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RIINVEST COLLEGE

INSTITUTIONAL

FINAL REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

March 6, 2023



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit: 9th February 2023

Expert Team (ET) members:

- *Prof. Milan Pol, Masaryk University, Czech Republic*
- *Prof. Peeter Normak, Tallinn University, Estonia*
- *Mr. Christoph Back, student expert*

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- *Ilirjana Ademaj, KAA Officer*
- *Leona Kovaci, KAA Officer*

Sources of information for the Report:

- *Self-evaluation report (SER)*
- *Other documents delivered by the Riinvest College upon the request*
- *Data from the interviews (site visit)*

Criteria used for institutional and program evaluations

- *KAA Accreditation Manual*



1.2. Site visit schedule

Time	Meeting	Participants/Comments
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>)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Visar Vokrii- UD Rektor2. Dorina Kralani- Sekretare e Kolegjit3. Albnora Hoti- Drejtoreshe per Ceshtje Akademike4. Alban Hashani- Dekan per studime Postdiplomike5. Gezim Turkeshi- Dekan per studime Bachelor6. Rita Sekiraqa- Zyrtare ne Zyren per Sigurim te Cilesise
10:35 – 11:35	Meeting with: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Quality assurance representatives2. Administrative services	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Rita Sekiraqa- Zyrtare ne Zyren per Sigurim te Cilesise2. Argjenta Plakolli- Antare e Komisionit te Cilesise3. Blerim Jahiu- Antar i Komisionit te Cilesise4. Ramadan Dervishi- Antar i Komisionit te Cilesise5. Shkendie Loxha- Zyrtare per Sherbime Studentore6. Malesore Rexhepi- Udheheqesse e zyres se IT-se



11:40 – 12:40	Meeting with Deans of Faculties (Head of programmes in case of smaller colleges)	1.Alban Hashani- Dekan per studime Postdiplomike 2.Gezim Turkeshi- Dekan per studime Bachelor
12:40 – 13.40	Lunch break (to be provided at the evaluation site)	
13:40 – 14:30	Visiting tour of the facilities and infrastructure	1.Dorina Kralani- Sekretare e Kolegjit Riinvest
14:30 – 15:20	Meeting with teaching staff	1.Adnan Maxhuni- Ligjerues- ShK-IS 2.Alban Hashani-LSE-EP 3.Albin Ahmeti- DSBA 4.Argjenta Plakolli- MA Menaxhment 5.Blerim Jahiu-SHK-IS 6.Fisnik Recica- MB 7.Fitim Mulolli- LSE- EP
15:25 – 16:15	Meeting with students	1.Agnesa Selmani 2.Egzon Bllaca 3.Fatbardh Dumishi 4.Gresa Ramadani 5.Rilind Ramadani 6.Sumeja Fejza
16:25 – 17:15	Meeting with graduates	1.Anite Hajdari 2.Funda Safqi 3.Tringe Shkodra 4.Dea Salihu 5.Kaltrina Aliu 6.Anita Mehmeti



17:20 – 18:10	Meeting with employers of graduates and external stakeholders	1.Komtel- Tome Rodiqi 2.Four Points by Sheraton-Bujan Stavileci 3.Marigona Hill-Sihana Hoxha 4.Radix-Arben Zeka 5.Incodex-Saranda Sefedini
18:10 – 18:20	Internal meeting – Expert Team and KAA	
18:20 – 18:30	Closing meeting with the management of the institution	1. Visar Vokri- UD Rektor 2. Dorina Kralani- Sekretare e Kolegjit 3. Albnora Hoti- Drejtoreshe per Ceshtje Akademike 4. Alban Hashani- Dekan per studime Postdiplomike 5. Gezim Turkeshi- Dekan per studime Bachelor 6. Rita Sekiraqa- Zyrtare ne Zyren per Sigurim te Cilesise

1.3. A brief overview of the institution under evaluation

Riinvest College was established in 2007 by a group of Kosovar computer science experts working and living in Austria, “based on the rich tradition of the Riinvest Development Research Institute” (SER, p. 3). Riinvest College currently offers bachelor and master programs. The bachelor programs are as follows: BA in Business Management (with concentrations on Economics, Analysis for Business; Management and Marketing; Banking, Finance and Accounting), BSc in Computer Science (with concentrations on Programming for Mobile Devices and Cloud; Cyber Security; Management of Networks and Databases). Riinvest College also offers MA in Management (with concentrations on Management and

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Marketing; Management of Financial and Information Systems). Riinvest College was several times accredited as an institution by the KAA, last time in 2019 (for the period of three years).

2. INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION

2.1. Public mission and institutional objectives

The mission of the Riinvest College is “to offer high quality studies and research to provide experts for the development needs of Kosovo, with capacities to compete as well as to offer solutions to socio-economic challenges at the global level” (SER, p. 10). This way, it can be said the mission statement explicitly relates to all three main pillars of a standard higher education institution (teaching, research and public outreach/community service). In this respect, the mission statement can be viewed as well-balanced.

The vision of the Riinvest College is very ambitious. It is about “for the next 10 years ... to be a leading entrepreneurial and model higher education institution in Kosovo and the region... synergically combine quality education and practical work, creating a unique academic experience that cultivates creativity, entrepreneurship and employability in students. There will be strategic partnership with local and international businesses and universities. Riinvest will be a leader in shaping economic policies and decision-making and technological innovations and will play an active role in social development” (SER, p. 10). The vision of the Riinvest College can be viewed as corresponding to the mission statement.

