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Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



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Riinvest College

Programs under evaluation:

1. COMPUTER SCIENCE AND SOFTWARE ENGINEERING – Re-Accreditation of BSc

ACCREDITATION Evaluation

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM



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6th June, Prishtina

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: 6th June 2019

Expert Team (ET) members:

- *Prof. Dr. Vassilis Tsiantos - Eastern Macedonia and Thrace Institute of Technology*

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 of the Riinvest College Computer Science and Software Engineering*
- *Site-visit information;*
- *Webpage of the College;*
- *Annexes to the SER;*
- *Complementary materials from the KAA (CVs, Syllabuses etc.)*

Criteria used for program evaluation:

- *National standards for quality assurance as presented in the Accreditation manual transmitted by the KAA;*
- *European Standards and Guidelines, 2015;*
- *Decisions or regulations of the MEST - as understood by the ET;*



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

Insert general information about the institution and the program under evaluation, its legal status, its mission, and others.

- The department of CSSE has been serving the higher education system in Kosovo from 2007. In 2012, Riinvest college applied for accreditation as an independent educational institution under the name of “Riinvest College” and accredited as a three-year college by KAA and reaccredited in 2015.
- Riinvest's academic staff developed over several years at European and American universities, and particularly at Staffordshire University of Great Britain. Now the best professors and experts in the field of economics and computer science are bound to Riinvest College by creating a strong foundation for economics and business studies at Bachelor and Master level.
- Along with the mission of institution, the department of Computer Science and Software Engineering (CSSE) has a mission as follows: *Mission of CSSE is to provide a high quality of education in Computer Science in general and training an elite educated generation for the needs of Kosovo.*

2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

The ET decided to present its conclusions and recommendations within the template of the report (as received from the KAA) by discussing each standard under each of the General Area of the Accreditation Manual. This section is dedicated therefore to presenting the results of the analysis of the collected information and recommendations for improvement. The data was collected from the SER and the interviews conducted during the site visit.

2.1. Mission, objectives and administration

(Insert all comments or observations, commendations and suggestions relating to this general area and its allocated standards, as specified in the KAA Accreditation manual. Consideration should be given to the adequacy of processes and results achieved in each of the standards.)

Standard 1.1. The study program mission is in compliance with the overall mission statement of the institution.



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The study program mission is in compliance with the Riinvest College mission (SER, p. 4) as resulted from [SER, p. 3] that states that: *“Mission of CSSE is to provide a high quality of education in Computer Science in general and training an elite educated generation for the needs of Kosovo.”*

Standard 1.2. **Relevant academic and professional advice** is considered when **defining the intended learning outcomes** which are consistent with the **National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area**.

The SER did include relevant data to show the compliance with this standard, and also during the site-visit, the conducted interviews proved that the learning outcomes were designed by the professors in charge of the disciplines with external help only at the initial stages building the course (Vienna profs). Some of them declared they compared their syllabus proposal with the syllabus of similar international programs. The teaching staff declared that they are checking the learning outcomes in order to improve them. However, there is space for improvement. Teachers are very familiar in using new technologies in their teaching and research activities. For example, Moodle/e-learning platform is used in order to communicate with their students and sharing materials with them. Using such a tool help their teaching activity and save them precious time that could be invested into further explanations or examples related to the most difficult elements of the course – those that usually cause problems to the students (who find it difficult to meet the required standards).

Recommendation: the university can consider the opportunity of using the established structures within the University for providing training opportunities for their teachers. These trainings could on the one hand provide training in new teaching methods and international trends relevant for the teaching activity, and on the other hand could provide training in areas indicated by the evaluations of teachers as areas that need improvement.

Standard 1.3. The study program has a **well-defined overarching didactic and research concept**.

