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Agjencia e Kosovës për Akreditim
Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency

ILIRIA COLLEGE

INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

4th of June 2020



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1. Introduction

1.1. Context

Institutional Reaccreditation Procedure at Iliria College

Date: 14th of May 2020

Expert Team

- Prof. Dr. Melita Kovacevic, University of Zagreb
- Prof. Dr. Magdalena Platis, University of Bucharest
- Ms. Oana Sarbu, PhD student, University of Bucharest

Coordinators of KAA

- Naim Gashi, Executive 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

- SER
- On-line interviews

Criteria used for insitutional evaluation

- Standards and guidelines of KAA

Sources of information

- Information obtained during the on-line visit;



- Meetings conducted with the management of the institution, teaching and administrative staff, students, graduates, external stakeholders and employers of graduates;
- Additional documents requested by the ET

1.2. Site-visit schedule (on-line)

14th May 2020

| | |
|---------------|--|
| 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 – 11.20 | Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative services |
| 11.20 – 12.00 | Lunch break (<i>to be provided at the site visit place</i>) |
| 12.00 – 12.50 | Meeting with the heads of study programs |
| 12.50 – 13.40 | Meeting with teaching staff |
| 13.40 – 14.30 | Meeting with students |
| 14.30 – 15.10 | Meeting with graduates |
| 15.10 – 15.50 | Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders |
| 15.50 – 16.00 | Internal meeting – Expert Team and KAA |
| 16.0 – 16.10 | Closing meeting with the management of the institution |

1.3. A brief overview of the institution

The Iliria College was established 2000 according to the Article 22 of the Law on Higher Education, No 2002/2, registered as a legal person with competent bodies, and licensed pursuant to Decision No 935/02-1 of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. It offers degree programmes at the bachelor and master levels in different fields: Law, Banking, Finance and Accounting, Management, International Business, Computer Science, International Relations and Diplomacy, Health Management. It has in total 2,419 students. The College began its activity in 2001 as a private institution.



2. INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

The institutional evaluation consists of 11 sub headings through which the administration, organisation and management of the institution, as well as teaching and research are assessed.

2.1. Public mission and institutional objectives

According to the SER, Iliria college defined the mission and vision of the institution, having a three pillars, teaching, research and serving to society. While teaching and education is defined as student-centered and career-focused, interestingly, research is also defined as a mean for individual development of students, which is in a way unusual way to define the main role of research. The institutional mission has been developed in a dialog with internal and external stakeholders who actively contributed to its content, as well as throughout of this process academic staff had an opportunity to continuously participate, they recieved a feed back and had been given a chance to follow all the introduced changes.

However, while the mission is defined in acceptable way, it does not provide a well enough guide for strategic planning, it is not well align with the later elaboration of the instututional research, which is presented in a format and content of quite superb resesearch institutions. At the same time the mission does not clearly distinguish Iliria College from any other institution in a local, or broader context. In general it is not easy to distinguish among language issues in writing/translating the self-evaluation report (as an example, a sentence *By connecting theory and practice in the learning process, the study allows the student to take ownership of their own education*) and using a terminology that sometimes is unclear, sometimes seems as coming from a strategic document belonging to a different kind of institution (having terms such as long term learning, students as customers, or the statement *The SMT is a consultative mechanism comprised of heads of products and services at the institution, SMT being Senior Management Team*).

As much as such unclear and confusing statements and their chosen vocabulary could have resulted from the lack of language knowledge, it is hard not to conclude that they are also a result of non-transparent definition of roles and responsibilities of the various institutional bodies, as well as an overall lack of understanding of some features of higher education system. A significant portion of documents are written in confusing way, as a patchwork of variety of



terms, statements, definitions etc. belonging to different areas and fields, and being taken from different documents, frequently contradicting each other. Definitely the scope of ambitious and strategic plans is too broad and it does not match the reality and observed capacity of the target institution. In addition, there was an observable gap between the document and the kind and level of information collected during the interviews.

Institutional strategy has defined institutional objectives within the four areas, as SER refers to active leadership, academic profile, institutional sustainability, and environment, however, these objectives are in some instances not realistic, not grounded in the real and objective institutional capacities and very much saturated with many words, but not the sound content.

It is important for the institution to rethink how to match the defined and recognized institutional mission with the planning and objectives that will respond to the actual institutional capacity. A plan and objectives that could be actually met, will enable institutional further development and improvements. On the contrary, lack of well grounded planning could actually have a negative impact on institutional functioning.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Objectives should be revisited and to be defined in a more transparent and coherent way*
2. *Medium and long term institutional objectives need to be defined and better balanced with the overall institutional strategic development*
3. *More coherent and realistic way of defining all the pillars of the institutional mission, bearing in mind how much the institutional capacities could be stretched and how it should provide an effective guide for strategic planning, decision making and institutional operations*

2.2. Strategic planning, governance and administration

A new institutional strategy covers the period of 2020 to 2025. The Strategy embraces the external analysis PEST as well as SWOT analysis. While the PEST is quite elaborated and extensive, SWOT analysis is extremely modest and it does not appear as an objective collective work based on profound self-reflection of all the aspects of the institutional functioning and the context. In addition, SWOT analysis is not directly reflected in the body of the Strategy,

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and while the PEST is a kind of introduction, SWOT analysis is introduced in the document after the strategic objectives. According to the Strategy as well as the SER and information collected during the on-line visit, Iliria Strategic Plan is the result of consultation and contribution of all the stakeholders. It covers all the aspects of institutional life, however it is not well balanced across different components. Summary of Strategy is available on the institutional web page (although, among documents there are the institutional and programme reports of the KAA performed from 2009 to 2016. The Strategy is not accompanied with the Action plan.