The Riinvest College also points out a set of values the institution declares it is standing behind. They are as follows: creativity, critical thinking and innovation; tolerance; high ethics and honesty; academic freedom; partnership and transparency towards stakeholders, institutions and the wider audience” (website of the Riinvest College).

It was reported by the Riinvest College and also confirmed during some interviews that the vision and mission statements were developed in a broader consultation process, and the mission statement is recognized by most respondents across the Riinvest College community. Also, the mission statement as well as the vision statements are published at the Riinvest College’s website.



Since the mission statement of the Riinvest College emphasises three main pillars of higher education institution, as such it has a potential to serve as an effective guide for strategic planning, decision-making and operations of the institution.

The institutional objectives can be considered consistent with the mission of the Riinvest College, and they support it, as seen in the set of four aims and 16 objectives that contain the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 of the Riinvest College.

In general, public mission and institutional objectives are clearly developed and can be serving as a solid guide for the institution's functioning.

Compliance level: Fully compliant

ET recommendations:

None

2.2. Strategic planning, governance and administration

The Riinvest College has developed the Strategic Plan for the period 2022-2025. It is structured into four aims; 16 objectives; results; and performance indicators ("personal measurements", as they are called in the SER). The four aims are focused on important areas of the Riinvest College operation: (1) improvement of quality of academic achievement and experience; (2) diversification of resources and their efficient use; (3) increasing visibility and presence; and (4) creation of local and international strategic partnership.

The first aim is more concretely elaborated by six objectives which relate to recruitment of quality staff and students, teaching and research, administration system, efficient decision, and quality assurance. The results relate to the number of students, their satisfaction, and modern administration. Indicators seem to cover employment and overall quality.

The second aim is saturated by four objectives which are related mainly to financial stability, alternative incomes and new services provided (English language center); indicators relate to profitability.



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The third aim is concretized by two objectives which are related to media and other visibility of the Riinvest College.

And the fourth aim is elaborated by four objectives related to the increase of external interactions of the Riinvest College (international agreements, partnerships with higher education institutions, local businesses and institutions, and alumni). Results and indicators only focus on international relations, though.

The Strategic Plan on the one hand covers important areas of the Riinvest College operation and suggests some important developments. Some of these developments seem to be highly desirable, some will bring a significant change to the institutional operation (for instance, a high increase of student numbers which is planned for the years to come). The panel was informed about the plan of the Riinvest College to move to the new campus but did not see these facilities, therefore it is not possible to evaluate more concretely this intention. It remains clear, however, that in current facilities an increase of student numbers would not be recommendable.

At the same time, it seems that some areas of the Riinvest College activity are not explicitly focused on in the Strategic Plan. In other words, some already chronicle problems (for instance, the learning resources – in particular the library; support to research activities which is only indicated by the plan to allocate more money into it, but there is no explicit plan to develop and implement a functioning policy of research support and development). Although the third role is a part of the mission statement of the Riinvest College, too, it does not seem to be explicitly more elaborated in the Strategic Plan either (focus on external environment to foster mobilities and cooperation with industry is more directed towards the institution's internal interest). This way, it seems the Strategic Plan takes only partly account of aspects of the internal and external environment affecting the development of the institution.

This is stated in the SER, and it was in some extent confirmed during the interviews, the Strategic Plan was drafted in boarder participation of key stakeholders inside the Riinvest College and beyond.

The integration of the Strategic Plan with annual and longer-term budget processes can be confirmed to some extent. However, the space for improvement can be found here (see chapter 1.6).



The Riinvest College declares it is monitoring the implementation of the Strategic Plan on short and medium targets, and this was partly evidenced during the interviews, too.

It seems to be clear that the Riinvest College has developed a decision-making system and internal operation regulations in line with existing legal provisions. Responsibilities are divided among owners of the Riinvest College, the College Board, the Academic Council, and the Management. Academic decision-making processes relate to the (acting) rector, Academic Council and Program Committees at the Riinvest College. Election criteria and processes are defined. Responsibilities of the decision-making bodies are differentiated, and they seem to be followed in practice.

As for student participation, the Student Union exists at the Riinvest College, having elected student representatives from all majors and all years of study. The student representation body is supposed to be a bridge between students and the executive staff of the College, but apparently there are some problems with this, as also stated in the SER – although student representation is formally guaranteed in decision-making, “the quality of student involvement is not satisfactory” (SER, p. 18).

The Riinvest College has an administration which seems to be sufficiently effective and qualified; the administration staff cover main administrative functions of the institution. The responsibilities of administration service personnel are clearly defined, and they seem to match the qualifications of individuals.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Make sure the strategic plan more clearly points out the development of areas which need improvement (for instance, learning resources, research)*
2. *Make sure the third role of the institution is clearly incorporated into the strategic plan.*
3. *Make sure all parts of the strategic plan clearly relate results and indicators with the aims and objectives.*
4. *Encourage more effectively student involvement in decision-making processes.*



2.3. Financial planning and management

According to the SER, the Riinvest College has an income generated mainly from student fees. The other expenses seem to be comparatively minor (they come from consultancy, grants, other legal sponsorships; and the Riinvest College is planning to have some income from the testing services, too). According to the financial plans, the student fees are now largely prevailing, and this will be even stronger in the next years, since it is planned to significantly increase the number of students. It seems the Riinvest College has sufficient financial resources in the short and medium term to adequately reach its mission and objectives.