As resulted from the SER [p.12] and the annexed syllabuses, the study program has been built with a first and foremost educational (didactic) purpose: to offer the opportunity to all potential candidates to a career in the field of Computer Science and Software Engineering. Moreover, the program intends to contribute also to the development of research skills of the



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students and facilitate the creation of an offering environment for its academic staff to engage in research activities and reach good results.

Standard 1.4. There are formal **policies, guidelines and regulations** dealing with recurring procedural or academic issues. These are made **publicly available** to all staff and students.

As resulted both from the SER and the interviews from the site visit, there are policies and regulations for recurring procedural and academic issues such as: student's admission, hiring new academic staff, organizations of the studies, etc. According to the [SER, p. 4] "The regulation book is reviewed and then approved at the academic council and made public for everyone on the Riinvest College website every academic year and it is modified, in case of need, and published through website".

Standard 1.5. **All staff and students comply with the internal regulations** relating to **ethical conduct in research, teaching, assessment** in all academic and administrative activities.

All staff and students met during the interviews knew about the existence of the internal regulations and were able to explain them to the ET, thus proving that they were aware of them. Moreover, the QA responsible persons were able to prove that they check if all these regulations are followed by everyone.

According to the [SER, p. 4] there is a note that "Based on the Code of Ethics and College Bachelor's Degree Regulations, students enjoy equal opportunities for enrollment and study regardless of gender, religion, ethnicity or nationality. Registration of students with special needs is treated affirmatively based on the available conditions". The site visit showed that Riinvest College fulfils the requirements of the Standard.

Standard 1.6. **All policies, regulations**, terms of reference and statements of responsibility relating to the management and delivery of the program **are reviewed at least once every two years** and amended as required in the light of changing circumstances.

The so called MIS (Management Information System) tool is a strong point of the Department. It helps the leading team to make decisions towards the necessary revision of the Policies and regulations which usually occurs every year.

Compliance level: Fully Compliant



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ET recommendations:

- 1. The Department should develop their own policies and regulations based on the Statute of the University and the policies and regulations of the university (by including details specific to the CSSE BSc program);*
- 2. A Committee for quality assurance and evaluation at the level of academic unit (Department) would help as this has not been established. This structure should use the procedures and guidelines for QA from the level of university and adapt them for the level of the Department.*

2.2. Quality management

(Insert all comments or observations, commendations and suggestions relating to this general area and its allocated standards, as specified in the KAA Accreditation manual. Consideration should be given to the adequacy of processes and results achieved in each of the standards.)

Standard 2.1. All staff participates in self-evaluations and cooperates with reporting and improvement processes in their sphere of activity.

According to the SER, the Senate, Rector, the Central Committee for Quality Assurance and evaluation at the level of the College, the Office for Academic Development at the level of College, the Committee of the Quality Assurance and evaluation at the level of the academic unit (Department) are involved in the internal quality assurance processes. These structures include both teachers and students. Moreover, they do include at least one representative of the administrative body, and representatives of the alumni (graduates) or the employers.

Standard 2.2. Evaluation processes and planning for improvement are integrated into normal planning processes.

The evaluation forms are integrated and managed via the Management System (MIS) which proves that it is part of the normal planning processes [SER, p. 4].

Standard 2.3. Quality assurance processes deal with all aspects of program planning and delivery, including services and resources provided by other parts of the institution.



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The questionnaires used as part of the internal quality assurance processes refer to all aspects of the program planning and delivery, from quality of teaching, the course curricula and implementation, up to the quality and adequacy of the infrastructure and services [SER, p. 6].

Standard 2.4. Quality evaluations provide **an overview of quality issues for the overall program** as well as of different components within it; the evaluations consider inputs, processes and outputs, **with particular attention given to learning outcomes for students.**

According to the SER [p. 6 and p. 11] the internal quality evaluation overview all different components of the program and the overall program (including the research activity of the academics in the specific field) itself. Moreover, SER does mention that the learning outcomes are monitored at each semester [SER, p. 11].

