

Reaccreditation of Academic Programs Iliria College (IC) Intermediate Report

- ✓ Bachelor (BA) in Law
- ✓ Master in Civil Law (LLM)
- ✓ Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) in Computer Science

1. Participants:

1.1. Expert Team (ET):

- ✓ Prof. Dr. Peeter Normak / Tallin University (Estonia)
- ✓ Prof. Dr. Frédéric Mertens de Wilmars / University of Valencia and European University (Spain)

1.2. KAA Coordinators:

- ✓ Prof. Dr. Blerim Rexha (State Quality Council / KAA)
- ✓ Ms. Furtuna Mehmeti (Acting Director - Expert for Evaluation and Accreditation / KAA)
- ✓ Mr. Shkelzen Gerxhaliu (Officer for Evaluation and Monitoring / KAA)

2. Program Evaluations

The ET was formed to undertake the evaluation of 3 academic programs, two at a bachelor level and 1 at Master level: Law (BA); Computer Science (B.Sc.) and Master in Civil Law and (MA).

The Evaluation Procedure is based on:

- ✓ The Iliria College Self Evaluation Report (SER) dated on August 2016
- ✓ The visit of the Iliria College facilities (on August 11, 2016) and the discussions with: the management of the college, the people responsible for the study programs, members of the academic staff and 8 students.
- ✓ The additional documents received during and following the visit

3. Documents received prior, during and following the site visit

The documents received are:

- ✓ Self-evaluation report (SER): If some inconsistencies and mistakes concerning some of the data were corrected in the previous SER, there are additional vague descriptions of some academic programs, subjects and methodology aspects. Therefore, the meetings

Accreditation of academic programs: Iliria College – August 2016 (FINAL REPORT)

during the site visit with the staff clarified some aspects and the ET thanks the senior management and the people responsible for each academic program.

- ✓ The site visit program for August, 11 - 2016
- ✓ KAA Guidelines for experts (academic Programs and institution), Code of Good Practice for Site visits, and Standards.
- ✓ Two reports of evaluation for program accreditations: June 21st 2013 and May 1st 2015.
- ✓ 95 staff CVs (all received electronically by the KAA on August, 8 2016).
- ✓ The project descriptions of Iliria College
- ✓ One exemplar of the *Iliria International Review*
- ✓ The list of agreements with several institutions and Iliria College for the period 2005-2016.
- ✓ The KAA list of Iliria College Academic Staff receive on August, 12th 2016.
- ✓ The list of additional information requested by KAA experts received on August, 12th 2016.

4. General observations drawn from the meetings and the visit

The mission statement reflects an ambitious strategy for the Programs with the aim to create and maintain the highest standards in the field of teaching, learning and research.

4.1. Research

For Research, the strategy needs significant financial and material means. Research has to be THE priority for IC in financial and material and terms. And it's more evident if the research plans are set each academic year in order to be conform "with the requirements of the market" (see SER, p. 211, for example).

Teaching at the university is based on research, as well on the personal research of the professor as well as from the scientific community, presented in conferences and published in books and magazines. It arises from the CV's of the professors, some of which are involved in research projects and publish the results. However, in most of the cases, these activities are individual, not part of the IC's international projects, and presented in international conferences.

Recommendation:

A realistic research Program would need:

- another administrative structure
- a significant financial input from IC (eventually in cooperation with the private investments or companies): minimum **30 % from the financial structure.**
- a **planning for 3-5 years** with research lines for each program and creation of research groups and coordination between all the research groups.
- A strategy of international visibility in terms of scientific productions proper to Iliria College

4.2. Academic Staff

In the first place, the ET observes that the CVs' among is not conform with the among (117 members) of the academic staff in the SER (see p.345-348) nor with the Excel document received on August, 12th 2016 (131 members). What's the definitive number of academic staff? The CVs list is incomplete.

On the other hand, according the last list of academic staff, 56% of the members are not from Kosovo, and the majority of the foreign members is Albanian. In the case of the Law Programs, all the responsible persons are Albanian. For legal and labor considerations, the ET supposes there are not inconvenient about it.

In other respects, it would be interesting to know the proportion of the academic staff's gender profile. What's the proportion between male and female members? The IC develops a gender policy in terms of recruiting and corporate governance?

Recommendation:

For the future, communicate:

- a definitive list of the academic staff, similar in all the documents
- a complete list of the academic staff CV's
- measures or policy about the gender questions in the academic staff and corporate governance of Iliria College

5. The Study Programs Evaluations

5.1. Bachelor in Law

Professor Mertens de Wilmars met with Professors Dr. Bekim Kadriu, Dr. Rita Loleci, Dr. Jorida Xhafaj (Dean of Law Department), Dr. Besmir Alushi and Dr. Ervin Karamuço. ET regrets the absence of Dr. Hekuran Rapaj, co-responsible of the bachelor in law.