The Strategy is elaborated on more than 40 pages, it covers different areas, as referred to academic profile, institutional sustainability, strategic environment, provides also financial plan, risk management and key performances indicators. However, the institution has to further elaborate adequate decision making system as well as to make it consistent and logical through different levels of decision making bodies and procedures (e.g. the Statute defines that the GB has 9 members, and in the case of regulation and policies, *pro vote* of seven members is needed; in the case of the Senate, there are also 9 members; and in the case of regulation and policies, *pro vote* of eight members is needed; it is not very logical that both bodies have the same number of members, as well as how and on what premises it is decided for seven or eight members). The existing relevant regulatory documents relevant for the governing and management of the institution needs to be carefully reviewed and aligned.

According to the last evaluation recommendations, some improvements have been implemented related to the governing and decision making bodies, however the procedures are still unsufficiently defined and too much power is given in the hands of one man, which actually leads to non-transparent behaviour and decision making process (e.g. Statute, Art 30., 4.3.3 *Decision-making procedure*, *The Rector issues decisions independently without any limits inside his/her range of powers; There shall be two Vice-Rectors under the Rectors's headship: (a)Vice-Rector for Research and Development, (b)Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, and (c)Vice-Rector for Student Services*, the same article, without any elaboration of the role of vicerectors, three of them, although stated that there are two). There are no clear criteria how decision is made, as well as there is no defined appeal process.

Nevertheless, a careful reader will find many inconsistencies in statements, numbers and figures, definitions, selection of vocabulary. At the moments it is hard to understand a level of self-reflection and lack of objective, critical thinking. Many statements could be fitted to the best academic institutions in Europe and worldwide. This kind of approach could actually stop the College from the adequate development and self-motivation for the improvements, as well



as it could be misleading for the students. Some examples are ‘...*continuum from blue sky research..*’ (it is hard to resist questioning if there is understanding what kind of research this is); *The emphasis on an expanded set of key transferable skills in research training, as required by the Salzburg Principles (2005) and other key policy documents will accentuate this instructional aspect* (Salzburg Principles is a document for doctoral education which does not exist at the College, at least at the moment, and presently, there is no capacity for it, although it has been elaborated in the Statute; this document and similar others, talking about transferable skills accentuate actually a relevance of some soft skills as well research skills, but not ‘*instructional aspect*’). As it has been already observed, the big portion of the document is logoreic and it is unsufficiently embedded in the real and objective context of the institutions, its capacity and the state of the development. There is a lot of redundancy in the text which questions its realisation in a real life, its institutional implementation.

If the ambitions of the Strategic plan is observed on one side, than it is very unambitious to have a Rector a person who is only a lecturer (as a minimal criteria). In the same way, it could be compared with overstated plans for research, and very lenient criteria for academic staff promotion, far away from the criteria that mark recognised research institutions somewhere else. However, to be supportive and objective, there is no need for the college of this format and capacity to be an excellent research institution, but to focus on some aspects of research, optimally applied research, as well as contract research and try to intertwine this research through teaching process. Well defined research focus and honest and realistic self-reflection on research capacity could be beneficial for the institution and different stakeholders.

Although there is a session on ethics, there is not enough regulation on employment procedures, conflict of interest and/or nepotism which might be a serious issue in some private institutions (although it is mentioned that the Ethics Council will promote ethics in staff selection, promotion and assessment, Statute, Art, 35; Code of Ethics, Art. 5, *The administrative procedure integrity principle entails, for example: correct procedures for selecting, electing and appointing Academic Community Members...* without specifying what is meant under ‘correct procedures’). In the feed back to the draft report institution pointed to the fact that there is a new Employment Regulation, however on the web site it is not available, not in English (while there are some documents available in English such as the Statute,



Strategy etc.), and not in Albanian. The website provides only a list of documents in Albanian, but they cannot be reached. (<http://www.uiliria.org/en/university/documents>).

In conclusion, developed Strategy can help the institutions to develop further and to reach its potentials, however in order to achieve this it is must to have well developed activity plan; to have better and more consistent indicators and to match the reality and ambitions. Strategic planning often put the threshold a bit higher, it reflects our plans that might not be fully realised (this is why a monitoring and adjustments are important), but postulating too ambitious planning could easily become an obstacle. Too high threshold could prevent the institution to make positive changes. In addition, clear writing is also a reflection of a clear thinking. Therefore a strategic plan should also take such an approach of focused, non redundant and informative language into a serious consideration.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *It is important to develop an adequate activity plan, with all the components, such as activity, time line, responsible person/body etc. and to add it to the existing Strategy as an accompanying document as well as to make it available on a web site along with the Strategy*
2. *Further development of indicators for all the strategic objectives and corresponding activities*
3. *To further elaborate on roles and responsibilities of different positions and bodies*
4. *Ensure objective and realistic wording that is used either in strategic documents and/or other structural documents in order to reflect actual context and capacities of the institution with a main aim to boost a further development*
5. *Revisit bombastic claims that might become a barrier for a positive change*
6. *Revisit the plans for monitoring the Strategy implementation and, accordingly, define short and medium term targets*

2.3. Financial planning and management

Iliria College is a private institution in Kosovo which considers itself as a combination of both traditional and contemporary education and student centered (<http://www.uiliria.org/en/university/ui>). According to SER (page 28 and 29):



- the institution was capable to predict the growth of the student number
- *the institution has diversified its funding through enhanced capacities in research projects, industry services and donations*
- *while founder' capital investments were essential in infrastructure development, the operation of programmes, research and staff development will have to rely significantly on student tuition fees*
- *the institution also operates several fee-based professional certifications with international vocational training bodies like and which have proven to be a small but steady stream of incomes.*