The increased income from student fees as planned (from 423 thousand EUR in 2022/23 growth to 1,418 thousand EUR in 2025/26) means that in 2025/26 the institution will have a total earning of about a half million EUR (after reduction of expenses). This money is not to be invested back into the Riinvest College's operation, it seems. Considering some shortcoming in the Riinvest operation (research provisions, library, antiplagiarism software deficits etc.), the question remains whether some more investments into the College's operation would not be advisable.

Oversight and management of the Riinvest College budgeting is done via engagement of Baker Tilly, LLC as an internal auditor, which performs "internal audit which includes sales and accounts receivable, review of sales processes through the bank, purchases and procurement, assets, review of inventory processes; financial reporting that includes key expenses and eventual problems; review of internal controls...; preparation of monthly reports on findings and recommendation" (SER, p. 19). This seems to be a good solution.

Monitoring of expenditure and commitments is done every three months by the management, and annually by the College Board, which is a common and acceptable practice.

It seems that accounting systems comply with accepted professional accounting standards.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:



1. *Consider a possibility to invest more finances from what will be earned as the netto income (mainly generated by student fees) into the Riinvest College's operation in the next years.*

2.4. Academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability

The topic of academic integrity is embedded in the „Code of Conduct“ of Riinvest College. The „Code of Conduct“ contains all important contents of values of academic freedom, institutional autonomy and ethical integrity. Within the Code the requirements for all internal stakeholders are defined to act consistently with high standards of ethical conduct and avoidance of plagiarism in research, teaching, performance evaluation, and in the conduct of administrative duties, and to avoid conflicts of interest. In the SER, Riinvest College is stating: “The „Code of Conduct“ has been revised following the advice of the Council of Europe within the framework of the European Union and the Council of Europe "Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey": Strengthening Integrity and Fighting Corruption in Higher Education.”

With the „Code of Conduct“, Riinvest College has a sufficient framework to work with regarding to the topics of academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability. Unfortunately, the expert team (evaluation panel) did not find enough evidence that the College is applying the standards from the „Code of Conduct“ in a satisfactory scale.

In the SER, Riinvest College shortly describes three bodies which are in charge to tackle the topics defined in the „Code of Conduct“. These three bodies are the Disciplinary Commission, the Complaints Commission and the Academic Council. Unfortunately, the evaluation panel was not able to find precise processes and mechanisms on how the bodies are functioning. During the on-site visit the evaluation panel asked for further explanations but the answers from Riinvest College were vague and contradictory.

The evaluation panel is not convinced that the described structure with the three bodies is able to analyze and resolute the potential breaches in the „Code of Conduct“. A designated structure to handle all topics regarding to the „Code of Conduct“ (such as an Ethics Committee) does not seem to exist.



Regarding the avoidance of plagiarism, a difficult topic in Kosovo, Riinvest College showed only a little awareness for this matter. A plagiarism detection software is available to check documents in English language but not for Albanian language. Riinvest College explained, that a plagiarism software for Albanian language will be ready for the use soon. The evaluation panel does not find the current situation satisfactory.

The evaluation panel was able to find all internal regulations, procedures, self-evaluation reports and decisions of governing bodies publicly available. However, accurate, objective and relevant information about the data of the institution (such as academic staff, offered programs, number of students, ...) is not publicly available. For the reason of transparency, Riinvest College should improve the practice of publishing this required data and information.

In general, the evaluation panel states the topic of academic integrity, responsibility and public accountability as a weakness of Riinvest College. The „Code of Conduct“ contains all necessary topics but the application of the „Code of Conduct“ leaves much to be desired. The awareness for the topics of this chapter at Riinvest College is low. During the on-site visit the evaluation panel found only a little understanding of the importance of the topics.

The existing „Code of Conduct“ can serve as a foundation for a desired change. A designated structure, such as the Ethics Committee is not established, and clear procedures and mechanisms are not defined as for how the Ethics Committee is working and how the „Code of Conduct“ is enforced. Also, the revising and improvement process of these procedures is not defined at the moment.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Establish a designated structure (like an Ethics Committee) which will be responsible for the analysis and resolution of any potential breaches in the „Code of Conduct“.*
2. *Introduce clear processes and mechanisms for the enforcement of the „Code of Conduct“.*



2.5. Quality management

The latest version the *Regulation on Quality Assurance* is adopted by the Academic Council of the Riinvest College on 18. 3. 2018. The document is divided into two chapters – 1) Internal quality assessment and 2) External evaluation process. The first chapter describes the quality assurance policy, criteria and process of approval of programs, quality assessment of programs and modules, and other aspects of quality assurance. The second chapter covers the whole cycle of external evaluation, from application for an accreditation until activities based on the recommendations of external appraisers. For example, on the quality assurance of the teaching staff, the quality instruments are described and the processes of usage of these instruments. The document is freely available on the institution's web. Moreover, the main principles of quality assurance are outlined via drop-down menu on the institution's main webpage. The latest Quality Assurance Report can also be downloaded from this page.

Academic Council is the highest decision-making body of quality assurance. The implementation of the quality assurance policy is the responsibility of the Quality Assurance Committee and the Quality Assurance Office. The budget does not have a separate line for quality assurance. Nevertheless, since the (acting) rector belongs to the Quality Assurance Committee, it has enough authority and resources to cover necessary costs.

The College has declared the development of a quality culture as one of its main operating principles. It is based on the principle of cause and effect: when a problem occurs, determine the causes and acting correspondingly. Effective communication channels were mentioned as one of the tools used. A help desk was created, which also collects requests of students.