The exchange was direct, honest and friendly with the mutual understanding goal and the goodwill to emphasize the academic Program's positive and negative aspects.

The material supports in the meeting were the academic program's descriptive Bachelor in Law included in the SER, and it was discussed about next: Program's goals, teaching's methodology, student's practical, methodology and research's line and the academic Program content.

During the meeting, we noted several contradictions between the SER version and the clarifications gifted by the interviewed professors but after discussions it seemed more clear.

5.1.1. Student Management – teaching methodology/practical work

According the meetings with the students and the SER, the professors have an important role in their formation because they become mentors or “coaches”. The academic staff would be not only trainers in theoretical and practical lessons but also on the career opportunity preparation.

Accreditation of academic programs: Iliria College – August 2016 (FINAL REPORT)

We noted several observations from law students. They need study more cases and practical perspectives of the subjects. The methodology is too much theoretical and not enough practical. For example, they consider necessary increase simulations activities. On the other hand, they affirm that IC could improve more in the access of data and electronical information in order to be updated with the juridical actualities. Finally, they insist about the need to participate in abroad activities (conferences, Erasmus, etc.) with a material or/and financial support from IC.

About the internship, the ET points out that in the SER, there are not mentions about an eventual agreement between the Ministry of Finance and IC. Now, this public administration has an important role for the internship in the public administrations. Respect to the clinical studies, the information is not very clear about the inclusion in the study Program.

In terms of assessment, the ET outlines the importance of the continuous evaluation and the BA in Law is based in this aspect. Nevertheless, each subject presents a different type of assessment (in terms of marks). It could generate difficulties of understanding and mistakes about the importance of the subjects' contents.

Respect to the Research Plan, the explanations during the meeting demonstrate that the research activities are limited to the individual and not collective research. In addition, a real research plan need more than one academic year! By the way, there are not information about the current research subjects in Law.

Recommendations:

- Respect to the expected learning outcomes, the list is of competencies and skills seem too general. It's necessary to specify more: General competencies, Transversal Competencies and Specific Competencies
- Respect to the proportion between theoretical and practical part of the study, for the first year, for all the subjects, the proportion would be 70%-30%; the second year, 60%-40%; and for the rest, 50%-50%.
- ✓ Provision should be made for tutorial system: every student must get a same mentor/coach from the BA admission to the end. The mentor must support, motivate and help to the student during its career. The mentor should deal with two students' tops and the mentorship frequency once a week (for example 1 hour/student).
- ✓ In the teaching methodology, increase cases studies and simulation activities
- ✓ Increase the access facilities to legal and doctrinal data (international, European and national levels)
- ✓ Increase the agreements with private and public institutions. Try to negotiate with international organizations present in Kosovo. For the future, communicate a list of effective agreements and the number of current internship in each partner of IC. The agreements have to include the type of practice to do, the number of hours, the student's evaluation and the supervision by a person of the partner institution.
- ✓ Communicate a complete information about the Clinical studies' implementation in the study Program
- ✓ Respect to the assessment, preview the same standard for all the subjects:
40% = final exam/test – 30% = collective work – 30% = individual work

5.1.2. Overview of the Program (Course Description and Contents)

Respect to the course description (SER, p. 213-218), the ET indicates several observations about the place and subject titles. First all, the SER doesn't explain the sense of the Program structure. For example, we don't have information about the modules (objectives, why last year, why these subjects, etc.)

Year 1:

1. *Introduction to the Law* instead of *theory of State and Law*
2. to make fusion between *Rhetorical of Law* and *Mass communications* as elective subject in 1st semester
3. insert *History of State and Law* in third elective subject in the 2nd semester
4. Insert *Methodology and Legal Research* in obligatory subject in the 1st semester

Year 2:

1. Insert *Constitutional Justice* in *Constitutional Law*
2. As elective subject, instead of *Constitutional Justice*, insert *Special Cases of Constitutional Justice*
3. Change the title *Politology* by *Political Theories and Applications*
4. Insert *Law of International Organizations* in *International Public Law*
5. *Criminalistics* has to become an elective subject and *Basis of European Law* has to be an obligatory subject.