Standard 2.5. Quality assurance processes ensure both that **required standards are met** and that there is **continuing improvement in performance.**

According to the SER [p. 6 and p. 11] internal QA processes are meant to contribute to the improvement of the study program. Thus, if any problem is identified it is addressed by the respective management authority. Moreover, during the site visit discussions it has been mentioned by academic staff and also by students that such problems when identified they are transferred to respective management for solution.

Standard 2.6. **Survey data is being collected from students, graduates and employers;** the results of these evaluations are **made publicly available.**

Survey data is being collected from students, but its results are not publicly available. However, the Department uses the results and internally resolves faced problems according to [SER, p.6]. Since the surveys refer mainly to the teaching activities, the results are provided only to the teachers (each one receives an individual report on their performance), their direct managers and the rector. With regards to collection of survey data from graduates or employers the Department follows a formal procedure and the results of the surveys are published on the webpage of the College.

Standard 2.7. **Results of the internal quality assurance system are taken into account for further development of the study program.**

There were sufficient information provided during the discussions at the site visit in order to assess whether the internal QA system includes besides the evaluation results (regarding the teaching performances), investigations of the student workload and/or academic success and



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employment of graduates. As stakeholders mentioned during the meeting with them the Department takes into account the recommendations of them with regards to changes in the curriculum.

Standard 2.8. The institution ensures that **reports on the overall quality of the program are prepared periodically** (eg. every three years) for consideration within the institution indicating its **strengths and weaknesses**.

According to the [SER, p. 6]: “Quality monitoring and assurance is done by the quality office of the college in collaboration with the department.” Similar reports are elaborated each time the university or the program undergoes an external evaluation which means that strengths and weaknesses are identified every two or three years.

Standard 2.9. **The quality assurance arrangements for the program are themselves regularly evaluated and improved.**

According to the SER [p. 6] the Department regularly evaluates and improves the quality assurance arrangements.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. The academic unit responsible for the reviewed program could consider naming a Quality Assurance commission/committee that should be responsible for the internal QA procedures for the study program. This unit could instruct the members of the community about QA procedures, could offer them opportunities to help about instruments of ensuring quality of their activities and inform them about national and international trends in the QA field.*
- 2. Self evaluations could be mandatory for teachers annually and for the entire program every three years.*

2.3. Academic staff

Standard 3.1. Candidates for employment are provided with **full position descriptions and conditions of employment**. To be presented in tabular form data about full time (FT) and part time (PT) academic/ artistic staff, such as: name, qualification, academic title, duration



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of official (valid) contract, workload for teaching, exams, consulting, administrative activities, research, etc. for the study program under evaluation.

[SER, p. 7]: All academic staff in the Department holds either PhDs or Master degrees. So, according to the country of Kosovo requirements they have adequate academic and scientific qualifications regarding to respective courses. However, the international standards are somehow different.

ET recommendations:

- 1. The qualifications of the academic staff should be improved and the Department should employ more teaching staff with PhDs and good record of scientific papers. Since research is always connected to teaching deep knowledge of the scientific subjects helps to deliver more relevant and topical information to students and also improve their skills with the state of the art of the disciplines.*

Standard 3.2. The teaching staff must comply with the legal requirements concerning the occupation of teaching positions included in the Administrative instruction on Accreditation.

The Institutional SER, p. 78 included a table with the academic staff employed full-time and part-time. There is at least three PhD staff occupying full-time positions, thus complying with the regulation. KAA assured the ET that this aspect is also verified. Moreover, during the site-visit, the ET found out that the program initiators intended to open up competitions for further people to join the program as academic staff.

Standard 3.3. Academic staff do not cover, within an academic year, more than two teaching positions (one full-time, one part-time), regardless of the educational institution where they carry out their activity.

KAA verifies that academic staff does not cover more than two teaching positions within the program. Discussions during the site visit pointed out that the teaching staffs spend the time required by their contract within the university. Furthermore, teaching staff is available to students either via emails or other electronic ways (Moodle platform, etc.) when necessary.