The Expert Team (ET) appreciates the effort in providing financial information and analysis and calculation for all estimations. Nevertheless, ET is reserved in considering financial resources sufficient in reaching the objectives, as the objectives included in the Strategy for 2020-2025 are more directions of action elaborated around the concept of active leadership and not concrete measurable objectives. The Strategy published on the website in English and as well in Albanian consists of the same information (English version: [http://www.uiliria.org/ui/dokumente/2%20Strategy%202020-2025%20\(Summary\)%20ILIRIA%20College.pdf](http://www.uiliria.org/ui/dokumente/2%20Strategy%202020-2025%20(Summary)%20ILIRIA%20College.pdf) and Albanian version: [http://www.uiliria.org/ui/dokumente/2%20Strategjia%20\(Permbledhje\)%20Kolegji%20ILIRIA.pdf](http://www.uiliria.org/ui/dokumente/2%20Strategjia%20(Permbledhje)%20Kolegji%20ILIRIA.pdf)) although the former one is declared as being a summary document and not a full document.

Iliria College has provided an estimation on an annual budget and a three-year budget which does not address its financial sustainability. The most financial resources are based on student fees - 65% (SER, page 29). The explanation provided in the required additional documents regarding the dynamics of the number of students is considered correct for the decreasing number of students (Additional documents, page 4) but financial stability means more than stability in the number of students, which is an unstable figure, anyway. The college representatives are aware of the fact that in order to address the financial stability properly they need students to pay tuition and they have confirmed that they have faced a decrease in the number of students. Therefore, it is important to reveal that Iliria attracts only 15 % of the income from donors, 9% from research projects and 11 % from providing services (SER, page 29). Based on the income, the college allocates different expenditures to staff, capital, research, recurring maintenance scholarships and other expenditures. There is no evidence that they have clear action plan to make financial resources stable. In SER (page 30) some contradictory

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information are provided as the income table shows according to the title the income evolution during 2018-2020, while the same table content refers to income during 2019-2021. Financial policies are totally missing and therefore, decision-making will not be possible for adequate investment and self-finance.

Accounting functions are carried out by a specialized office responsible to a senior administrator, mainly: The Finance Office is subordinated to the Secretary who reports to the Rector (SER, page 21). Financial activity is monitored through a specific software; in addition, *“budget monitoring is done through a series of quarterly budget reports. Initial budget allocations to expense managers are based on the agreed annual allocations derived from the Business Plan and hence from the Strategy. Budget reports are based on a number of indicators showing the performance of payment planning and the use of the allocated budget to date”* (SER, page 31). Therefore, *“an increasing level of performance in budget consumption has been achieved. Once contracts are passed with service providers, the payments can be monitored directly by expense managers. The Finance software has been enhanced with reports showing budget allocation, usage and payments”* (SER, page 31).

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Elaborate the budget more detailed (or create an annex to the budget) correlating the budget allocation to concrete measurable strategic objectives*
2. *Create financial policies to address to financial sustainability and support decision making for finance and investment*
3. *Increase the budget allocation for international cooperation*
4. *Create a local/institutional decentralized evidence of expenditures and incomes on cost units (faculties/study programs).*

2.4. Academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability

Academic integrity and ethical issues are specified and regulated in many institutional documents and considered and analysed by the activity of many structures:



- main documents considering ethical issues are (SER, page):
 - ✓ *The Statute of Iliria College, 2012*
 - ✓ *Code of Ethics, 2019*
- relevant structures that guarantee academic integrity are (SER, page):
 - ✓ *Senate*
 - ✓ *Ethics Council*
 - ✓ *Ethics Committee and sub-committees.*

Iliria College has adopted in December 2019 the Code of ethics which is publicly available at http://www.uiliria.org/ui/dokumente/4%20Code%20of%20Ethics_ILIRIA%20College.pdf . It provides general institutional regulation on integrity and responsibility and academic freedom. The Code of Ethics describes also the structure and obligations of the Ethics Commission and the so-called tasks of the sub-commissions established at the faculty level.

The Code of Ethics requires that the academic community of the college act consistently with high standards of ethical conduct: *“Academic Community Members shall, to the best of their ability, avoid situations giving grounds”* (Code of Ethics, Article 3). The same document defines academic community as staff, students and contractors (Code of Ethics, Article 1). The integrity principle in scientific research and expert work (Code of Ethics, Article 6) regulates obligations of the staff on citations and avoiding plagiarism. The code is new adopted by the college and the ET is clearly aware of the fact that application of a code of etichs requires time to have its effectiveness proved. At this stage, the code is considering different processes and mechanisms specific to higher education nstitutions and is a good start. Nevertheless, a long and transparent way to go in this direction is still real and of utmost importance.

In addition, according to SER (page 34), *“the College has established an Ethics Council. The newly established body is responsible for the implementation and promotion of responsible ethical code of conduct and diversity policy among staff and students on teaching, research, learning and management. The body is composed of seven members”*. Other ethical issues involve the Ethics Commission: *“violations of the Code of Ethics shall come before the Ethics Commission comprising:*

- 3 members of the teaching staff;
- 1 member from support staff
- 1 student member”. (Code of Ethics, Article 13).