Year 3:

1. *Arbitration*: specify the title and insert to the obligatory subjects.
2. Change de title of *Labor Law* by *Labor and Social Law*
3. Insert *Fiscal Law* with *Finance Law: Fiscal and Finance Law*
4. *European Law*: specify if it's institutional or/and material EU Law
5. Preview a third elective subject in the 6th semester

Year 4:

1. Insert *Competition Law* in obligatory subject instead of *methodology of legal research*
2. Preview a third elective subject in the 7th semester

Modules:

1. *Administrative – Constitutional*: modify the title of *Positive Constitutional Law*
2. *Civil Law*:
 - insert *inheritance Law* with *Property Law*
 - Contract Law*: modify by *Contract and Obligations Law*
 - Insert *Civil and International Arbitration* as obligatory subject
3. *International Law*: add to the title *European Law* and add *European Law* in each subject.
4. *General Law*: it's necessary to explain in the SER the reason of this module and the subjects

Respect to the subject contents, in general terms, the SER has to draw up a "Teaching Guide" for every subject, showing next points more clearly:

- Results expected (learning)
- Description of contents (with precision)
- The workload (classroom activities and non-attending activities)
- Teaching Methodology (specify)

Accreditation of academic programs: Iliria College – August 2016 (FINAL REPORT)

- Recent bibliographic references (basic and additional) and minimum 3 references in English
- In every “teaching guide”, indicate with precision the content of the practical part of the study with the elements mentioned above.

Respect to *Constitutional Law*, the SER has to shift page 245 and in *European Law*, to modify the contents (it seems more history than law).

With the modifications in the course description, it supposes that IC will have to create new elective subjects and reform several contents

5.1.3. Final Conclusions:

ET **recommend** the accreditation for three years, but with **the requirement “sine qua non”** of the following aspects:

- Create a **real research plan** in Law in all aspects (subjects, financial support, Program for several years, etc.) with **research teams or groups**
- Modify the structure of the Study Program (based on our recommendations)
- Modify the several contents
- Improve more in the internship agreements with public and private entities

5.2. Master in Civil Law

All the observations about the BA in Law are the same for the Master in Civil Law, in terms of Student Management, Teaching Methodology/Practical Work, Internship, Assessment, etc. Respect to the Master, we regret the absence of two responsible persons.

5.2.1. Observations about the Master Program

The subject contents and the Program structure are conformed with the objective of the Master in Civil Law. Nevertheless, we recommend:

- to include references to *European Law* in the content of every subject.
- to preview 5 ECTS for each subject and for the *Seminary work*
- all the subjects are obligatory
- 15 ECTS instead of 27 ECTS for *Mastser's thesis drafting and presentation*

5.2.2. Final Conclusions

ET **recommend** the accreditation for three years, but with **the requirement “sine qua non”** of the following aspects:

- Create a real research plan in Master in Civil Law in all aspects (subjects, financial support, Program for several years, etc.)
- Modify the Study Program (based on our recommendations)
- Improve more in the internship agreements with public and private entities.

5.3. Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) in Computer Science

5.3.1. Introduction

This program has been assessed in June 2013 and subsequently accredited for three years. The following major recommendations for improvement were made:

1. *Reconsider the formulations of mission and objectives of the program. The mission and outcomes of the program are far too ambitious.*

In 2016: This recommendation is in fact not taken into account. The formulations in 2016 are identical to those of 2013. The mission says that the study programme guarantees that the students will be able to “gain specialist skills in the areas of computer science in one or more of major focuses (Applied IT, Robotics and Business Informatics) which make them qualified personal and leader in these fields.” For example in robotics it is not just possible without having a dedicated lab for conducting classes in robotics (more about it below).

2. *Elaborate a motivation system for employing full time academic staff.*

In 2016: the College added funding for working on projects and for teaching additional classes. Cooperation with foreign institutions in applying and conducting EU projects has been intensified.

There were also some questions, statements and minor recommendations in the Evaluation Report of 2013:

3. *To what extent “Mathematics I” serves the subsequent courses in computer science?*

In 2016: the course *Mathematics I* was removed from the study programme and two new courses in mathematics added (*Calculus and Linear Algebra* and *Calculus 2*). However, the same question could be asked about these courses. It is not clear how these courses serve courses in computer science.

4. *The course Network Software (4th semester) includes the very basics of HTML. On the other hand, there already was a compulsory Web Language course on the second semester (taught by another teacher). Therefore teaching of the courses of a similar topic are not always coordinated.*

In 2016: the *Network Software* course does not contain basics of HTML any more, so the recommendation has been taken into account.

5. *The course Software Engineering bases on unified process methodology while agile methodologies are currently*

Accreditation of academic programs: Iliria College – August 2016 (FINAL REPORT)

massively used.

