

Re-accreditation
of Study-Programmes at Iliria College, Prishtina, Kosovo

Final Evaluation Report

On behalf of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA)

October 20th, 2016

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Part I General Background

1. Procedure

The Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) has been empowered by the Minister of Education, Science and Technology of Kosovo to evaluate all institutions of higher education in Kosovo. KAA asked the following experts to visit Iliria College in Prishtina on Oct. 13th -14th 2016 as part of the assessment regulations:

- Nevenka Cavlek (University of Zagreb, Croatia)
- Volker Gehmlich (Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences, Germany).

Iliria College asked for a re-accreditation of the following study-programmes:

- BA in Banking, Finance and Accounting
- MA in Banking, Finance and Accounting
- BA in Management and Informatics
- MA in Management and Informatics
- MA in Health Management

The following report is based on the Self-Evaluation Report for Programme Evaluation submitted to the KAA by the College in September 2016, the meetings with management, responsible staff, academics and students respecting the Code of Good Practice for Site-Visits and the Guidelines for experts distributed by the KAA in line with the European Standards of Guidelines (2015).

2. Programme of the site-visit

Program Reaccreditation Procedure at PrBHE "ILIRIA" College

Date: 13th – 14th October 2016

Address: Street Gazmend Zajmi, Prishtinë

Coordinators of KAA

- 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

Site Visit Program

13th October 2016

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| 19.45 | Meeting in the Reception of the Hotel |
| 20.00 | Working dinner |

14th October 2016

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 08.30 | Meeting in the Reception of the Hotel |
| 09.00 – 09.30 | Meeting with the management of the Institution |
| 09.30 – 11.30 | Meeting with responsible persons for the study programs <i>(Curriculum, teaching, researches, recommendations)</i> |
| 11.30 – 12.30 | Visit to facilities |
| 12.30 – 14.00 | Lunch and discussion of ET and Co. KAA |
| 14.00 – 15.00 | Meeting with academic staff |
| 15.00 – 16.00 | Meeting with students |

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| 16.00 – 16.15 | ET and Co., KAA consultation |
| 16.15 – 16.30 | Closing meeting with the management of the Institution |
| 16.30 | The end of the site visit |

Annex: Meetings with responsible persons

| Nr. | Study programs | Experts | Responsible persons of study programs | | |
|-----|---|---|---------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Helathcare Management/ MA | Volker Gehmlich Nevenka Cavlek | Bashkim Berberi | Admir Nake | Ismije Sahiti* |
| 2 | Management and Informatics/ BA | | Nasir Selimi | Petrit Pollozhani | MeraleW Vehapi |
| 3 | Management and Informatics/ MA | | Petrit Dollani | Halil Snopce | Azir Aliu |
| 4 | Banking, Finance and Accounting/ BA | | Mixhait Recic | Mirac Hani | Shpresa Reshidi* |
| 5 | Banking, Finance and Accounting/ MA | | Shefket Jakupi | Arif Murrja | Adriatik Kotorri |

*unable to join

3. Meeting with Management

According to the Management Iliria is in a favourable competitive position within Kosovo since they managed to keep a sustainable number of students although more competitors have entered the education and training market, i.e. more public universities and some private colleges. Some colleges had to give up their activities. Management claims that Iliria's financial situation is stable and the college has managed to stay profitable. This is underlined by the number of applicants and number of students registered in the programmes offered.

Iliria is in the process of establishing their own building on a 7,000sqm site which they bought in the City Centre and which they expect to use from December 2016 onwards. They have also kept on investing in the improvement of library facilities and they managed to internationalise their electronic library network and acquire equipment for detection of plagiarism.

Iliria has been able to increase their international cooperation with USAID support and close connections to both, US and UK embassy. The College also follows suggestions made by the US Chamber of Commerce.

According to Iliria a major challenge to their future is linked to the present law on Higher Education in Kosovo. Management believes that the recruitment of top-level staff is getting more and more difficult because of their limited range of programmes they can offer (mainly bachelor and master programmes) and they see the future development of their staff endangered. They are afraid that their staff might leave the country because of missing opportunities.

