional) accreditation in 2012 and was not accredited in 2013. A new programme "Master in Information Technology" was unsuccessfully proposed for accreditation in March 2014. This programme consisted namely of two specialization profiles ("Web Technologies and Software Development" and "Management Information Systems"). According to the Assessment Report of 2014, the first specialization had an acceptable quality, but the second not (it was characterised as having "a loosely related set of courses without any focus").

The currently proposed "Master in Computer Science" study programme is identical to the second specialization profile ("Management Information Systems") of the study programme "Master in Information Technology". Identical is also the explanatory text preceding to the programme description, although the one assessed in 2014 was much broader (had two specialization profiles instead of one). Therefore it is appropriate to check to what extent the recommendations of the Assessment Report of 2014 are taken into account.

It is extremely disappointing that none of the recommendations from the Assessment Report of 2014 was taken into account. As it was said above, the study programme is identical to the (weaker) half of the study programme assessed in 2014. Moreover, even the obvious mistakes in the SER of 2014 that were indicated in the Assessment Report of 2014, were not corrected in the SER of 2015.

Therefore, all recommendations and remarks of the Assessment Report of 2014 are still relevant, and will not be repeated in the current report. We will point out some additional remarks only that were discussed during the meeting with the academic staff.

The following bases on the documents presented to the expert team, on the site visit and on discussion with some staff members: Assistant Professor Florinda Imeri, Assistant Professor Mefail Tahiri (the person in charge for the study programme), Senior Lecturer Eija Vieri, Assistant Professor Basri Ahmedi and Assistant Professor Valbon Ademi. Some teachers teaching on Bachelor programme only took also part on the discussions: Assistant Lavdim Beqiri, Lecturer Rifat Osmanaj and Assistant Professor Sali Kelmendi.

4.1. Academic Programmes and Student Management

The staff members claimed that the study programme was composed under the coordination of Professor Edmond Beqiri who recently left the college. Therefore, not all questions raised during the discussion with the staff were satisfactory answered.

However, there are some aspects that the college should pay attention on in further development of the programme:

- 1) Expected learning outcomes from Internship are identical in Bachelor and Master programmes. The purpose of the text in the SER about Internship remained unclear because the Master study programme does not contain any internship.
- 2) Both the Bachelor and Master programmes contain the module *Multimedia Intelligent Systems* with identical expected learning outcomes. This module has 6 credits and was

optional in BSc programme, and had 8 credits and was compulsory in MSc programme. One should mention here that the module description had a different title in the BSc case ("Intelligent Multimedial Systems").

- 3) The previous problem led to a more general question: How the programme can be adapted to the prior competences of students (for example, if a student has achieved the learning outcomes of a compulsory module already during bachelor studies)? The staff members explained that it is possible to compose an individual study plan. However, the SER did not mention about this possibility.

4.2. Staff

The proportion of permanent staff is relatively high, much higher than it is normally in other private colleges in Kosovo. The fact that the vast majority of teachers who was supposed to teach on the programme have doctoral degree, is a good prerequisite for developing a good quality study programme in the future.

4.3. Research and International Co-operation

This is in fact a key issue: a high quality master programme assumes that the teachers are at the same time active researchers in the area of the programme. However, there is no research group formed in ICT in the college yet and there is only one internationally well visible teacher – A.Kurti. On the other hand, he has all his significant publications published under the name of Linnaeus University (Sweden). Therefore, the college is in ICT research internationally completely invisible.

4.4. Finances and Infrastructure/Space and Equipment

Starting a master programme presumes that the ICT infrastructure should accordingly be upgraded as well. There is only one computer lab what satisfies the current minimal requirements for running bachelor programme, but would not be enough for running two ICT programmes in parallel. There were no resources in the budget foreseen for setting up a second computer lab.

4.5. Quality Management

The fact that it was possible to submit this study programme to accreditation is an evidence of a not properly functioning quality system of the college. For example, it came out on the meeting with the staff that there does not exist a system of treatment recommendations from the academic staff concerning organization of studies. Moreover, the ET asked the question "How the assessment reports will be treated, what procedures are in place?" during the initial meeting with the top management of the college. Judging by the reply, analyzing the assessment reports and elaborating improvement proposals are the responsibilities of departments. Therefore, the supervision over the activities of the departments does not work well enough. It is extremely unfortunate because existence of a master programme in ICT is badly needed in the region, and the European College Dukagjini is the only institution offering higher education in ICT in the region.

6. Proposal for the decision on re-accrreditation

The team of experts **proposes re-accrreditation** (with conditions specified in the specific program reports) of the two bachelor programs submitted for reaccrreditation by the European College Dukagjini for the period of three years:

- **Banking, finance and accounting (BSc, reaccrreditation)**
- **Computer science & IT (BSc, reaccrreditation)**

The team of experts **does NOT propose** the following master program to be accrredited at this point in time, before the conditions stated in above provided programme report are fully met:

- **Computer science (MSc, accrreditation)**

7. Recommendations to KAA

1. Plan the incoming site visits to regular study periods. This would give an opportunity to consider actual learning/teaching processes.
2. The assessed institutions should select students and staff for meeting with expert teams from those who are able to conduct discussions in English language. This would spare time for topical discussions (not wasting time to translation).

Annex: List of additional documents provided post on-site visit

1. The mission statement of the college.
2. Examples of written reports certifying that at least 20 Hours/week has spent on research related Activities (see Article 4 of work contracts, page 214 of SER).
3. Study regulations stating the possibility to conclude individual study plans.
4. The list of optional courses the students of the assessed study programmes took in 2014/2015 academic year (2 lists, separately for the programmes).
5. Updated list of the staff of Bachelor in Banking Finance & Accounting programme (section 3.4.2, pages 126/127 of the SER).