Standard 3.4. At least 50% of the academic staff in the study program are full time employees, and account for at least 50% of the classes of the study program.



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According to SER: “*All lecturers who are holding PhD’s and Master level of degrees at the department of CSSE possess the appropriate academic qualifications and experience in the relevant field*”. There are 11 full-time (regular) staff and 8 part-time (non-regular) staff within the College [Institutional SER, pages 78-79] therefore the standards is met.

Standard 3.5. **For each student group** (defined by the statute of the institution) and for every 60 ECTS credits in the study program, the institution has employed **at least one full time staff with PhD title** or equivalent title in the case of artistic/applied science institutions.

CSSE Department proposes this program for **200** students and it has allocated it 180 ECTS. For each 60 ECTS the program fulfils the requirement of having employed at least one full time staff with PhD title, as the program has more than three staff members holding a PhD.

Standard 3.6. **Opportunities** are provided **for additional professional development of teaching staff**, with special assistance given to any who are facing difficulties.

[SER, p. 33] writes: “**Observation** - In order to guarantee staff development, Riinvest uses the information collected from student questionnaires but also from the peer observation process. Observation aims to improve quality through peer feedback, individual reflection and staff development. For each program, observers are assigned and the observation timetable is set by the heads of departments responsible for the observation process. The report drafted based on the observation is used for staff development”.

ET realized during the site visit that the College puts much attention to staff development.

Standard 3.7.

Both the SER and the site visit confirmed that the responsibilities of all teaching staff, especially full-time, include the **engagement in the academic community, availability for consultations with students and community service**. Students declared that academic staff replies very promptly to their inquiries in person or via emails.

Standard 3.8. **Academic staff evaluation is conducted regularly** at least through self evaluation, students, peer and superiors’ evaluations, and occurs on a formal basis at least once each year. The **results** of the evaluation are not made **publicly available**.



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Academic staff evaluation is conducted annually, but the results are not made publicly available. They are communicated directly to the evaluated teacher, its direct superior (e.g. the dean) and the rector. No information about the results or follow-up of the evaluations is communicated to students.

Standard 3.9. Strategies for quality enhancement include **improving the teaching strategies and quality of learning materials**.

Strategies for internal quality assurance include improving the teaching strategies (as previously shown), and also of learning materials.

Standard 3.10. **Teachers retired at age limit** or for other reasons lose the status of full-time teachers and **are considered part-time teachers**.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

2.4. Educational process content

Standard 4.1. 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 aspects refer especially to academic or artistic competencies, to the capability of taking up adequate employment, contributing to the civil society and of developing the students' personality.

The study program is modelled on **qualification objectives** as it is designed to prepare future computer science and software engineering experts for industry and enterprises.

Standard 4.2. The study program **complies with the National Qualifications Framework and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area**. The individual components of the program are combined in a way to best achieve the specified qualification objectives and provide for adequate forms of teaching and learning.

The study program complies with the National Qualifications Framework and therefore with the EQF. However, it is not very clear that the components of the program at the final year are attracted to the students in a way that best serves the purpose of reaching the specified qualifications objectives. For example: many of the students drop out of the program, because



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the find jobs according to the program leaders which might indicate that they find it difficult to follow the logic and need of the components during last year.