It should be highlighted that the College is much in favour of supporting financially students and staff, e.g. by giving grants or offering courses outside the fixed curricula without extra charge or covering the expenses for attending conferences, publishing materials or fostering internationalisation. They are also responsive to needs of the labour market in form of specific courses. Additionally, they offer consultancy to their graduates four years after graduation, free of charge. In this way their alumni network is strengthened and the competences of their former students are enhanced. Iliria received information that the alumni could very usefully exploit the newly acquired skills and competences. By doing so Management is convinced that the Kosovo economy will benefit directly, e.g. through the increase of new businesses. Iliria hopes to keep its open-mindedness and become internationally visible.

Part II Programme Evaluation

1. Banking, Finance and Accounting

Meetings with responsible persons for the study-programme and academic staff teaching on the programme

1.1. Curricula

1.1.1. Bachelor Level

It is a 3-year programme which comprises 18 mandatory courses and 17 electives out of which the students have to study 8. Of the mandatory courses only one is covering Banking directly; none of the electives is supporting this direction. However, some areas are dealt with in other subjects, such as Financial Markets and Institutions or Monetary Finance, both mandatory.

Having put Banking first in the denomination of the programme, may mislead outsiders. The experts conclude that the content of the programme is much more geared towards Finance and Accounting, underlining the more general orientation of the programme (see report of 2013). Otherwise one could expect that at least electives would reflect more the banking area.

Although there was the recommendation in the 2013 report to include „Entrepreneurship“ as mandatory course, underlining the specific environment in Kosovo, the college lists this course still as an elective, arguing that this was recommended by experts. At least in the past evaluation report of this programme the experts clearly outlined their suggestion.

The experts noted positively that some recommendations of the past reaccreditation have been taken up, e.g. the clarity of curricula (see report from 2013) and the better quality of the report (fewer mistakes in the use of English). As regards the alignment of learning, teaching and assessing progress has been made concerning the writing of learning outcomes (some active verbs are being used) but the reflection of learning outcomes in learning and teaching (student-centered approach) should be further improved in particular as regards the forms and types of assessment. There is no real transparency how the stated learning outcomes relate to the forms and types of assessment documented in the SER. Some learning outcomes lack the information about the modality within which the object of learning can be achieved. They cover knowledge, skills and competence but the college could improve the structure of their presentation by applying the elements of Kosovo Qualifications Framework (see also report of 2013). This would also be helpful assuring that the courses meet the bachelor level. This may be supported by mapping the learning outcomes of programme thus revealing clearly a progression of learning within the

programme. Any ambiguity as regards the learning outcomes should be avoided. It is helpful to avoid terms like „understand“ (see also ECTS User`s Guide of 2015).

It is questionable whether it is suitable to achieve two credits for an internship which does not appear in the overview of the course as an independent element, i.e. neither semester nor year is identified for this activity; it should last for a minimum of one month and is characterised as part-time work . It might be helpful to follow the ECTS User`s Guide 2015 in this regard. The performance of the student as an intern is reported by the company supervisor to the student tutor and provides information about the student`s professional and personal abilities (page 71). There are no further details given to which extent this information is taken as an assessment in form of a mark or whether it is only taken as a workload estimated as 50 hours, i.e. two credits. These 2 credits only appear as part of the bachelor thesis (page 21); the relationship between the two, however, is not clearly outlined.

This internship is a very interesting element but should be much more strengthened in the curriculum. First of all it should be noted that a part-time work for a month could not be for more than 20 hours a week, i.e. roughly 80 hours per month, corresponding to at least 3 credits. An analytical report should round up the internship so that overall it could carry 5 credits (workload for the report about 50 hours, e.g.). The forms of evaluation read like a shopping list and should be more specified as the internships as such. The experts also believe that the present status of the internship is much too vague, though they agree about its benefits. The college might consider to design the internship as a separate course/module within the programme – with the respective independent credits – or that it is really linked to the bachelor thesis, i.e. while the student is working in the business organisation a topic is designed and finalised within the internship or at the latest, for example, a week later. The present 8 credits for the thesis and 2 for the internship should be increased to at least 12 credits, reflecting a workload of 300 hours. For some students the internship may even have the form of a full-time placement. This internship should be stressed as a characteristics which singles out this programme from similar programmes in Kosovo. It also follows common practice in many universities of applied sciences in particular within the European Higher Education Area. Another option could be imagined by linking the course Project Management with the internship.