The institution management is not aware of the cases of the existence of any unethical behaviour of the academic community. During the site visit, at the question addressed to the



management of the college regarding the existence of any violation of the Code of Ethics, the answer was that the ET will get detailed answers from the the next meeting participants. The meeting with the quality assurance representatives and administrative services revealed the fact that they registered one case of minor violation of the Code of Ethics in 2019, the unethical behaviour being of a teaching staff. The ET remarked no evidence on making public any report on ethical issues. Decisions of governing bodies are not publicly available. According to SER (page 35), “Iliria senior management also uses public forums and events to present the institutional strategic orientation”. ET admit this piece of information as information of the audience participating at forums, but this cannot be considered as being publicly available.

Iliria Coolege has to put a lot of effort in making relevant information available to the internal and external stakeholders. At present, there is some information on the programs on the website, such as number of ECTS, duration of study and courses to be studied. Nevertheless, there is no clear evidence on making public many internal regulations, self-evaluation reports and decisions of governing bodies; there is no public clear and relevant information on objectives, relevant, accessible and detailed information regarding its academic staff, its research and academic activities, number of students enrolled, learning and assessment procedures used, the pass rates, graduate employment information, scholarship opportunities, as well as tuition and administrative fees.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Make public (available online) the results of the code of ethics application, self-evaluation reports and decisions of governing bodies – Senate, Rector, Quality Council and Ethics Council;*
2. *Invest in an anti-plagiarism software for staff and students in all languages of the study programs (no Albanian language software right now);*
3. *All committees and organizational bodies should inform the management of the institution on all aspects, so it can be aware of all important matters, especially in relationship to ethical issues and quality assurance;*
4. *Develop the site of the institution with relevant information for all stakeholders – internal and external.*

2.5. Quality management



In December 2019, Iliria College adopted the Quality Assurance Regulation which describes the institutional quality assurance system, its processes, mechanisms, instruments, reporting, data collection, timeframes, quality cycle, responsibilities of all individuals and units involved in these processes, but the document is not publically available. It is a new document that tries to respond to a lack of regulation in the field, for the last years.

According with the Quality Assurance Regulation, Iliria College established the Quality Council responsible for the implementation and monitoring of evaluation procedures in accordance with the statute and the regulations of the College. The Commission consists of five members, among them one member comes from the Alumni and another one from the students.

Quality assurance processes and management at the overall institutional level are managed by the Quality Assurance Office, which closely cooperates with Quality Council. The Quality Assurance Office is reorganized last year and all new employees in this department previously worked in the college in other positions. Although they stated that they held the positions following a public competition, they also stressed that the fact that they worked in the university was an advantage to the conditions for filling the position. ET considers that in this way a redistribution of the administrative staff was actually made, not the hiring based on the competencies required by this position.

Quality Assurance is also one of the main strategic area for development mentioned in the Strategic Plan of the College 2020 – 2025 and the strategy of development proposes to enhance the capacity to some procedures: Procedures for design and approval of new programmes, subjects and modules, Procedures for student assessment, Procedures for ongoing monitoring of programmes, Procedures for programme evaluation, Procedures for selection, appointment, appraisal and development of staff, Procedures for evaluating premises, equipment and facilities, Procedures for evaluating student services, Procedures for evaluation the governance and quality assurance policy, Procedure for the evaluation of public information. Beyond the fact that quality assurance does not only mean procedures, they do not cover the entire activity of the institution, and research or internationalization do not seem to be part of the quality assurance processes. In the same time, The Iliria Quality Assurance Workplan for 2020 establishes objectives and indicator in terms of QA also for research or internationalization. It seems to be not a full correlation between Strategic Plan and the activity of the Quality Council, which was responsible to develop the Workplan.



Surveys to students, teaching staff and graduates are used as tools for data collection. Obtained data is collected, stored and processed in the institutional database. Course evaluations provided by students are carried out at the end of each semester and fragmented reports are produced. The Internal Evaluation Report – 2018 presented by the college to ET is an interpretation of data provided by surveys without any other analyses. The overall self-evaluation reports to provide an overview of performance for the institution as a whole and for organizational units and major functions within it seem to be prepared only for the external evaluation. ET didn't identify surveys to administrative staff or employers.

In this organizational structure and with these procedures, the internal quality assurance system is very new, only a few months of implementation. The management of the institution seems to be aware that the implementation of a truly functional system with specialized human resources cannot be achieved so quickly. Important steps have been taken by establishing clear structures and responsibilities, the new people involved can be trained in this direction, and there are premises for this system to become truly functional. Taking into account strictly the period after November 2019 (when the new QA regulations were applied), the College didn't produce yet any comprehensive analysis according with the new QA Regulations. Even if students are members in different organizational structures of the University, they are not engaged in the design and implementation of quality assurance processes, mechanisms and instruments. The institution should increase its efforts to promote the development of quality culture as a common understanding of quality values, for which every individual of the institution is responsible, a set of shared ideas, beliefs and values about quality united when everyone inside the academic community is sincerely engaged and motivated.

The QA assurance system and processes are regularly evaluated by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency and updated according with KAA requirements

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Increase the internal commitment for the constant quality improvement and develop the quality culture across the institution. Maybe to organize workshops, round tables or other kind of activities which could involve people from the entire academic community;*
2. *Ensure that the QA system and the data collection instruments cover the whole range of institutional activities (graduates and employers);*



3. *Increase the role of QA system in the processes at all levels of the college's activities;*
4. *Ensure that people directly involved in QA structures have appropriate knowledges and skills;*
5. *Ensure that the all collected data are used for institutional improvement.*
6. *Ensure that the data provided in internal QA analyses are real and are not only to establish the conformity with some standards, there are tools for permanently quality improvement.*