Quality assurance is implemented on three levels – on institutional, program and module levels. Institutional level deals with organization, finance, management, infrastructure, teaching and research. The main instruments are questionnaires for students, academic staff and administrative staff. Program level quality assurance consists in evaluation of study programs after each cycle of the program organized by the program leaders. The main instrument is the annual report that has a predetermined structure and considers the program approval criteria set out in the *Regulation on Quality Assurance*. Module level quality assurance focuses on specific subjects. The main instruments are: questionnaires, focus group interviews and peer observations. The templates of questionnaires (Student questionnaire for assessment of the institution, Questionnaire for academic staff, Questionnaire for administrative staff, Student feedback questionnaire, Questionnaire for lecturers) and peer observation are accepted on the



level of Academic Council as appendices to the Regulation on quality Assurance. However, the description of the role of program committees in the Statute of the College is confusing. According to Article 28.1 of the Statute, “Each Academic Unit has the Program Committees for each program it offers”. On the other hand, according to Article 28.3, the program committee deals with several study programs. No document determines the qualification requirements and responsibilities of program leaders.

Evaluations are conducted according to the Evaluation Plan of the College. The Evaluation Plan determines activities and their timelines for the following evaluation tools: 1) Questionnaires for evaluation of subject and teachers, 2) Questionnaires for teachers (An individual report is provided through the link), 3) Questionnaires for assessment of administration and services, 4) Observation, 5) Development Plan (of academic departments), 6) Focus groups with students, 7) Focus groups with stakeholders, 8) Questionnaires with Alumni, 9) Annual report. For example, evaluation of subjects and teachers (tool no.1 in the list above) consists of the following activities: 1) collection of data, 2) processing the data, 3) sending tables without analysis, 4) analysis, 5) figure relationship, and spans from week 10 until week 18. The questionnaires for students focus on the assessment of modules (courses) and the College in general. There is no question about the relations between different modules and the study program as a whole.

During the meetings, several suggestions for improvement were made by the participants. This means that the collection of input from students and staff has still some room for improvement. Moreover, the *Regulation on Quality Assurance* is almost entirely devoted to the quality of teaching and does not consider the quality of research and development of academic staff. However, the quality of research is addressed in a draft document *Research Regulation* which is not implemented yet. The fact that development activities are mentioned in only one article in this document (there are 45 articles in total) is somewhat incomprehensible.

The *Regulation on Quality Assurance* describes the tasks and procedures on quality assurance of all major stakeholders (although employers are mentioned in this 59-page document only once). Some processes are described in detail. For example, the process models for the eight main enrollment procedures are fixed in flowchart form: 1) handling applications of students, 2) admission of students, 3) semester registration, 4) taking academic leave, 5) discontinuation of studies, 6) continuation of studies, 7) registration of the academic year, 8) students’ attendance in lectures.



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The Quality Assurance Office implements the decisions of the Quality Assurance Committee: it is responsible for the organization of continuous evaluation and improvement of quality. The Quality Assurance Office is responsible for drafting and implementing the assessment methodology based on decisions taken by the Academic Council's Quality Assurance Committee. The office is responsible to the Rector.

The university has a Quality Assurance Committee that develops policies and procedures for quality assurance, sets the deadlines for evaluations, approves the composition of the evaluation teams, promotes the culture of quality and approves reports for publication related to quality. The committee has five elected members (three from the teaching staff, a student representative, one from administration) and three ex-officio members (Rector, College Secretary, Head of Quality Assurance Office). At the beginning of each academic year, the Quality Assurance Committee coordinates the internal appraisal process and composition of the self-evaluation report.

The duties and responsibilities of the Quality Assurance Office and of the Quality Assurance Committee are stated in the *Regulation on Quality Assurance*. In addition to the administration of internal quality assurance, the office also coordinates the preparation and execution of external accreditations, both of study programs and institutional. The Quality Assurance Office reports twice a year to the Academic Council of the College.

Templates for collecting data from stakeholders are used. A thorough (114 pages) Quality Assurance Report for 2020/2021 academic year that contains 56 figures, and 41 figures is publicly available. The Report is unfortunately in Albanian language, so the expert team (evaluation panel) was not able to conduct its deep analysis.

The College has a Management Information System (SIM). The SIM contains data on student profile ensures the measurement of student performance/progress (Attendance, passing exams, tests and other) across modules/years/programs, but also the provision of e-learning services for students. A huge number of reports can be generated from SIM data. SIM also includes an IT Management System called MyRiinvest as well as a HelpDesk.

The management of the university, quality assurance representatives and deans have all listed a number of improvements since the last institutional evaluations.

The Quality Assurance Regulation was first approved by the Academic Council of the College in 2015 and revised on 19.03.2018.

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Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Develop competency requirements for the persons in charge of the study program (program leaders), and mechanisms to ensure that a lead professor is only appointed to that position.*
2. *Develop principles for setting up a program committee for each study program, dominated by non-university stakeholders (employers, graduates, policy makers, representatives of other relevant educational institutions, etc) and determine the responsibilities of program committees and their leaders.*

2.6. Learning and teaching

The College has published and adopted sufficient regulations for its academic programs. They are specified for undergraduate (“Bachelor Studies regulation”) and graduate studies (“Master Studies regulation”). Every program is monitored by the instruments of student evaluation, graduate assessment, employer evaluation (the College has an “Industrial Board” as an advisory panel), employment of graduates and graduation data.