Standard 4.3. **The disciplines** within the curriculum are provided in a **logical flow and meet the definition and precise determination of the general and specific competencies**, as well as the compatibility with the study programs and curricula delivered in the EHEA. **To be listed at least 7 learning outcomes for the study program under evaluation.**

The learning outcomes of the study program are detailed in Appendix 1, page 1: ‘Upon successful completion of the program the student will be able to:

- ✓ Understand, evaluate, and apply techniques and methods to solve different management problems and to develop various IT / software processes
- ✓ Evaluation and application of project management tools and related techniques
- ✓ Recognize, evaluate and use a set of programming languages to enable the development of different IT systems
- ✓ Design, evaluate and implement software development methods to enable the creation of different IT systems
- ✓ Learning, understanding and applying algorithms and data structures to enable the most successful implementation of different applications
- ✓ Introduction and implementation of various software testing methods and maximum quality assurance of developed systems

Standard 4.4. **The disciplines** within the curriculum **have analytical syllabuses** which comprise at least the following:

1. **the discipline’s objectives,**
2. **the basic thematic content, learning outcomes,**
3. **the distribution of classes, seminars and applicative activities,**
4. **students’ assessment system,**
5. **the minimal bibliography, etc.**

The full course description/ syllabuses of each subject/ module should be attached only in electronic form to the self-assessment report for the study program under evaluation.

Appendix 2 provided the ET with the syllabuses of the program and they all fulfil the minimal requirements.



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Standard 4.5. If the language of instruction is **other than Albanian**, actions are taken to **ensure that language skills of both students and academic staff** are adequate for instruction in that language when students begin their studies. This may be done through language training prior to the commencement of the program.

The language of instruction is mainly in Albanian. However, the ET noticed that the level of English of most of the students is very high, so some modules are taught in English.

Standard 4.6. 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.

[SER, p. 17]: "Through the learning process, students are well informed about their progress in assignments, projects, results of exams, and syllabus of courses by Learning Management System (LMS) of the college, so called MIS (Management Information System), compiled by CSSE department".

The ET recommends the academic staff to share the learning outcomes with the students and follow together with them the students' progress towards meeting these expected outcomes.

Standard 4.8. **Student assessment** mechanisms are conducted **fairly and objectively**, are **appropriate for the different forms of learning** sought and are **clearly communicated** to students at the beginning of courses.

[SER, p. 12]: «For all courses either obligatory or elective, course syllabus is developed that contains goals, objectives, expected results, assessment method, and bibliography of course books and related materials».

ET during site visit discussed the issue with students and found that there was no any problem with the assessment of their work, neither they were aware of cases that there was a strong disagreement between teachers and a student.

Standard 4.9. Appropriate, valid and reliable **mechanisms** are used **for verifying standards of student achievement**. The standard of work required for different grades is **consistent over time, comparable in courses offered within a program, and in comparison with other study programs at highly regarded institutions**.



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The academic staff declared during the site visit that they are in touch with different similar programs from other institutions (in other countries) and that this helps them checking whether their standards are internationally agreed upon.

Standard 4.10. Policies and procedures include **actions to be taken in to dealing with situations where standards of student achievement are inadequate or inconsistently assessed.**

Neither the SER, nor the site visit did offer sufficient information in order to verify if such policies or procedures exist.

Standard 4.11. If the study program includes **practice stages**, the **intended student learning outcomes are clearly specified and effective processes** are followed to ensure that those learning outcomes and the strategies to develop that learning are understood by students. The practice stages **are allocated ETCS credits** and the work of the students at the practical training organisations is **monitored through activity reports**; students during practice stages have **assigned tutors** among the academic staff in the study program.

Practical stages are mandatory in all modules of the study program as SER mentions [SER, p. 12] “All courses composed by a theoretical part that is lectured by lecturer and a practical part that contains practise, exercise and research in computer labs.”

SER on page 12 mentions “The practical part of the course can be done mostly in computer labs with enough number of assistants/tutors in which every 10 students has one tutors during the recitation in lab”.

From SER and during discussions with staff and students ET concluded that practical work is well organised and assessed following all necessary steps [SER, p. 12].