2.6. Learning and teaching

The institution has drafted and adopted some regulations applicable to academic programs. Main document that describes the teaching and learning activities and provide regulation on the organization of studies is the Statute of the college. The Statute includes information on studies and curricula, joint programs, student admission and assessment, bachelor and diploma thesis, graduation, recognition of learning, academic year, language of study, changing study programs and students' right, obligations and organizations (http://www.uiliria.org/ui/dokumente/1%20Statute_ILIRIA%20College.pdf). According to SER, there are only few more documents, apart from the Statute of the college referring to studies: Student Drop Out Strategy and Student Appeals Regulation. ET considers that there is a lot of room and important to elaborate specific academic procedures/documents as separate ones, for instance regarding the transfer of credits. This regulation, appears on the website just as a title, but it does not open as many other documents in the list: <http://www.uiliria.org/en/university/documents>. In the Statute it is mentioned that “a student may transfer semesters, ECTS points collected, and parts of ECTS points of a course”; “students may be transferred to the Iliria College only for one course, or a certain number of ECTS points in a course” (Article 91). This is very difficult for students to understand how this might be possible, in the absence of additional clarifications. The institution does not monitor the extent to which those regulations are effectively implemented. An evaluation of all programs is included in the annual report for quality assurance but this is based on descriptive set of questions and answers. In addition, the Evaluation at program level provided to the ET (Additional Documents, page 128) does not cover important issues on programs and no measurable indicators.

According to the information provided:

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- *“ILIRIA College has received positive evaluation and accreditation for most of its Bachelor and Master programs” (Additional Documents, page 4);*
- *“The general structure of curricula at College is uniform and is worked out by the Curriculum Committee of the Senate. The respective Faculties draw up the objectives of the curricula and education programmes within the certain confirmed rules” (SER, page 52);*
- *“A variety of teaching methods employed across all departments offer possibilities for active learning. These include case-studies, project work, problem-based learning and simulated learning. Site visits and practice placements are important features of the teaching and learning process. Opportunities for interactive learning are reinforced through project-based learning, case study analysis, visiting speakers, group work and e-learning. The use of these teaching methods is enabled by a favourable teacher-student ratio and small classes”. (SER, page 55);*
- *“Most of Iliria programs fall under NQF Level 6 (bachelor) and Level 7 (Master). Progression from level to level shall be defined in terms of increasingly complex and demanding outcomes of learning, defined in terms of knowledge, skills and wider competences” (SER, page 58);*

Therefore, ET observed that during the online site visit, the teaching staff demonstrated that they have used differentiation in teaching methods and students' assessment, they proved to be aware of their teaching responsibilities, they use teaching strategies suitable for the different kinds of learning outcomes and willingness to participate in activities to improve their teaching effectiveness. They all agreed that engagement in the learning process is important and an ongoing and continuous process. The meeting with students and graduates proved that on the basis of their learning processes achievements they were able to find a proper job immediately after graduation or even during their studies. The teaching staff is aware of their duties and teaching responsibilities. Unfortunately, there is an “Inadequate training on competency-based didactics” (SER, page 62).

There is no evidence that graduates and employers are properly involved in providing feedback and ideas for teaching and learning improvement. No survey for these categories has been elaborated. Therefore, there is no plan for improvement based on these stakeholders' perceptions.

Compliance level: Partially compliant



ET recommendations:

- 1. Involve students and partners efficiently in the curriculum design/changes in a formal way;*
- 2. Provide training to teaching staff regarding the categories of skills and competences;*
- 3. Provide regular training to teaching staff on lecturing skills to improve the teaching effectiveness;*
- 4. Elaborate a methodology on the study program monitoring (when is done, how, what kind of indicators are used, how are they collected, by whom)*
- 5. Involve graduates and employers effectively (create official surveys) in providing ideas for concrete improvement.*

2.7. Research

Institutional research has been presented and elaborated in a couple of institutional documents. On one side, it is extremely ambitious when it comes to its role, presence and place that it takes in institutional planning, namely how it is presented in various documents, but on the other side is very modest, local and with very low research productivity when it comes to its actual realisation. Research plan is descriptive, but with no clearly defined indicators and benchmarks for performance targets.

From time to time, it is almost annoying to read about its absolute excellence which is not evidenced in none of the relevant research aspects – actual research infrastructure, human resources, research productivity, funding. Institution is allocating some funds and supports its teaching staff to be engaged in some research activities. Mainly funding covers conferences, travelling and supports partially publishing. The College developed institutional publishing, both a journal and books. The College is publishing *The Iliria International Review*, journal that is recognised outside Kosovo, mainly in a region, Central and Eastern Europe, with relatively low impact factor (0,765, <http://globalimpactfactor.com/iliria-international-review/>), and accepting papers from social sciences and humanities. The institutional efforts should be recognised, however, it is also important to bear in mind that institutional, local journals often favourise local authors, regardless how much they try and claim not to, and they usually do not gain a wide international recognition for many different reasons.



In order to be productive researcher, it is necessary to have adequate infrastructure, and funding for conducting research. As much as the teaching staff involves students in research and also translate their research activities into their lectures and teaching activities, students could participate in some research, but they cannot be a main force. At the same time, no once was mentioned research based learning, neither in the SER or other documents nor during the interviews. Research budget needs to be better articulated with elaborated funds allocations according to the research plan.

A part of Strategy is also devoted to so called commercialisation, it is mentioned innovation and transfer technology, as well as entrepreneurship, spin offs etc, however there is no word on patenting, how to do transfer technology, what kind of professionalised support is offered to the researchers, what are the regulations and many other things that are relevant topic for all the universities that are developing this kind of activities and that proved to be in this area advanced and successful.