In comparison to the past reports the allocation of credits has improved. However, the general explanation given that the difference in the number of credits is due to the complexity of the course could basically be fine but then it should be possible to prove this statement. The experts have not been able to identify any evidence. Overall the credits are being used in a rather quantitative way; their qualitative element could be exploited to structure the courses better. This refers to part of independent learning as well which is rather seen as the difference between the hours represented by the number of credits (1 credit = 25 hrs) and the contact hours, comprising lectures and exercises. Students were not

really aware about independent learning. That causes some concern as the programme is qualified as a full-time one; however, it became evident in the meeting with the students that most of them are in some type of employment, i.e. their time for independent learning is even more restricted. They also seem to need to learn what independent learning entails (so may the teachers have to).

1.1.2. Master level

The programme consists of 8 mandatory courses and 3 electives (out of 6) plus the Master thesis with a workload of 30 credits being placed in the fourth semester. Only Bank Management (1st semester) is stipulated as a course related to Banking. However, the title is identical with the course at bachelor level (3rd semester). Although the contents seem to differ, it is not really possible to exclude overlaps. Nevertheless, it looks – from the experts' view that the Master learning outcomes seem to be more at bachelor level, e.g. „understand the main principles of banking business“... (SER 142p). Rather surprisingly it is stated at bachelor level that students should „understand the banking system of different countries“; the experts wonder whether the sequence should not be the other way round. Similarly, the mandatory course „Financial Markets and Institutions“ at bachelor level is an elective at Master level and parts of the contents seem to overlap. There should be a clearer distinction as regards the name and the contents. Unfortunately, this refers as well to „Public Finance“ and „Corporate Finance“. The experts think that the differences between the two levels are not clearly distinguished.

„Management Accounting“ (many colleges refer to it as „Managerial Accounting“) appears also in both programmes and the experts identify similar problems.

The experts worry that 5 courses out of the 11 electives the students have to study cause these questions of quality (see also evaluation report from 2013, 67p).

In addition to what has been said above the experts were surprised to learn that independent learning is seen in a 1:2 hours relationship (one hour of contact; 2 hours of independent studies). At Master level the relationship is expected to be more likely 1:3 hours.

1.2. Academic Staff

In the bachelor programme a total of 31 staff holding a PhD and seven having been awarded an MA are teaching courses. Unfortunately, it is impossible for the experts to verify this number as the reference list of the KAA is not detailing the subjects taught by the staff. Also, it is not clear – because it is not mentioned – who of the teaching staff holds the academic title of professor, associate or assistant professor. However, the experts were able to talk to the staff present and found out that they appeared to have a qualified academic background, professional experience in the field and demonstrated enthusiasm to be

teachers in the programme. This refers only to those present in the meeting but was confirmed by students as regards the whole academic staff in the respective meeting later on.

It seemed that with the exception of the seven staff holding a Master-degree the other staff present were also teaching at Master level. Because of the missing information as regards the individual contracts of staff the experts were unable to find out to which extent staff was engaged at both levels with which number of contact hours. The overview in the SER refers to 15 PhD-holders as „permanent scientific personnel“ (SER 134, English version). On page 228 all full-time and part-time staff are stated by the college; but the list does not always correspond with the list supplied by the KAA which is the legitimate basis for the judgments by the experts. It is possible, that in the list of the college several staff are listed as full-time – and are seen as such by the college – but may very well also be employed, even as full-timers, in other institutions. It might be helpful – but probably not feasible – to have information of the contracts made with the College (contact hours and courses to be taught).

In the meetings it became apparent that staff could do with a further development of their language skills in English. Permanently a translator was necessary. Most of the staff present seemed to lack confidence in communicating in the foreign language. It may be helpful to offer more opportunities for staff to gain the confidence so that they could teach their subjects in English thus enhancing the opportunities for the students to improve the much needed language skills in the internal business and academic environment. The experts cannot see the opportunity of internationalisation when these skills are lacking. On the other hand the experts noted that several staff were able to converse in Italian or German and the experts wondered why these skills didn't seem to be exploited.