Standard 4.12. In order to facilitate the practice stages, the higher education institution signs **cooperation agreements, contracts or other documents with institutions/organisations/practical training units.**

The Center for Career Development of the University helps students with relevant advice in finding opportunities for undergoing such stages. [SER, p.14]

Compliance level: Fully compliant



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ET recommendations:

1. *The ET recommends the academic unit to define the learning outcomes for the practical stages included in the program as a first step of ensuring their quality.*

2.5. Students

Standard 5.1. There is a **clear** and formally adopted **admission procedure** at institutional level that the study program respects when organising students' recruitment. Admission requirements are **consistently and fairly applied** for all students.

The admission procedure includes examination in relevant subjects and the eligibility criteria for students' enrolment are set out in the Riinvest College statute and are respected by the College for all its programs.

Standard 5.2. **All students** enrolled in the study program possess a **high school graduation diploma or other equivalent document** of study, according to MEST requirements.

According to the SER, all enrolled students have completed high school and passed the Matura exam.

Standard 5.3. The **study groups are dimensioned** so as to ensure **an effective and interactive teaching and learning process**.

The study program proposed to enrol 230 students per year; however much attention has to be paid to improve the infrastructure available to the program on the short and medium term. This will give them the possibility to hold lectures with 60 students and practical seminars with two groups of 30 students, thus ensuring the quality of the teaching - learning process.

Standard 5.4. **Feedback** to students on their performance and results of assessments is given promptly and accompanied by mechanisms for assistance if needed.

The site visit highlighted the efforts of teachers to offer feedback to students on their performance periodically as intermediate evaluations are organized at mid-term. However, the ET recommends the academic staff to accompany this feedback with a discussion with each student on mechanisms for overcoming the gaps.

The academic unit should also consider developing a mentoring program that would either connect students in difficulty with older students or with academic staff in order to work together to improve their progress towards meeting the learning outcomes.



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Standard 5.5. **The results** obtained by the students throughout the study cycles are **certified by the academic record.**

AND

Standard 5.7. **Records** of student completion rates **are kept for all courses** and for the program as a whole and included among quality indicators.

Academic records are kept both on paper and online by the teaching assistants.

Standard 5.6. **Flexible treatment of students in special situations is ensured** with respect to deadlines and formal requirements in the program and to all examinations.

Registration of students with special needs is treated affirmatively based on the available conditions [SER, p. 4]. However, no other flexible treatment for students in special situations was mentioned in the SER or during the site-visit discussions.

Standard 5.8. Effective procedures are being used to **ensure that work submitted by students is original.**

In the Student Handbook on pages 24-25 and 28 there are strict rules for plagiarism and the penalties for students who are caught on plagiarism.

Standard 5.9. **Students' rights and obligations are made publicly available**, promoted to all those concerned and enforced equitably; these will include **the right to academic appeals.**

In the Student Handbook there is relevant information regarding the rights and obligations of the students.

Standard 5.10. The **students' transfer** between higher education institutions, faculties and study programs is **regulated in formal internal documents.**

Article 17

Transfer of students



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In the Appendix 4 of the Student Regulation on Article 17 mentions that “Students wishing to transfer from other local or international universities shall file a transfer request, which is reviewed by the Admissions Office. Students shall possess the transcript of grades, the curriculum, the course curriculum from a licensed university. Upon receipt of request from the office, the head of department shall compare and recognize courses according to the program at Riinvest and shall issue a transfer decision, which shall contain the program table, recognized courses and instructions on remaining courses. After approval of transfer, the student's file is completed. Students must have completed at least one semester at the previous institution and may not be transferred in the last semester of studies”.

Standard 5.11. **Academic staff is available** at sufficient scheduled times **for consultation and advice to students**. Adequate tutorial assistance is provided to ensure understanding and ability to apply learning.