Research productivity of full time staff is very low, and annual ratio person-journal is far below one. And this is in total, not checking and sorting out where the papers are published and what kind of papers, not to talk about the quality using internationally recognised parameters. It would be also important for the institutions which claims to have research, to differentiate different types of projects (e.g. between fundamental and applied research; or scientific research and professional projects). ET received the list of projects which is very non-transparent, listing projects finished some years ago, very few being still in the process, but hardly any being really a research project, based on creativity, research idea and research questions. In majority of the cases they are contract-projects that serve to collect data and to provide a descriptive statistics.

Research project plan is vague, descriptive and non-operational. On individual level, or even unit level it is very hard to identify with. Strategy talks about research groups, interdisciplinarity etc, but it is very hard to match any of these with the research plan. The same could be said for the research budget which is absolutely not transparent and vague.

Again, as it has been already commented, SER is using a lot of words, some of them in a wrong context (as an example, *The institution has consulted a number of research evaluation frameworks (Productive Interactions, ERA...* ERA is European Research Area and nothing to do with the evaluation framework, and it is always recognised by the abbreviation; in case it is



something else the full name should have been written), some of them belonging to some other contexts not to this SER at all. From time to time it is disturbing to read the text that it is evidently more the text that it could have been taken from different other texts, that it is a text that does not describe the institutional concrete and real activities, procedures, measures etc. Although the Statue elaborates the doctoral education in almost all its details, research that is prerequisite for those who want to have doctoral education, cannot be treated the way that it is the case in this report. The first important step would be to better align the reality and the report. And then to analyse the capacity in truthful and responsible way. Main prerequisite to perform doctoral education is not to have regulations and to be allowed by the law (although this is *conditio sine qua non*), but to have research capacity and research productivity.

The SER document (page 63-64) reflects on research plan, which appears, as described, very general, extensive and without clear focus and research priorities.

Institution has developed Code of ethics, and although it covers some relevant aspect of research integrity, it is still partial and it does not provide a clear guideline for performing responsible research and to fully support research integrity as well as the rights of the involved participants.

For the SWOT analysis there is a slot, but the analysis is not provided (2.7.9.)

Compliance level: Non compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Revisit research plan and to make it operational*
2. *Ensure allocation on budget in a transparent way*
3. *Perform the reality check and align all the plans and activities in accordance with the actual research capacity*
4. *Avoid listing everything that it could be said about research; instead be objective and this way enable further possible development*
5. *Revisit criteria for promotions which are too low*
6. *Familiarise yourself with different research options and try to identify what is optimal for the institution*



7. *Make clear priorities for doing research, identify them in the Strategy and monitor by the Action plan*
8. *Develop professional administrative support for transfer technology*
9. *Develop professional administrative support for research projects, in particular European ones if you are aiming to further develop and implement research*
10. *Introduce and apply more frequently research based learning*
11. *Impose on yourself to report on research productivity in accordance with international practice and international criteria*

2.8. Staff, employment processes and professional development

According to SER:

- *“Staff receive an induction session prior to the commencement of each academic year. The Dean delivers the induction session and the Staff handbook is distributed at this session. Staff receive general and programme specific information at this session including the timetable, the assessment schedule, and overview of the subjects being delivered that semester as well as the teaching and learning strategies. An overview of the library and how to access its online facilities is presented during the College’s Induction days” (SER, page 70);*
- *“The Dean ensures that mechanisms for the allocation of workloads are approved and implemented in Faculty and are made available to the staff in accordance with Faculty Council Workload Policy” (SER, page 70);*
- *“Open calls for the recruitment of staff enable recruiting of the best staff in Kosovo and abroad” (SER, page 71.*

Several set of policies and regulations are described in the Statute of the college and are accessible to all teaching and administrative staff. It includes rights and responsibilities, recruitment processes, supervision, performance evaluation, promotion, support processes, and professional development: staff appointment and dismissal, academic promotion, staff right and obligations. The recruitment processes ensure that staff have the specific areas of expertise, qualification and experience for the positions they occupy: *“the rector opens the call for applications for an academic position, the rector gathers all the relevant data from every application and along with the dean of the department of study, where the concerned academic*



staff will be positioned, selects three of the best candidatures and proposes them to the Senate” (Statute, article 108).

During the site visit, the online meeting with the teaching staff revealed the fact that candidates for employment were provided with clarifications and descriptions of conditions of employment. The youngest staff confirmed that they were provided specific orientation program, once hired and accepted among academics. Their workload is considered proper due to a continuous monitoring at the Faculty Council level. The staff is qualified for their job and willing to explain to Et all the trainings that they benefited from.

Academic staff evaluation is done by students and occurs on a formal basis at least once each year. The results of the evaluation are not made publicly available. There is no evidence that the academic staff evaluation is done through self-evaluation, peer and superiors. In addition, *“Issues that emerge from the staff evaluation process are discussed with the staff member. The most common challenges that arise from the process include complaints about poor pedagogical skills, poor research skills and technical skills” (SER, page 73).* Therefore, staff performance need to reconsider clear requirements for improvement. There is no evidence that institution is closely monitoring the improvements in staff activity, especially in the segments underlined during the evaluations.

The Staff-student ratio in 2019 was 26,58 (SER, page 19), while the staff % that had annual training was 58%. During the online site visit, the teaching staff confirmed that they provide 2 hours/week to students as consultation, that they use interactive teaching methods, combining practical work with theoretical tasks for students in more or less equal percentage. Unfortunately, none of the participants were involved in any of international teams. Regarding the continuing form of students’ evaluation, although at the beginning the teaching staff said that they do not use as assessment, later on, they confirmed that the students have a mid - term test. In addition, teaching staff provided examples of training they benefited from: SPSS training, IT Academy, Erasmus+ training, entrepreneurship training etc. They also admit that some students have difficulties in learning and that they do a lot of effort to motivate them.