In 2016: agile methodology is (among a number of other methodologies) discussed in the course. On the other hand, this course is very overcrowded containing, for example, also project management.

6. *Only one computer lab suitable for conducting classes was demonstrated, another lab was suitable only for independent work.*

In 2016: there are two computer labs both suitable for conducting classes.

The following bases on the documents presented to the expert team, on the site visit and on discussion with some teaching staff – Azir Aliu, Nderim Zeqiri, Artan Luma, Halil Snopce, Arianit Maraj, Valdrin Haxhiu, Labinot Hasani.

Remark. The name of the study programme caused some confusion: the College submitted it under the name *Computer Science* while it is registered at the Ministry under the name *Computer Science – Applied IT*. The confusion becomes even bigger when looking at their web where the names *Computer Sciences – Applied Informatics* and just *Applied Informatics* are used (<http://www.uiliria.org/en/programs/bachelor/computer-science-applied-it>). It should also be mentioned that the SER was full of mistakes that made studying this document quite difficult.

5.3.2. Academic Programs and Student Management

Information technology is explicitly mentioned in the mission statement of the College. The mission of the College is to offer education that makes the graduates a qualified enough and leaders in the field (see also the comment to the 1st recommendation of 2013 above).

The quality, range and aims are in general appropriate to the bachelor degree. However, there are some concerns:

1. The study programme has three majors: 1) *Applied IT*, 2) *Robotics*, 3) *Business Informatics*. The objectives and learning outcomes for these majors are not formulated. Therefore, it is not possible to decide adequately enough on the composition of the majors and on the content of the each course in particular.
2. The major in *Robotics* is not supported with the necessary laboratory equipment. A few *Arduino* based solutions were demonstrated on a table in a general-purpose computer lab. If the College will continue offering a major in Robotics, then major investments are badly needed for setting up a dedicated computer lab with all the necessary components and software and hardware tools (including a 3D printer and 3D scanner).
3. The expected learning outcomes are partly too ambitious and even not adequate. Examples:
 - a. The learning outcome “Resolve complex problems, with a special focus on the fields of Algorithms, Software engineering, Database systems, Web-Application Technology, Network Communication and Robotics” is not adequate because courses in robotics are mandatory only to the students who take Robotics major. Other students can complete the study programme without having a single course in robotics.
 - b. It cannot be expected that bachelor graduates will “make Kosovo a competitor in the international scene” or possess “excellence-based education and the highest academic and ethical standards nationally and internationally” as it stands in two other learning outcomes.

Accreditation of academic programs: Iliria College – August 2016 (FINAL REPORT)

This type of learning outcomes cannot be taken seriously and may easily bring to the similar conclusion about the whole College. The expected learning outcomes should be formulated specifically enough for allowing adequate validation.

Recommendations:

1. Repetition of a recommendation from 2013 Report (that was neglected): Reconsider the formulations of the mission and expected learning outcomes of the programme.
2. Formulate the objectives and learning outcomes for the majors and revise the content of the majors accordingly.

Like the 2013 self-evaluation report, the 2016 SER does not present any evidence of having used in the College an overarching didactic concept. However, the course descriptions contain a section *Teaching and learning strategy* where the methods of achieving the learning outcomes are described.

Although the study programme is not compliant to any framework of university level ICT curricula recommended by an international organization (for example ACM/IEEE), it corresponds to international standards. However, the following aspects should necessarily be taken into account in further development of the study programme (additionally to those indicated above):

1. There should be enough freedom enabling students to take courses also from other higher educational institutions (national or international) or from other faculties inside the College. Both, the lecturers and the students complained that the study programme does not contain free electives. These would make it possible, for example, for a computer science student to take a course about IPR and licensing and for a law student a course in computing.
2. Link to the practice is relatively weak. There is no internship or other forms of industrial placement foreseen for the students.
3. The fact that the graduates have no experience in using *Java* (software engineering courses are based on C++) and that open source software is relatively little used is somewhat unusual.

The study programme gives sufficient opportunities for independent studies: a majority of courses have 6 credits and involves 60 contact hours and 90 hours for independent studies. The latter is supervised using mainly Skype, e-mail and individual consultations. Students are spending in average 15-20 hours weekly to independent studies. Therefore, having additionally in average about 20 contact hours (lectures and exercises) each week, it can be concluded that the workload for the academic programme is manageable for students. On the other hand, there are two aspects that both the students and teachers repeatedly stressed:

1. The access to the library resources should be possible also from outside the College' campus. The need to have access to other digital libraries (in computer science, for example, to the ACM/IEEE digital libraries).
2. Feedback to the students about their homework is not systematic and its absence does sometimes not motivate the students to make enough effort.