Academic staff is required through their work contract to provide consultations for students and they publicly announce their consultations schedules. Students use the opportunity of consultations to address their difficulties in studying and teaching staff is always available. Moreover, teaching staff is receiving student requests for help, or general inquiries via emails and according to the students they reply very promptly.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations - given the aspects presented above, the ET recommends:

1. *To enrol 230 students in the first year;*
2. *to acquire a special software to verify the originality of students work.*

2.6. Research

Standard 6.1. The study program has defined **scientific/applied research objectives** (on its own or as part of a research centre or interdisciplinary program), which are also reflected in the research development plan of the institution; **sufficient financial, logistic and human resources** are allocated for achieving the proposed research objectives.

AND



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Standard 6.2. **Expectations for teaching staff** involvement in research and scholarly activities **are clearly specified**, and performance in relation to these expectations is considered in **staff evaluation and promotion criteria**

SER on page 19 mentions that “*Research is an essential part of the college level of studies. Every academic staff is encouraged to research in his/her expertise area by engaging students. Also, the college encourages all academic staffs to make their publications under the college name and disseminate the results, in terms of the level of students, during their lectures in classrooms. The most of academic staffs in CSSE department present their works at conferences, symposia, seminars, etc. and some of these works are published in either local or international journals*”.

Standard 6.3. **Clear policies** are established **for defining what is recognized as research**, consistent with international standards and established norms in the field of study of the program.

The Institutional SER mentions from the beginning (page 5) that Riinvest College, as a strength of the program: “*Shaping economic policies and innovations is done through participation in public discourse, research and technology development. Riinvest's role in Kosovo society is to promote research-based policy-making and to support the development through the preparation of educated and professional staff for a dynamic market with major cultural and technological changes*”.

As mentioned in Standard 6.2 research is part of the promotion criteria, but the ET feels that the associated standards are rather lower than the international standards and the university could aim to slowly, gradually raise them. This is in line with the Weaknesses in the SWOT Analysis for research [SER, p. 20].

Standards 6.4, 6.5 AND Standard 6.6

The academic staff has a proven **track record of research results on the same topics as their teaching activity, as shown by the list of published articles in specialty magazines (journals) included in the Institutional SER (pages 48 - 72)**. This stands as a validation of the quality of their research.

Standard 6.7 and 6.8: **Each academic staff member** and researcher has produced at least an average of **one scientific/applied research publication** or artistic outcome/product **per year**



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for the past three years, as proved by the list of research outcomes included in the SER (pages 48 - 72). And they have published under the name of Riinvest College.

Standard 6.8. Academic staff are encouraged to **include** in their teaching **information about their research and scholarly activities that are relevant to courses they teach**, together with other significant research developments in the field.

Discussions during the site visit included mentions of the fact that academic staff is referencing the latest research results during their teaching, when it is relevant for the lesson.

Standard 6.9. **Policies are established for ownership of intellectual property** and clear procedures set out for commercialization of ideas developed by staff and students.

The Institutional SER mentions that College Council is “*Drafting the Strategy for the Development and Protection of Intellectual Property of the College*” [page 19].

Standard 6.10. Quite few **students are engaged in research projects** and this is due to the thesis that every student has to prepare as a standard policy of the university to encourage students to be part of research activities.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

The ET recommends to the program initiators/responsible persons to:

1. *Set some research objectives for the program and plan resources (human, material and financial) to meet these objectives. This could support the mid-term objective of creating a Master and a PhD program.*
2. *Raise the standards regarding the research activity of the academic staff and include them in the promotion criteria.*
3. *Encourage the academic staff to reference the latest research results in their teaching (during classes), thus inspiring students to consider getting involved in research projects and to involve their students in research activities;*
4. *Encourage students to use the online platforms that give them access to recent scientific articles when preparing their paper works for different disciplines.*



2.7. Infrastructure and resources

Standard 7.1. The adequate long-term implementation of the study program is ensured in quantitative terms as regards premises, human resources and equipment. At the same time, it is guaranteed that qualitative aspects are also taken into account.

Both the SER and the site visit indicated a general overall scarcity of resources within the College, in general, and this program, in particular. It seemed existing a very good relationship between different decisions levels within the College. The premises although were rather small the offices for academics were sufficient and the spaces in general were new, clean and well equipped.