The institution has no clear plan for all categories of staff, including the administrative one for professional development, no structured approach in identifying such needs, and as there is no clear financial stability policy, there is no evidence on resources allocated for staff development. In SER at “2.8.4 Staff professional development” all areas described from 1 to 5



refer to teaching, research, management staff, but not to administrative staff . In addition, the table providing the training list (as additional document) is strange produced (no consecutive years) and in many cases, all staff is allocated to trainings related to research (as in January 2020). Therefore, the institution does not consider the need for staff according to their professional duties. In addition, the last additional document requested was not provided so ET cannot connect the effort for staff development for teaching and learning process, in general.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Create institutional conditions to motivate teaching staff to work in international teams;*
2. *Integrate the feedback of students into the academic staff promotion procedure;*
3. *Create a procedure for academic staff peer and superior evaluation;*
4. *Make public a report on academic staff evaluation (at least statistical report);*
5. *Consider lecturing skills as criterion for academic staff recruitment;*
6. *Create a development plan for administrative staff.*

2.9. Student administration and support services

According to the SER, the College's website and student's testimonials, the admission requirements and procedure at Iliria College are defined in the Statute according to which the conditions for enrolment to undergraduate studies in the College are the following: completion of secondary education in Kosovo, certified by a diploma; completion of primary and secondary education outside of Kosovo, with at least 12 years of education, proven by a relevant diploma; special authorization issued by the Ministry. The information regarding the admission procedure is published on the official website of the institution and the application can be submitted online on the college website. The website also includes information on the programs and services provided by the institution. The students also mentioned that the college is active in promoting its study programmes in high schools, this being one of the reasons why they chose this institution.

The college offers scholarships by partially reducing the fee for different categories of students: students with very good learning performances, students with limited economic means (in some conditions), students that have received a distinction during their secondary school and students who are also Kosovo civil servants.



According to the information provided, there are processes in place to collect and analyze data referring to the student progression and drop-out rates. The institution collects also data on students' satisfaction with their programmes, the learning resources, and administration and support services. As ET already mentioned, obtained data is collected, stored and processed in the institutional database. There are some statistical analysis, but not clearly evidences that they are used for supporting decision making at all college's levels: teaching, research or administrative.

The students have confirmed that starting this academic year they have online available a Student Handbook, provided to the student through the Student Portal. The Student Handbook will be distributed and presented (Even if SER and students presented this information in the past, as in this academic year Iliria College did not have the right to enroll new students and Student Handbook is quite new, ET reserves the right to present it as a future commitment from the institution) by dean during the induction session and it includes all information and regulations that student need. It is also confusing in line with: *"Iliria College did not have the right to enroll new students"* the fact that in the additional documents (page 8) it is presented as activity Induction weeks (presentation held **for all applicants enrolling in the first academic year** – BA and MA level) – October 2019, with 300 participants

Students Appeal Regulation was approved by the College last year, in October. The regulations make clear the grounds on which academic appeals may be based, the criteria for decisions, the remedies available and guarantee impartial consideration. It is a public document, the students seemed to know about it, but being a new one, it was difficult to identify how the procedures really work.

Iliria College has a soft to identify plagiarism, but it is for English language. During the meetings, students or staff members could not identify activities to prevent plagiarism, but according with the additional documents provided, some could be mentioned: Academic writing course, Research methodology course etc.

Iliria College has a Career Office that deals with career planning and employment counselling. According to the SER, the main responsibilities of the office are student's career orientation, job counselling and mediation, and internships for College students. The discussion with the students showed that they do not have a clear idea about the activity of the Career Office and they confuse the Career Office with some Business Centre. The college also has established memorandums of understanding with employers that offer various internship or employment opportunities to students and graduates, but the number of beneficiaries is not really



representative in relation to the student population. (*Additional doc, page 36 – 92 students from 2.419, in 2019*). The College didn't provide evidences for any other kind of counselling.

The documents provided by the institution and discussion with students didn't identify any relevant extracurricular activities.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Provide real counselling for students (career, psychological etc.);*
2. *Ensure that the data provided in internal QA analyses are used to identify the students' need;*
3. *Ensure that the plagiarism's prevention is one of the key point in teaching, research and administrative activities;*
4. *Increase the number of internships supported by the College;*
5. *Increase the College's support for extracurricular students' activities.*

2.10. Learning resources and facilities

First of all, ET should mention the fact that regarding the learning resources and facilities, the evaluation was made on the basis of the information received from the institution, including a movie presentation, and those declared by the participants in the meetings during the online site visit.

The college seems to have adequate and clean classrooms, labs and offices and also a project to build a new campus in the city centre with a next year's budget allocated for this. The college has a cooperation agreement with the hospital located about 5 minutes away from the college, which is ready to assist in case it is needed. During the discussions, ET understood that the college has not facilities for students or staff with special needs, but if necessary, the courses or offices are organized at the ground floor of the building. Considering other kind of special needs (blindness, deafness etc.), ET didn't identify appropriate facilities and learning resources.

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The library's College includes also a reading hall equipped with computers and several scientific and educational databases are available for students and staff: EBSCO Publishing, Springer LINK, Science Direct Elsevier magazines, European Research Online, Synergy, e-magazines of Blackwell Publishing, Oxford Reference Online, Cambridge University Press e-magazines. Books, journals and other materials are available in Albanian and English and the loans and returns of the library material are managed by a librarian. Teaching staff mentioned that at the beginning of each academic year, after establishing the syllabuses, submit to the library the bibliography indicated in their syllabuses, so that the learning resources are updated accordingly. As stated by students during the meeting, a photo-copying facility is available to students free of charge.