To ensure high standards for all programs regarding learning and teaching, an initial approval is done before a new program is introduced. Later on, performance monitoring which leads to changes if needed is performed. Because of a relatively small size of the institutions with only a few programs, the College is able to do it in an informal way. If Riinvest College is planning to introduce additional programs, this informal system will reach its limits and a standardized system will have to be introduced.

To identify and investigate differences in quality between programs, the College is working with performance indicators which are set at the institutional level. The indicators that are continuously monitored and reported are as follows:

- Student composition profile
- Student progress, success and dropout rates
- Student satisfaction with their programs
- Learning resources and support for students



- Career paths for graduates.

Unfortunately, during the on-site visit the College was not able to explain what the generated data on these indicators are used for. The chance of identifying rooms for improvement with this data is not used. Also, the difference in quality between programs could be determined with the performance indicators, but the evaluation panel did not find enough evidence that Riinvest College is doing it.

Riinvest College is providing a syllabus for all its programs. These syllabuses contain all necessary information for the students. All study programs are based on correlations between learning outcomes which are consistent with the National Qualifications Framework and with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

The evaluation panel did not find enough evidence that there are effective processes in place to ensure the fitness and effectiveness of assessment methods for the achievement of intended learning outcomes. Only vague answers were provided when the evaluation panel was asking about the process of evaluating the assessment methods.

When a new member of the academic staff is hired, s/he has to go through mandatory training for teaching. After this training, no other mandatory training is intended. During the on-site visit the College indicated that some trainings and workshops for various topics (teaching, IT, academic integrity, ...) are offered irregularly.

The College was able to credibly assure that the learning methods and environments are student-centered. With the help of various suitable examples, the teaching staff demonstrated a satisfactory handling of this topic. This was also confirmed by the students.

Riinvest College is using surveys to evaluate the teaching quality and the effectiveness of the programs. The survey for the students is carried out every semester. For the graduates' survey, the evaluation panel has contradictory information – during the on-site visit it was stated that only one survey right after the graduation is carried out. But, in the SER the College states that this questionnaire is handed out to the graduates on an annual basis. The employers of the graduates do not get any surveys on regular basis, they only fill in a questionnaire about the student after s/he completed an internship in the company of the employer. The College should



improve these procedures, because the information from the surveys is crucial for the development of the programs.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Make sure the data from the performance indicators are used.*
2. *Add more (mandatory) trainings for the teaching staff to ensure a high level of teaching effectiveness.*
3. *Improve the procedure of evaluation with the use of surveys. Graduates and employers of graduates should be part of this procedure on a regular base.*

2.7. Research

The College does not have a research development plan. The Strategic Plan 2022-2025 does not list any explicit research related objectives. Objectives that indirectly contribute to the development of research are: 1) Recruitment and retention of qualified staff and 2) Quality assurance in the development of study programs, teaching, teaching-learning, research and learning environment. However, the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 was not publicly available. Moreover, the public webpages of the college contained under About us/Scientific Research only four sentences of general type without any indication on the research topics/areas conducted in the college. As mentioned above, the College is in the process of drafting a Research Regulation. However, the current version of the regulation does not foresee preparation of a research development plan or strategy.

As mentioned above, the College does not have a research development plan. Let it be noted that development of a research development plan that articulates the research priorities and objectives of the Riinvest College and specifies indicators and benchmarks for performance objectives was one of the recommendations of the previous institutional accreditation of Riinvest College (in 2019).

The budget of the College does not allocate any resources specifically dedicated to research or for development of research infrastructure. According to the draft Research Regulation, an independent Research Department will be formed with a separate budget.



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About 95% of the total income of the College is generated from the study fees that is in general not supposed to finance research and development activities of academic staff. Therefore, there are created almost no preconditions for conducting high-level research. Although the public webpage claims that the college has a Research Department, its existence is not mentioned in the SER. This is also not shown in the organizational structure of the College (<https://riinvest.net/riinvest/organet-dhe-strukturat/>). Limited financial opportunities for research funding and conference participation and publications for students and staff is recognized by the College as one of their current weaknesses. On the other hand, a Scientific Research Commission is formed and had its first meeting on 23. 3. 2022. The Commission is authorized to prepare the Research Regulation for accepting it in the Academic Council.

University documents do not pose specific research tasks for academic staff. Research is basically validated by scientific publications. The College considers cooperation with Riinvest Consult and Riinvest Institute to be important. At the same time, the actual cooperation seems to be random – for example, none of the lecturers whom the experts met had any connection with the Riinvest Institute at the moment. Moreover, Riinvest Institute does not mention the College on their website neither in *About us* nor in *Partners* sections. Therefore, it seems that the recommendation of the expert team (evaluation panel) of previous institutional accreditation “increase the integration between the academic and research activities of the College and the Riinvest Institute” has not fully implemented yet.

According to the Appendix 22 of the SER (the list of publications), there are 31 publications in total published during last three years (2020-2022): nine items from year 2022 (three from Adnan Maxhuni and six from Alban Hashani), 20 from year 2021 (one from Alban Hashani, ten from Alban Hetemi, three from Alban Zogaj and six from Albin Ahmeti) and 12 from year 2020 (six from Albin Ahmeti, five from Arben Ahmeti and one from Arben Damoni). Some items in the list are confusing. For example, Alban Hetemi is assigned an article (The Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the right to liberty and security of person) that he does not belong to the authors; and vice versa, this article is not assigned to an actual author (Ariana Qosaj-Mustaf). Misprints in the SER made sometimes difficult to check the correctness of the text (for example, “Pavlovska” instead of “Pavloska-Gjorgjieska”). Since there are many more academic staff – but not all – who have publications in year 2020-2022 on one hand, and the majority of articles in Appendix 22 are from earlier years, it is very time-consuming to get an adequate overview from Appendix 22. There are almost no joint publications of the members of the College. This means that no research groups are formed in the College, and the

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research is in fact conducted outside. Moreover, some academic staff have indicated other institutions as their employers in Google Scholar.