Standard 7.2. There is a **financial plan** at the level of the study program that would demonstrate the **sustainability of the study program for the next minimum three years**.

Regarding the financial sustainability of the program during the site visit discussions and the SER seemed to be well explained and justified. Moreover, there is great request from potential students for this program.

Standard 7.3. The higher education institution must **demonstrate** with adequate documents (property deeds, lease contracts, inventories, invoices etc.) that, for the study program submitted for evaluation it possesses the following, **for the next at least three years**:

- a) **owned or rented spaces** adequate for the educational process;
- b) **owned or rented laboratories**, with the adequate equipment for all the compulsory disciplines within the curriculum, wherever the analytical syllabus includes such activities;
- c) **adequate software** for the disciplines of study included in the curriculum, **with utilisation licence**;
- d) **library** equipped with **reading rooms, group work rooms and its own book stock** according to the disciplines included in the curricula.

Riinvest College has its own premises and CSSE Department is hosted within it. The computer lab with 40 terminals is adequate at the moment. However, the College allocated another room for IT lab, so as students from next academic year will have more space and computers for classes and also to work on various projects.



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Standard 7.4. **The number of seats** in the lecture rooms, seminar rooms and laboratories must be **related to the study groups' size** (series, groups, subgroups); the applicative activities for the speciality disciplines included in the curricula are carried out in laboratories equipped with IT equipment.

The number of seats in the lecture and seminar rooms is adequate for a student population of 200 students/year and working groups of 40 students for seminars, which the ET considers the ideal group size given the available resources of the program.

Standard 7.5. The education institution's libraries must ensure, for each of the study programs:

- a) a number of seats in the reading rooms corresponding to **at least 10% of the total number of students** in the study program;
- b) a number of seats in the group work rooms corresponding to at least 10% of the total number of students in the study program;
- c) their own book stock from Albanian and foreign speciality literature, enough to cover the disciplines within the curricula, **out of which at least 50% should represent book titles** or speciality courses of recognised publishers, from the last 10 years;
- d) a book stock within its own library with a sufficient number of books so as to cover the needs of all students in the cycle and year of study the respective discipline is provided for;
- e) a sufficient number of subscriptions to Albanian and foreign publications and periodicals, according to the stated mission.

The program does not have its own library, but shares one with other programs in the College. Although the library is small it covers 10% of the total number of students of all the study programs that should use it, and not by far manages to ensure from the book stock learning materials for at least 50% of all these programs.

Moreover, the library has several subscriptions to online platforms granting both students and academic staff access to Albanian and foreign journals with the most up-to-date research outcomes.

Standard 7.6. **The infrastructure and facilities** dedicated to the implementation of the program is **adapted to students with special needs**.



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From the site visit ET concluded that the building facility in which the Department of CSSE operates does meet the criteria for people with disabilities.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

ET recommends the program initiators and the university management to:

- encourage students to frequently use the online platforms that grant them access to international journals and recent scientific papers, which can help everyone overcome the shortage of books and learning materials from the stock of the library.
- For example, students could be granted remote access to these platforms so that they can use them from home, from their own computers.

3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the study program **COMPUTER SCIENCE and SOFTWARE ENGINEERING – BACHELOR (Bsc)** offered by **Riinvest College** is **Fully 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 230 students to be led in the program.

The ET made several recommendations throughout this report and takes this final opportunity to emphasize the importance of different units of the College working together towards the goal of improving this program. In order to reach this desired outcome, the program initiators and responsible persons could start from the list of recommendations received from external evaluators in time. We reassure the educational services provider and the QA agency (KAA) that the current recommendations made by the ET are in line with and complement the previous recommendations.

4. APPENDICES (if available): -.



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Expert Team

Chair

	Vassilios Tsiantos	24.6.2019
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

Member

(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)
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