Recommendations:

1. Make the library resources available to the eligible individuals also from outside the campus.
2. Consider the possibilities to enlarge subscription to scientific electronic resources (possibly in cooperation with other relevant institutions).

Accreditation of academic programs: Iliria College – August 2016 (FINAL REPORT)

The biggest concern concerns the content of teaching units. There are some topics that should belong to the core of each computer science study programme and that are not mentioned in the syllabi. Examples of these topics: *virtualization, cloud computing, Internet of things, social software, linked/open/big data*. Although the teachers claimed that these topics are to a certain extent discussed in some courses, it is clearly not sufficient – a test conducted with the two participating students of computer science revealed that *cloud computing, social software* and *open data* were the only concepts from the above list they knew. Having this and the fact that the study programme does not contain any course on research methods, it can be concluded that the content of teaching units are clearly not sufficient for the successful achievement of the study programme's – very ambitious – goals and expected learning outcomes.

On the other hand, the course descriptions are quite thorough and give a good overview about the content of the courses.

Recommendation: update the course contents with the modern topics that are massively and increasingly used in IT professional activities and that are currently underrepresented in the study programme.

The admission criteria and procedures are adequate and the ratio of academic staff to students is appropriate (about 1:20).

5.3.3. Staff

The composition and the quality of academic staff have been considerably improved compared to the previous assessment in 2013: more than 60% of academic staff has full-time employment and more than 70% have a PhD degree. Academic staff has reached certain stability – about 60% was involved in the College also in 2013.

On the other hand, big part of the full-time teachers has other employments as well. As the majority of them indicate other institutions as their employers on their personal *LinkedIn* web pages, and not the College, it can be concluded that they do not consider the College as their primary employer. Therefore, their devotion to the work in the College may be questioned. For example, Azir Aliu who is in charge for the study programme, has indicated *South East European University* (SEEU) as his employer on his *LinkedIn* page. The College is not mentioned neither among his current or previous employers. Inserting “Azir Aliu”+Iliria in *Google search* returned only 9 hits (11.08.2016), but in fact none of them relates him directly with Iliria College. Neither has he indicated his affiliation to the College in his publications. On the other hand, inserting “Azir Aliu”+SEEU returns 9180 hits (sic!).

Recommendation: it is strongly recommended to reconsider the role and duties of the person in charge for the study programme, stating also his/her responsibilities in quality assurance of the study programme.

Note that 40% of lecturers – all full-time! – have Macedonian citizenship and that all responsible persons for the study programme who participated on the discussions (A.Aliu, N.Zeqiri, A.Luma) have Macedonian citizenship. From teachers having Kosovo's citizenship, less than 50% have full-time employment.

5.3.4. Research and International Co-operation

As the management of the College explained, the College is teaching oriented. There are no regular research seminars in computer science conducted in the College neither a single research project in CS. Although some teachers have relatively good publication record – much better than it was in 2013 –

Accreditation of academic programs: Iliria College – August 2016 (FINAL REPORT)

the research is mostly conducted outside the College. The staff has indicated other institutions as their affiliation in their scientific publications in the most cases.

Academic staff expressed several concerns and recommendations of improvement. The most significant were the following:

1. For starting high level (applied) research, it is vitally important to form a research group in computer science at the College.
2. There is no Action Plan and not enough resources for conducting research. Special financial support should be made available for young staff for participation on international scientific conferences.
3. For securing more resources for research, better cooperation with other colleges and universities, as well as with the labour market is needed.

The College issues two volumes of proceedings *Iliria International Review* each year, but hardly any article about computer science can be found there. It can be concluded that research in computer science at the College is absolutely not visible.

Recommendation: develop urgently a *Research Strategy* in Computer Science and corresponding *Action Plan* for its implementation.

No evidences about international cooperation in research and teaching were presented – the list of projects (including Erasmus+ projects) did not contain a single project in computer science or a project that is specifically targeted to the staff or students of computer science.

As the share of research that is conducted inside the College is relatively small, the opportunities to be involved in research are relatively restricted for the students. Some research can be done in the course of preparation of the thesis. The fact that the students are not well prepared for conducting research (the study programme does not contain no course in research methods and/or research methodology) certainly is another factor that does not support participation in research projects.

6. General conclusions of ET

The ET recommend for 3 YEARS the reaccreditation of:

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Bachelor in Law (BA)✓ Master in Civil Law (MA)✓ Bachelor in Computer Science (BSc). |
|---|

Prof. Dr. Peeter Normak
Prof. Dr. Frédéric Mertens de Wilmars

Intermediate Report, August 19, 2016