Expectations for teaching staff involvement in research are in very general terms stated in Regulations and Employment Practices: “regular professors, associate professors and assistant professors should be able to demonstrate a successful background of teaching, research and professional or artistic practice to be evaluated by at least three appraisers who have at least one title higher than the candidate's current call for advancement” (section 2.1.2 of the Regulation). The staff self-evaluation template also does not contain questions about conducting research. According to the Annex 23 of the SER (detailed workload of academic staff), each academic staff is expected to devote an average of only two hours per week to research (that is, approximately one day per month). It is clear that no results worth mentioning cannot be achieved in such a low intensity. The academic staff explained to the expert team (evaluation panel) that they are interested in conducting more research within a suitable research group (even some research areas were suggested for these research groups).

The expert team was not able to find any regulation or other document of the university containing clauses about encouraging teaching staff to include in their teaching information about their research and scholarly activities that are relevant to courses they teach. During the meeting with the students, some students were aware of the research activities of some lecturers. It became clear that this was generally not the case.

Checking the publication data of the first ten full-time lecturers with a PhD in the Table 5 (List of academic staff) of the SER (pages 97-99) gave the following results: six lecturers have no publications from years 2020-2022; four lecturers have one or two publications in 2020-2022, and Riinvest College was mentioned as their employer in no publication.

The university has not yet established intellectual property and commercialization policies.

The university has adopted the *Code of Ethics and Conduct*. This document lists the general principles of ethical conduct (justice, respect for others, responsibility), discusses general rights and obligations of the College members (academic freedom, reliability of information, conflict of interest, etc.) as well as personal rights and obligations. Concerning research, the document contains two sentences: 1) “Riinvest College expects from all members involved in research-survey activities to witness high ethical and professional standards in terms of research work. “, and 2) “This Code will be applicable to all College internal stakeholders, who must act in



accordance with high standards of ethical conduct and avoid plagiarism in research, teaching, performance appraisal and in carrying out administrative duties at the College. “

Compliance level: Non-compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Review the College's research goals and plan an adequate research workload to achieve them in the employment contracts of academic staff.*
2. *Enforce the Research Regulation, previously defining in it the objectives of research-based development and the roles and tasks of the parties in their realization.*
3. *Decide on the research priorities and form the research groups accordingly.*
4. *Develop and implement a motivation system that supports cooperation of teachers with companies.*
5. *The College is recommended to establish an intellectual property ownership policy and develop clear procedures for commercialization of ideas developed by staff and students.*

2.8. Staff, employment processes and professional development

Employment regulations are outlined in the *Regulations and Employment Practices* and *Code of Ethics and Conduct*. The first document (*Regulations and Employment Practices*) describes the general principles and rights and obligations of staff and College members (academic freedom, conflict of interest, equal opportunities for employment and access to education etc.). The second document extends the first one by clauses on working hours, on leave and absence from work and on communication.

The need for additional recruitment has been decided by the Board of Directors.

The *Code of Ethics and Conduct* describes the procedures used in recruitment (Code of Ethics and Conduct, page 8):

- i. **Public Announcement in the Media for a Job Vacancy.** This notice must contain the title and description of the post, the criteria to be met by the candidates, the required documentation, address and deadline for submitting the application.



- ii. Establishment of the Candidate Evaluation Panel. This Panel prepares the written test, interviews the candidates, makes their final assessment and sends it to management, or the relevant body, the Steering Committee or the Academic Council for approval.
- iii. Announcement of the winning candidate and contract award. If no qualified candidate is found after the application of these procedures, the procedure is repeated from the beginning.

The document states also the conditions of employment termination.

The recruitment is carried out by the Human Resources Department. The description of the position, the relevant duties and responsibilities, the criteria that the candidate must meet are approved by the board.

However, the documents stating titles of academic staff are confusing. According to the Statute and *Regulations and Employment Practices*, the titles of the academic staff engaged in the College are: Regular Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, Assistant, and New Assistant. On the other hand, the SER and other documents provided to the expert team (evaluation panel) are using *Lecturer* and *Assistant* only.

According to the Code of Ethics and Conduct, during the first working day, the new staff must be present and meet with the person in charge of administration and operations. The latter guides and discusses how to perform duties. The new staff will be introduced to other staff and shall be provided with the contract and the policy on internal policies and procedures. New staff may be required a probationary period of three months.

The College has provided a detailed overview of the workload of academic staff. Weekly teaching hours vary between 2 and 12, and research workload 2 hours for all academic staff. Consulting workload and administration workload are the main differentiators between full-time and part-time staff: 48 hours for full-time and 24 hours consultations for part-time academic staff and 24 and 12 hours, respectively, for administration during a semester. There is almost no correlation between the type of employment (full-time or part-time) and the teaching workload: some part-time teachers have 12 hours, while some full-time teachers 2 hours a week.

The ratio of students per full-time staff is approximately 16:1, which is close to the optimal. However, this ratio is quite unevenly distributed between the study programs: from 1,8:1 (LSE programs) to 30:1 (BSc of Computer Science, Software Engineering). The student-faculty ratio is most unfavorable in the most resource-demanding disciplines (Computer Science, Software



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Engineering). At the same time, considering also part-time lecturers, this ratio is acceptable: 9,13.

