



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency

RIINVEST COLLEGE

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT/ BA

REACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

June 2019, Prishtina



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: 6th of June 2019

Expert Team (ET) members:

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

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

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

Sources of information for the Report:

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

Criteria used for institutional and program evaluations

- KAA Accreditation Manual



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1.2. Site visit schedule

6 June

08.30	Meeting at the reception of the hotel
09.00 – 10.30	Meeting with the management of the institution (<i>no slide presentation is allowed, the meeting is intended as a free discussion</i>)
10.30 – 11.30	Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative services
11.30 – 13.00	Meeting with the heads of study programs
13.00 – 13.50	Lunch break (<i>to be served at the institution</i>)
13.50 – 14.20	Visiting tour of the facilities and infrastructure
14.20 – 15.00	Meeting with teaching staff
15.00 – 15.50	Meeting with students
15.50 – 16.30	Meeting with graduates
16.30 – 17.10	Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders
17.10 – 17.25	Internal meeting – Expert Team and KAA
17.25 – 17.40	Closing meeting with the management of the institution



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

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

- *Studies in BA Business Management have been offered since 2007 and are principally devoted to potential students who complete pre-university school cycles and plan to continue undergraduate studies and to advance in the academic or economic / business / management areas or to be employed in public or private institutions;*
- *This programme offers three study profiles: 1) Economic Analysis for Business 2) Management and Marketing 3) Banking, Finance and Accounting;*
- *Given the strategic goal of ensuring a high level of student employment and as part of the commitment to good brand studies in economics and business, management of the programme has achieved significant cooperation with well-known domestic businesses to provide scholarships and jobs for graduates from this programme;*
- *This year, Riinvest College has launched the “STUDY FOR FREE” model and the BA Business Management programme has marked an increase in the student numbers and attraction of excellent students in the programme.*

Riinvest College has a very friendly website (<https://london.ac.uk/riinvest-college> and <https://www.riinvest.net/en/>), looking like an invitation to come and meet the staff, to find about their offer, to study there. They consider themselves as a unique teaching institution, located in the capital of “Young Europeans” – Prishtina. They provide courses that can be studied in a London campus, aspect someone can clearly identify from the very beginning, seen the reception and the entrance in the building.

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



2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

2.1. Mission, objectives and administration

As stated in SER (pages 5-6):

- *Business Management Programme aims to provide experts for the benefit of Kosovo's development needs with capacity to compete globally;*
- *The program incorporates students into research, practical work, and develops competitive skills and competencies that provide a good basis for flexibility in their work career or further studies not only in Kosovo but also abroad;*
- *This program is also one of the key components of institutional vision implementation to be a model institution in Kosovo and the region, a good combination of analytical, creative and research and entrepreneurial skills;*
- *The college has been advised by partner universities such as the University of Dubrovnik and Staffordshire University.*
- *Studies are conducted based on the criteria and legal frameworks for higher education and the bachelor study regulations. The regulation is reviewed and then approved at the academic council and made public for everyone on the Riinvest College website.*
- *Student progress monitoring is done through the student management system (SIM), while the success and student achievement is reviewed at regular meetings of the programme committee. The results are communicated individually for each student and, where necessary, the student is advised about the studies performance with the department head. Moreover, semester success for all students is presented and discussed at Academic Council meetings.*

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

- *The mission of Riinvest College is to provide high quality studies and research that develop experts for the benefit of Kosovo's development needs, with the capacity to compete globally;*
- *The College values are:*
 - *Cultivating creativity, critical thinking and innovation*



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- *Tolerance*
- *High ethics and honesty*
- *Academic freedom*
- *Partnership and transparency towards stakeholders, institutions and the public*
- *Identification and ownership of our mission, vision and values by staff and students.*