Quality assurances processes include feedback about the quality of facilities, but how the ET already mentioned, the quality assurance system is not fully functional and completely integrated in the daily routine among the college. Also, there is not any kind of feedback from administrative staff, already used for institutional comprehensive internal analysis. The ET didn't identify on the Organogram of the College an IT Office or a responsible to support the staff and students to use the information and communication technology, but ET is aware that the college has a Faculty of Computer Sciences.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Ensure the development of the facilities and of the learning resources for students with special needs and allocate the relevant budget;*
- 2. Develop tools to ensure feedback from administrative staff and include the results in the periodically self-evaluation reports and, consequently, in the Action Plans proposed.*

2.11. Institutional cooperation

Iliria College developed an Internationalization Strategy which was approved at October 28, 2019. The Strategy identifies the followings as key areas:



- *Developing excellent learning in partnership with our students. In particular offering a globally relevant and culturally rich experience by growing our global student body and encouraging all students to undertake curricula and extra-curricular activities with an international perspective*
- *Building on the world class research of the College and growing its research standing and impact internationally*
- *Fostering and promoting international opportunities for our students and staff through cross cultural events on our campus; exchange and study abroad programmes and research and professional connections*
- *Taking the ILIRIA experience across the world expanding the delivery of our programmes and courses overseas (SER, page 372).*

The institution has not created and assigned the portfolio for institutional cooperation / internationalisation to a member of upper management. The activities are coordinated by the International Office which has the responsibilities *in the pursuit of international partnership and global engagement in education and knowledge* and also *to serve as a global link for funding opportunities, exchanges, visits, international events and conferences* (SER, page 90). Additional, the ILIRIA Project office is responsible to support students and staff to apply for different projects.

The college has established memorandums of cooperation with relevant local and international organizations, and is presented as partner institution in various Erasmus+ mobility projects. Students and staff participated in various international mobilities as study, practice, study visit, conferences etc. The Iliria College has also partner in different national and international projects which aim to increase the visibility of the college, to give opportunities to teachers and staff for personal development and also to be an active partner in the community live. ET believes that supporting the community to communicate more easily in English would create more opportunities in this direction.

Various events as conferences or workshops are organized by the College. Iliria Summer School became already a College's tradition. The teaching staff's participation in international projects is financially supported by the college, but the engagement in international cooperation and contributions to the community are not included in the staff performance review and are not constantly monitored (The example of the Internal Quality Report provided by the IC as additional document, doesn't refer at all at international cooperation or contributions to the community). The College has to continue to promote international collaboration and to support



teaching staff and students to be members in international teams, increasing also their involvement in research projects. The mobility of teaching staff and students will increase also their expectations regarding the College's activities and will make them aware of the challenges in the Higher Education Area. Only in this way it will be possible to create a true culture of quality, and the weaknesses will be easily identified by them, not as at present, when it is very difficult for them (*teaching staff, students or graduates*) to identify what could be done better.

The college also has established memorandums of understanding with employers that offer various internship or employment opportunities to students and graduates, but the number of beneficiaries is not really representative in relation to the student population. There are no evidences that all staff are encouraged to participate in forums in which significant community issues are discussed and plans for community development are considered. Starting from the mission, to the assumed objectives, there is no clear approach at management level to identify the specifics of the institution within the higher education system in the local context. Also, the ET considers the involvement of local employers in advisory committees of the college being not fully operational (see also comments at Standard 6), as also the involvement of Alumni Association.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Increase the number of internships supported by the College;*
- 2. Enhance the capacity of the staff in English language skills;*
- 3. Really capitalize the involvement of employers in College's decision bodies;*
- 4. Continue the efforts to keep the contact with alumni in a regular way, using regular surveys.*
- 5. Indicate the participation in the international projects and the contributions in the community as one of the performance evaluation criteria for staff.*

3. Overall Evaluation and Judgments of the ET



According to the KAA Accreditation manual, in order to be granted a positive decision for program re/accreditation, every education provider has to demonstrate at least a **substantial compliance** level in the overall judgment. Therefore, failure in meeting at least an overall substantial compliance level entails delaying, withdrawing, suspending or denying accreditation.

Iliria College demonstrated **an overall partial compliance**, with eight partial compliance area of evaluation, two substantial and one non compliant. In all the areas of evaluation, including the areas with the substantial compliance there is a need for continuous institutional improvements. The standards that have been evaluated as having partial compliance, as well as one non compliant standard, would need careful, well planned institutional engagement and activities in order to overcome the weaknesses, both on a structural and operational level.

During the on-line site visit, ET invited every group of participants at the end of the dialog to add anything more they would have considered relevant to be taken into account in the report.

The ET considers that Iliria College has still a lot of work to do to achieve the proposed performances according to the institutional strategy and KAA standards. The institution showed that it started to react to some of the recommendations received in the last evaluation process, but it hasn't achieved yet the required level of compliance. It is not enough to follow compliance with certain standards, it is equally important to be aware of your mission and your resources, to focus the activities on the expectations of stakeholders.

According to the KAA Accreditation manual requirements, the Expert Team recommends **not to accredit** the institution.

Expert Team

Chair

| | | |
|-------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| | Melita Kovacevic | June 4, 2020 |
| (Signature) | (Print Name) | (Date) |

Member



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo



Agjencia e Kosovës për Akreditim
Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency

| | | |
|-------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| | Margareta Platis | June 4, 2020 |
| (Signature) | (Print Name) | (Date) |

Member

| | | |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| | Oana Sarbu | June 4, 2020 |
| (Signature) | (Print Name) | (Date) |