About 50% of academic staff have a PhD or are PhD candidates, about 10% have a bachelor's degree, and all of them hold an assistant's position. The level of academic staff is secured by the employment procedures where the applicants should comply with the competence criteria previously formulated. On top of formal criteria, an interview is conducted, and possibly a computer skills test and English language test.

The expert team (evaluation panel) was not provided any documents on performance evaluation. Also, the College has not implemented the practice of staff development interviews with superiors.

Although the College regulations foresee conducting staff assessment by students as well as peer reviews, their impact is questionable. For example, in a situation where each lecturer should publish on average at least one research article each year, several lecturers have not published any article in the last three years. Thus, regulatory compliance appears to be incomplete.

Although the SER claims that "Disciplinary procedures for neglecting responsibilities, non-compliance with instructions or inappropriate behaviour are set out in the regulations and applied consistently" (pages 95/96 of the SER), the expert team (evaluation panel) was not provided with documents on procedures in case staff performance is considered less than satisfactory. The deans explained that senior academic staff help junior teachers, if needed. However, the academic staff suggested during the meeting with the expert team that the College could introduce the practice of peer-to-peer observation lectures.

There are two types of staff trainings in the College: regular trainings (on recruitment of students, on teaching methods, on using technology and e-learning, on supporting students, on quality assurance, on evaluation and grading) and specific training on certain currently important topics. For example, on the following topics specific training is planned for 2022/2023 academic year: cyber security, supply chain via patented trackers and beacons, student participation in decision-making, application of European projects, online examinations. Additionally, staff mobility to foreign partner universities is planned.

The College supports academic staff to complete post-graduate studies. Twelve staff members are currently pursuing doctoral studies and seven staff members master studies. In 2023, 17 visits to partner universities are planned (19 visits in 2024). Orientation procedures for new

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staff are described in the *Code of Ethics and Conduct*. If necessary, it is also possible to apply for a probationary period.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Introduce development discussions of the staff with superiors, addressing all aspects of academic activity, and develop effective mechanisms for solving the problems that have identified.*
2. *Describe the procedures of academic staff performance evaluation, as well as procedures in case staff performance is considered less than satisfactory in regulations of the College.*

2.9. Student administration and support services

The admission requirements are specified in the “Regulation on Bachelor Studies” and in the “Regulation on Master Studies”. The evaluation panel has no indication that the admission requirements are not consistently and fairly applied.

Complete information about the institution (including the range of programs and courses, program requirements, services, scholarship opportunities, tuition and administrative fees) is available on the website of the College.

The College is organizing an onboarding for new students at the start of each academic year. During this week, students get in touch with all the services the College provides, the facilities are shown to the students, and the policies and procedures of the institution as well as the rights and responsibilities of the students are explained.

The student handbook is handed out during the Welcome days. In this handbook students can find all necessary information they need. The students stated that they are very satisfied with the handbook and its contents.



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The College is offering scholarship opportunities to the students. Students with an average grade above 4.0 only have to pay the administrative fee of 138 per semester and no further tuition fees. This system was just implemented for the academic year 2023/2024. Additionally, the College is offering a “scholarship from business” – this scholarship for academic successful student includes an internship in a partner company of Riinvest College. For students with disadvantaged backgrounds the College is offering no financial support.

Because of the relatively small size of the College, the collection and analysis of data referring to the profile of the student population, student progression, success and drop-out rates, students’ satisfaction with their programs, learning resources and student support available, career paths of graduates is not very complicated. The quality assurance office is in charge of collecting this data.

During the on-site visit the students were able to explain the procedure of a student appeal. They were also able to demonstrate an example of such a case. They referred to the student handbook for the detailed procedures and regulations for such topics.

The topic of academic misconduct is regulated by the “Code of Ethics”. As already described in this report, Riinvest College is not able to handle breaches of the “Code of Ethics” like plagiarism. Appropriate procedure has to be implemented.

Academic counselling, career planning and employment advice is available for students to a sufficient extent. Also, personal counselling is available via a mentoring program with the academic staff. The evaluation panel can state that the range of services provided, and the resources devoted to students reflect the main requirements of the student population. The effectiveness of student services is monitored with student services twice a year. Formal plans for the provision and improvement of student services are not available.

For extracurricular activities the College provides one room in the basement without windows for the students. This is not satisfactory; the College has to provide at least one additional room which is more suitable for extracurricular activities for the students.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

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- 1. Implement appropriate procedures to handle cases of academic misconduct like plagiarism.*
- 2. Create more space for extracurricular activities for students.*

2.10. Learning resources and facilities

Expenses of the College exceed expected total income by approximately 150,000 EUR in both 2023 and 2024. This is why the expenses are kept on a minimal level. There are no expenses foreseen for acquisitions, cataloguing and equipment in the budget. However, if the need arises, a request to the secretary can be submitted, and the rector will make a decision. On the other hand, since the College is moving to another location (Marigona Hill in New Prishtina) next academic year, it is not reasonable to invest heavily in the current premises.

Neither students, nor lecturers complained about the existence and availability of study materials.

Students have access to the JStore library and to the KREN (Kosovo Research and Education Network) services (for example, server space) and solutions like MS Office 365, MS Project and MS Power BI. The staff of the Computer Science program has also benefited from access to resources in Azure Stack HUB and Azure Cloud. Riinvest College has its own e-bookshelf platform under the MyRiinvest platform, which allows students to search for the desired paper/book. Book borrowing and return are registered on the platform. However, since the contract with KREN was only recently signed, it will take some time to fully benefit from it.