Therefore, the mission of the program is in compliance with the overall mission statement of the institution, paying a lot of attention to create through teaching and research a huge connection to local development in the context of the global competition. Relevant academic and professional advice has been considered in the process of defining learning outcomes of the program; the institution has developed good relationships with the private sector and business community. The research interest of the college is proven by the staff implication in projects: <https://www.riinvest.net/en/projektet/>. In defining the program mission, there is no clear research orientation, apart from the word “research” used in the mission description; taking into consideration the potential of the institution, the study program should develop a clear and specific research concept. The set of 12 case studies which was prepared by the staff is clearly a good start, but research concept does not mean case study type of analysis, but a diversity of methods sharing common or connected objectives towards a general scope. Riinvest College team considers that research concept for the program submitted can be analysed in cooperation with the MA program, and does not consider it as being important for the bachelor level of studies, as the connection with the practice is clearly considered; nevertheless, the KAA standards must be considered as applied to each program, as different programs refer to different level of qualification. The research concept of the program can be identified as being of secondary importance, after the didactic concept, but it must be expressed from the mission of the program.

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

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



Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Define a clear research concept; organize a mixt focus group (with dean, head of program, teaching staff, student, graduate, employer) to identify in partnership the research concept of the program;*
2. *Make some efforts to communicate at central level that the procedures should be uploaded also in English language.*

2.2. Quality management

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

- *In order to increase the quality, a student assessment of the subject and lecturer is conducted in between the 10th – 12th week of lectures. The received results are further analysed by the programme leader and actions are taken based on the needs arising from the evaluation;*
- *In addition, the quality office also organizes focus groups with students at all levels during each semester. Findings from the focus group are highlighted in the internal evaluation report and placed on a platform available for staff;*
- *Data from staff assessment for the institution are held and then presented to the academic council and are recorded in the evaluation report.*
- *Comprehensive re-evaluation of the programme takes place every three years and includes professionals with experience in economics, management and other areas of expertise, while the Faculty of Economics of the University of Dubrovnik and the Faculty of Business of Staffordshire University are advisory participants as faculties with long experience in the sector of education. On the other hand, student representatives attend the programme committee meetings and in the drafting of the college's strategic plan.*

Therefore, it is clear that staff participate in the evaluations and cooperate with reporting and improvement processes in their sphere of activity; in addition, there is a huge interest



of the college in quality assurance issues. Evaluation processes are part of a planning process meant to generate improvement in teaching and cooperation with students.

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

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

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

Feedback is collected from companies during the internship stage of the students; therefore, companies provide feedback in relationship with the quality of work, learning abilities, teamwork, initiative, reaction to supervision etc.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

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2.3. Academic staff

The SER has been completed with additional documents, after the site visit. The tables provided by the Riinvest College refers to the categories of work for the academic staff: teaching, exams, mentoring, administrative activities, research and community service as well as consulting as per projects subject to projects and managed through separate contract; these refer to both full-staff and part-time staff. The teaching staff comply with the legal requirements and have the proper qualifications. In fact, most of the teaching staff had studied abroad and got an international experience in teaching and learning.

Different opportunities are provided for additional professional development of teaching staff. There is a link from the website that refers to academic staff, but this is not in English and seems not to be very functional: <https://www.riinvest.net/en/about/our-teachers/#1471609606258-69a6e1d4-e3f9>. During the discussion with the teaching staff, the participant highlighted that there is a huge difference from a public university to Riinvest Collge, as at the college they can act in an integrity-based environment, where they can feel the academic freedom. They all have agreed that several professional debates take place ad these can be considered a best practice for sharing knowledge from experienced professors to young ones.

The responsibilities of the full-time teaching staff include the engagement in the academic community, availability for consultations with students and community service. The table provided show that not all staff get involved in the community service, only 7 out of 35 people.

In SER it is mentioned that:

- *Being part of the EUFORIA project, teaching staff from the BA programme had the opportunity to participate in two curriculum development trainings;*
- *Two additional trainings abroad on how to write case studies with a local context and as a result, staff have written eight case studies in cooperation with local companie;.*
- *Whereas, training for integration of case studies in teaching has been held at Riinvest by international professors.*



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

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

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

2.4. Educational process content

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

- *Teaching in the BA Business Management Programme is developed through lectures, practical part which is carried out during the exercises, researches and applied practice.*
- *Modules offer practical application opportunities (e.g. the Practice Subject) while students are required to complete the internship at one of the local companies, depending on the study profile and receive ECTS for this.*
- *Students studying at Economic Analysis for Business must attend compulsory internships at Riinvest Institute, those of Management & Marketing profile in our partner companies, while Banking, Finance and Accounting in Banks.*
- *Module lecturer along with the career's office monitor the intership process.*