It was positively revealed that staff was ready for extra-curricula activities. Students confirmed that staff was available for them whenever needed. Staff calculated 2 hours per student per week at bachelor level; more than that for master students.

Experts noted that the knowledge about the Kosova Qualifications Framework could be improved so that the distinction between programmes and their respective courses at bachelor or master level became more apparent. A more critical approach is needed (see description of knowledge, skills and competence in the Kosova Qualifications Framework and the Dublin Descriptors in the European Higher Education Qualifications Framework – as noted above).

Full-time teachers teach about 6 hrs per week. The exercises are offered by assistants, again a staff-category not easily identifiable.

1.3. Research

It appears that the College has not stipulated a research policy, though they speak of a „clear vision and mission“, „a strategy“ and „clear objectives“ (p.247). The policy should be sharpened and evidence provided – in particular by 2017 as the present planning period should come to an end by then (2013-2017).

It was confirmed by staff that they were encouraged to get involved in research projects at regional and European level, and were supported when participating in international conferences and publications. Within the descriptions of all programmes a research plan („under evaluation“) is stipulated. A long list of interesting topics is laid down but the implementation or the information about the state of intentions is missing (e.g. page 24). On page 247 the activities of the Research Institute are listed and it is said that the Science Information Service informs staff regularly about relevant meetings, conferences and the like; it even drafts a Work Plan for all departments. The College highlights that it employs staff with research potential.

Iliria has developed its own journal and staff is eager to place scientific articles also in other well-ranked journals as this opens options in their future career.

1.4. International Cooperation

As regards this area the institution is very eager but has its limitations which are often caused by the status of Kosovo. Still, the experts would welcome the involvement of more international visiting professors which was also voiced by students and staff. There may be more encouragement or knowledge needed about the opportunities offered within EU-programmes, both as regards teaching and researching. Mobility across borders is a particular challenge but should not discourage staff and students from trying. A positive example is the involvement in international summer schools.

2. Management and Informatics

Meetings with responsible persons for the study-programme and academic staff teaching on the programme

2.1. Curricula

2.1.1. Bachelor level

The programme comprises 18 mandatory and 15 electives out of which each student has to select 8 electives. Whereas Mathematics, Microeconomics and Accounting are being mandatorily taught, a key issue, i.e. Informatics, is not being offered before students have entered the second semester. One could also argue whether the terminology is adequate as

Informatics does not necessarily correspond to Information Technology (IT). It is worthwhile discussing why „Introduction to IT“ is not foreseen in the first semester, indicating IT as an essential part of this programme, being followed by „Business Informatics“ in the third and „Database Management“ in the fifth semester, possibly complemented by „Operational Research“, „Informations System Design“ and „E-Business“ as available choices as electives in the semesters to follow.

Being in line with what was recommended in the past reaccreditation report the experts like to stress again that the profile of the programme is much more of a general management nature. The experts still believe that the profile of this programme should be sharpened and its position clarified within the Kosovo environment. The experts note the further development but think that some more work has to be invested to this extent as outlined in the past and the present report.

It is questionable whether it is sufficient for students of Management and Informatics to have an English course only of level I. It is not stipulated which level of the European Competence Framework for Languages this refers to. According to the description the level is very low taking into account the students' intention to study a significant part in Informatics. If other courses were taught in English this might help significantly but neither in the description of the course nor by asking the students such an opportunity was mentioned (but wanted).

As both bachelor programmes overlap, the comments made by the experts as regards Internship and Entrepreneurship within the Banking, Finance and Accounting bachelor programme are also valid for Management and Informatics.

2.1.2. Master level

At Master level students have to study 8 mandatory courses and 3 electives out of seven. The following courses are being offered in both programmes (Bachelor and Master level):

E-Business (elective in both)

Entrepreneurship (elective in both)

Database Management (compulsory in both)

Human Resource Management (compulsory in both)

The experts wonder to which extent a differentiation is really made between the programmes. The paper version is not sufficiently clear to this extent. As regards Human Resource Management, for example, the experts doubt whether a real distinction is made at all.

The experts have the feeling that because of the significant changes in the area of Informatics the syllabus should be more regularly updated.

2.2. Academic Staff

See also the evaluation made above within the the programmes in Banking, Finance and Accounting.