Wi-fi is available in the College premises. Students have access to the cloud services as well. All students are provided an e-mail account. The university uses Moodle platform for supporting educational processes. For online teaching, Google Meet and Google Classroom is used. On the other hand, there were no computers in the library for students' use. A student survey showed that 28% of students are "very satisfied", and about 33% "satisfied" with the library. Consequently, nearly 40% of students are not satisfied with the library.

Although the SER claims that (page 115 of the SER) that the library is “the only library in Kosovo that works 24/7”, the library’s website states that the working hours are: Monday to Friday 09:00-20:00 and Saturday 09:00-17:00.



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The College has an original e-bookshelf platform under the MyRiinvest platform. The students can search for the desired book and find out if the book is available in the library. In case the book is not available, the students can make the request to the librarian, who then provides them with the book online.

The college operates a building of 2,000 m² (will be 4,400m² next academic year). The capacity of premises is adequate, considering the relatively small number of students (427) and small number of study programs (3). The library was renovated in 2015. There is also a public space for individual discussions and consultations in the library. There are also power outlets for laptops near each desk. Every full-time academic staff has a personal desk.

The staff of the IT department serves the staff and students in particular, by offering assistance in access to the electronic platforms, but also in the installation of adequate licensed software for the staff and students, as well as for the computers found in the College laboratories.

The facility allows access for people with disabilities and the transition from the entrance to the library by elevator. The new facilities are all on the ground floor, which also makes all services accessible to people with physical disabilities.

The College has engaged an internal auditor who is – among other tasks – also reviewing inventory processes.

Since the study program in Computer Science is focusing on software, there is no need for technologically advanced laboratories. The College has the minimum necessary computer equipment. However, since the College is willing to open a second BSc program in Computer Science, just two computer labs are definitely not enough on the new premises.

The staff of the IT department offers assistance to the staff and students, in access to the electronic platforms, in the installation of adequate licensed software as well as for the computers in the College' laboratories. They also offer training on use of MyRiinvest and eLearning platforms, on joining online lectures etc.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *In addition to the two computer labs planned in the new premises, create readiness for computer use by all students in some classrooms.*

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2. *Plan the library in the new premises in such a way that modern information work opportunities are created in it.*

2.11. Institutional cooperation

As for the institutional cooperation, the Riinvest College is having some productive relations with external subjects.

The increase of institutional cooperation is one of the four main aims of the Strategic Plan for the period 2022-2025 at the Riinvest College. As the main objective it declared here expanding cooperation with institutions from the European Union.

The institutional cooperation and internationalization agenda used to be administered by an academic director. Recently there was a restructuring in the Riinvest College and at the moment this agenda relates to the head of the office, and recruitment of suitable personal is under way, the panel was informed.

The Riinvest College has different agreements and memorandums of understanding with relevant national as well as international institutions, the list of these agreements/memoranda was provided (it contains of 22 institutions). Responsibilities seem to be assigned to both parties in a standard way in these documents.

The Riinvest College have participated in some international projects, mainly as a partner, but activity in this respect is rather modest. This can also be said about organizing events of international visibility and outreach (such as conferences, summer schools etc.). The Riinvest College does not seem to be involved in this very much, and the involvement of students was not evidenced.

There are some mobilities of the students and the staff, but not many, and they concern the outcoming mobilities. The list of mobilities from several recent years indicates there are only two institutions where students or staff members of the Riinvest college are sometimes travelling (Staffordshire University mainly in case of short term stays of the staff, and Universita Politecnica delle Marche in case of some student mobilities). This means that remaining international higher education institutions are rather sleeping partners of the



Riinvest College, and no evidence of a vital cooperation is available. Incoming student mobility is not existing, contributions of visiting international staff are rare. The Riinvest College does not seem to have established effective mechanisms to support cooperation with international higher education institutions. This also includes an absence of financial support for outgoing students that would help them to cover the relatively high expenses of the mobility stays abroad are not available on a system level.

Better situation is in the relations of the Riinvest College with local industries and employers, and the institution uses these relations for students' internships and other forms of cooperation. Representatives of local employers and other institutions are partly involved in consultation process with the Riinvest College.

A regular contact with alumni is at the moment only a part of the strategic plan; in reality, the contacts are not systematically developed and maintained.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Make sure development of international relations is supported by effective systematic measures in the College.*
- 2. Make sure international agreements supporting student and staff mobilities are effectively used in every single case.*
- 3. Make sure the Riinvest College is actively involved in a sufficient number of relevant international projects which also provide an opportunity for students to get involved.*
- 4. Make sure effective contacts with alumni are developed.*



3. OVERALL EVALUATION AND JUDGEMENTS OF THE EVALUATION PANEL

Standard 1	Fully compliant
Standard 2	Substantially compliant
Standard 3	Substantially complaint
Standard 4	Partially compliant
Standard 5	Substantially compliant
Standard 6	Substantially compliant
Standard 7	Non-compliant
Standard 8	Substantially compliant
Standard 9	Substantially compliant
Standard 10	Substantially compliant
Standard 11	Substantially compliant

In conclusion, the evaluation panel considers that:

The Riinvest College is *substantially compliant* with the standards included in the KAA Accreditation Manual and, therefore, recommends *accrediting* it for a duration of 3 years.




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Expert Team


Chair

	Milan Pol	06.03.2023
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

Member

	Peeter Normak	06.03.2023
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

Member

	Christoph Back	06.03.2023
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)