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



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

- The professors' openness to their requirements;
- The possibility of getting involved in curricular and extracurricular activities;
- Their involvement in research activities and even in applied research;
- The possibility of addressing complains in a special box;
- Great digitalization in communication (even too many notifications);

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

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

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2.5. Students

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

- *Applicants have the opportunity to apply online or personally at college.*
- *Admission requirements (minimum ones) are:*
 - *Certificate of "Matura Test" (Kosovo) or equivalent.*
 - *Certificate of International Middle School.*
 - *Minimum 12 years of education*



- *Aged students with relevant and / or professional experience will be considered on the basis of their individual merits. (This applies to those who have completed high school when there was no mature exam).*

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

Transfer of students is also regulated, the information being publicly available at: <https://www.riinvest.net/en/pranimi/transferet/>.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Create an alternative option (probably a formal internal procedure) for students with special needs in order to respect the deadlines and the formal requirements.*
2. *Make visible the students' rights and obligations; a solution would be to add a new procedure among the already existing ones and to include in a Handbook for students.*

2.6. Research

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

Research is very much considered as an important obligation of the academic staff. The level of engagement of the staff in research is different, as incentives for research represent a weakness of the institutional context, due to the high competition. The set of the 12 case studies prepared by the academic staff is used in teaching. The Office of Riinvest Consulting is working great with businesses willing to cooperate with academics in research subjects, mainly in preparing a clear and functional business plan. Students provide in many cases desk



research for different research projects. Riinvest provides training to students on project management, but during the discussion with the employers, it was revealed the need for the graduates to know much more in this area.

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

In SER it was mentioned that:

- *Majority of professors are continuously engaged in research and projects at the Riinvest Research Institute. Another major number is included in international research projects under mobility programmes with universities from Great Britain, Italy, Turkey, Croatia and Slovenia.*
- *A number of the BA Business Management programme staff participate in trainings for businesses in the field of sales and marketing, finance and consultancy in drafting strategic and business plans.*

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

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Extend the training program for academic staff on project management to increase the success rate in research applications;*
2. *Identify 3-5 research objectives correlated among them to reflect the main direction of research for the study program.*

2.7. Infrastructure and resources

As stated in the SER:

- *BA Business Management programme has modern infrastructure equipped with appropriate teaching technology and tools for the development of the learning process.*



- *Each classroom has at least one computer and projector, while subjects that handle quantitative (Accounting) accounting and accounting systems are held in computer labs equipped with computers and software for processing and analyzing data.*
- *Moreover, the programme also has a library that provides all the books that are included in the course curriculum that the programme offers. The library is open 24/7, provides reading space, thus supporting the continuous development of student.*
- *Students have access to three electronic resources from various online bookstores such as Athens or JStore; IMS Library and NEJM Library Hub to be used for project / task/ research.*
- *The programme provides ongoing training for academic staff on capacity building of teaching, in particular for the use of the systems and resources that the college possesses as well as external resources that can be used in the teaching process.*

The study program is developed within a small institution, which makes everything easier in terms of sustainability for the next 3 years; a financial plan at institutional level is therefore relevant for the program level, as the allocation is much better controlled in a small institution compared with a big one.

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

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

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

3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

The program submitted is an attractive one to potential students. With continuous improvements in the abovementioned areas, it has all the potential to become a top program in the region on Business Management.

The site visit was very well organized, all categories of participants to discussions being aware of what was happening and willing to contribute to all clarifications required by the expert team.



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The main recommendations are:

1. Clarify the research concept of the program;
2. Motivate staff for more research applications;
3. Invest in conditions for students with special needs;
4. Look for solutions related to the standard-related recommendations.

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the study program *Business Management/BSc*, offered by RIINVEST COLLEGE is *Substantially compliant* with the standards included in the *KAA Accreditation manual* and, therefore, recommends *to accredit* the study program for a duration of 3 years with a number of 100 (2 groups) students to be enrolled in the program.

Expert Team

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