If the College considers these programmes as different how does it come that the number of staff are identical. Is this just by chance or does it underline the opinion of the experts that both programmes are – more or less – general programmes in management. Because of this the College might consider to have a common core – at least in the first year - for both programmes which then differ in particular in their final year.

As part of the rationale of the programme the labour market is referred to. The College stresses career programmes as regards Entrepreneurship but they do not have the respective course as an obligatory one, in none of the programmes outlined above.

Improvements have been made as regards the number of credits being allocated, though a further explanation as regards the slight difference between individual courses could be helpful.

2.3. Research

As outlined above

It is stipulated that the list of areas and the support through the Scientific Research Institute are identical for all four programmes listed here and that the Institute works for all departments and their programmes.

2.4. International Cooperation

As outlined above

3. Health Care Management

Meetings with responsible persons for the study-programme and academic staff teaching on the programme

3.1. Curriculum

3.1.1. Master Level

The programme identifies a clear profile and students have to study 9 mandatory courses and to select 2 out of 4 electives, indicating a limited choice. The experts believe that the institution has managed to bridge the gap between the economics and the managerial issues. The experts support the managerial concepts into the health care sector. They

acknowledge the clear vision of the staff to adjust the programme to future developments in the sector and to position it respectively. The experts fully agree with the intentions expressed by staff in the meeting. This programme clearly demonstrates how a programme at college level could impact on the development and necessary changes in the field being internationally oriented. The representatives of the programme distinctively highlighted the responsibility and accountability of the implementation of the objectives of the programme. The experts still believe that the design and implementation of this programme could be used as a good example for other programmes of the institution and beyond – as was stated in the 2013 report. It should also be highlighted that all master dissertations are clearly linked to issues on the ground and have an applicable approach.

Nevertheless, the experts believe that international cooperation should be strengthened and developed and existing personal connections should be used to invite visiting professors from abroad. There is, also, an obvious need of revising the required literature in the light of the state-of-the-art. Within this context it is advisable to differentiate between literature which has to be studied in a compulsory manner and those which could be classified as additional reading.

The experts agreed totally with the intention of the programme representatives to emphasise more ethical approaches in a particular or in several courses.

3.2. Academic Staff

Academic staff consists of 10 members, all with PhDs. As in the case of all other programmes, it is impossible for the experts to verify this number as the reference list of the KAA is not detailing the subjects taught by the staff. However, the staff present at the meeting with experts did not have any difficulty in expressing themselves in the English language (except one).

3.3. Research

The experts are of the opinion that the College has developed a substantial research plan related to the challenges of the health system of Kosovo. The experts also positively evaluate students' involvement in this research.

3.4. International Cooperation

As already stated above, it is strongly advised that the programme strengthens and develops by inviting visiting professor from abroad and to collaborate with them in joint research projects.

4. Students

The experts thought that the students had been supported in critical thinking. Unfortunately, this has not been demonstrated in the discussion. They may need more encouragement in expressing their views, independent of the language used. Although students appeared to be very mature they were reluctant – to a certain extent – to reveal their opinions. They would definitely benefit from including lessons in the English language and for those of lower English language skills of extending English courses in the second and third year. Students realised the essential need of coping with English, not necessarily in the strict grammatical sense, but would welcome courses being presented in the English language, forcing them to adapt.

Overall the students were very satisfied with the infrastructure of the College, the support they receive through special services, e.g. Career Service, the quality and availability of academic staff and the overall atmosphere. All of them seemed to have made an informed and determined decision when opting for this College.

Part III Recommendations to KAA

Based on the remarks and suggestions given in the report the expert team recommends to the KAA the following:

- **Re-accredit the Bachelor programme in Banking, Finance and Accounting as BA in Banking, Finance and Accounting for another three years.**
- **Re-accredit the Master programme in Banking, Finance and Accounting as MA in Banking, Finance and Accounting for another two years.**
- **Re-accredit the Bachelor programme in Management and Informatics as BA in Management and Informatics for another 3 years.**
- **Re-accredit the Master programme in Management and Informatics as MA in Management and Informatics for another two years.**
- **Re-accredit the Master programme in Health Care Management as MA in Health Care Management for another 3 years.**