Like most colleges in Croatia and around the world, RIT Croatia moved all classes online this spring, in order to safeguard health and safety during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Although everyone was disappointed that some live events had to be postponed or cancelled, the college community joined together to make the transition as smooth and productive as possible. Fortunately, our faculty, administration, staff and students are already experienced and comfortable with online learning. Using technology to communicate effectively, work together and build relationships across distances has always been an important part of what we do.

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The focus of Writing Lab is to help students recognize, understand, and correct their own mistakes. Students who visit Writing Lab for individual help on a regular basis are amazed to see how much their writing improves. Even students who feel confident in their skills should think of their English experience at RIT Croatia like a sports training. No matter what level of skill you have, the only way to improve is with steady, regular practice and a good coach.

“With dedication, hard work, and the right guidance, our students learn to think naturally in English,” said Ms. Charry. “They don’t have to translate each word, or worry about what they are going to say or write next, and they really feel at home with English as a natural part of their lives. The transformation is just amazing.”

**ENGLISH COURSES @ RIT CROATIA**

**Introduction to Academic English** – a basic review of English grammar and vocabulary, offered the first semester of the first year for students who need it, according to the assessment test.

**Critical Reading and Writing** – reading and writing strategies, focused on the essay form

**Writing Seminar** – introduction to academic research and writing

**Literature, Culture and Media** – Reading, understanding and enjoying a variety of literary genres in English

**Technical Writing (Dubrovnik)** – concise and effective writing for a variety of business and professional situations.

**TIP: The easiest way to improve your English**

Read, read, read! Just read something interesting in English for 15 minutes a day. It can be a magazine article, blog or website about your favorite sport team, news, fashion, politics – anything that truly interests you.

All that good English goes into your mind in a natural way and builds up a solid foundation.

**METE OUR FACULTY: DR. JAKOB PATEKAR**

Dr. Patekar’s life started out interesting from the very first moment; he was born in New Delhi, India, an exotic place of birth that often surprises his fellow Croatians. Coincidentally, his last name, which comes from the north of Croatia, is also a popular Indian last name (you might want to google Nana Patekar, for example).

Dr. Patekar describes himself as an introvert, although he does admit that getting a teaching job right after university forced him out of his shell. His first job was teaching English to children from 6 to 14 years of age in a public elementary school for 10 years, before joining RIT Croatia at the Zagreb campus in 2016. Along the way he worked on many related projects, such as translating or examining speaking at Cambridge ESOL exams. However, he considers his most important professional achievement to be his participation in the team of professionals who recently developed the new Curriculum of English that will form the basis of teaching and learning English in Croatia in the years to come.

His academic background is a master’s degree in English Language and Literature and Education Science (double major) from the University of Rijeka and a doctoral degree in Language Teaching from the University of Zagreb.

Dr. Patekar currently serves as RIT Croatia’s General Education Chair, supervising and supporting faculty in several departments. But more important than his role as an administrator, he says, is his role in the classroom, teaching Introduction to Academic English, Critical Reading & Writing, and Writing Seminar. These key courses form the foundation of students’ writing skills for their entire educational career at RIT Croatia.

Dr. Patekar has always been a fan of writing. “When I was a kid, and a typical introvert, writing was like therapy to me, a way to express myself,” he said. “So much so that a concerned teacher once called my parents to school because she found a horror story I had written that involved decapitated heads.”

His written work today is less shocking, as he writes articles for scientific journals.

For Dr. Patekar, the most important thing in teaching writing is to show students that writing is a two-way street. As writers, students need to be aware of who is on the other side. Writing, he says, is not about what the author thinks the message is, but how the reader interprets it. So, for him, reading, too, is an interaction, even though one side cannot immediately reply. If you hear students saying “Engage with the text!”, then you know they’ve just had Critical Reading & Writing with Dr. Patekar.

Dr Patekar works in Zagreb but lives in Rijeka and commutes each day to work. So, students who come late to his class can’t blame slow tramways as an excuse. That just won’t cut it because he’ll outplay them in the game of who lives farther away or needs more time to get to the campus in Zagreb.

His students would describe him as a strict instructor in whose class you know when it’s time to have fun and when it’s time to work. He confirms that he likes running a tight ship, but adds that students are overall very positive about his teaching style. His mission is not to show students that everyone can be a writer, but that everyone already is a writer.
20 years of career-focused education

Each year, RIT Croatia brings together some of the leading employers in the region to meet our students and share insights about current trends in international business, hospitality, and information technology. Through workshops, panel discussions, presentations, and the opportunity to apply directly for employment, CED helps students take concrete steps along their career paths.

At RIT Croatia, the focus is on the development of skills and practical knowledge. To achieve this goal, each student completes between 800 and 1200 hours of internship (co-op) during the course of their studies, usually during the summer.

The CED event is a great way for students to find a summer co-op, but it is also much more. Career Education Day is also a “class outside of class” – a networking and learning opportunity that involves students, employers, faculty, staff and our alumni, who often return to CED as employers, representing the companies they work for in search of new talent. This year’s event was held in Dubrovnik, at the 5-star Hotel Palace. The Zagreb event was unfortunately cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions.

In addition, students Dora Beronjic, Dino Muharemagic, Paula Pufek, and Matija Sipek presented their research at the 7th Javantura conference in Zagreb.

“Studying at RIT gives me the chance to work with excellent faculty members who are not only experts in their field, but are also very approachable and ready to help,” said Matija. “This year’s topic at Javantura was regarding industry shift to cloud services, precisely enhancing scalability and performance of cloud-based software systems. As the number of clients and requests toward services is rising every day, we need to handle it by increasing channels of communication.”

“Most of the new technologies are, to a certain extent, enigmatic and you really have to get yourself deep into the methodology and, most importantly, practical examples in order to fully understand it,” says Matija. “It takes time, patience and sometimes going with your head through that wall in order to figure it out. Staying calm, focused, and moving towards a final goal is essential.”

The annual Javantura conference, organized by the Croatian Java User Association, is one of the biggest Java community conferences in the region.

“We presented our research on the improvement of performance in Java with the help of structured concurrency with the help of virtual threads, also known as fibers. The Loom project that we explored and tested is about creating a new version of threads in Java’s JVM, which run independently of operating system threads, thus making them significantly faster than the current implementation,” Dora said.

In their field, but are also very important. She credits her learning to RIT’s focus on a hands-on approach, teaching students to develop relevant knowledge and skills and implement their ideas in real life projects.

As a student, I enjoy working on research projects and feel confident in their application and the skill demand in such a new environment, our implementation and the skill demand challenges in current technological developments. “Through examining the history of automation, existing HR challenges in current technological implementation and the skill demand in such a new environment, our aim was to verify whether or not hotel industry jobs are vulnerable to automation,” she explained.

Andrea, who graduated from RIT Croatia in 2019, is currently a trainee in Hilton Supply Management regional office, which conducts procurement for properties in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

Career Education Day in numbers

- 550 activities: panels, presentations, workshops, case studies
- 7,500 coop placements in 50 countries on 6 continents
- 3000+ interviews for jobs/coops
- 2000+ company representatives

Research collaboration among faculty and students

Cloud-based software apps

Two students from our Computing Program, Matija Sipek and Dino Muharemagic, under the mentorship of Dr. Besim Agusaj and Aleksander Radovan, wrote a research paper “Enhancing Performance of Cloud-based Software Applications with GraalVM and Quarkus” which was accepted for presentation at the 43rd International Convention on Information and Communication Technology, Electronics, and Microelectronics in Opatija, Croatia.

Future Employment in the Hotel Industry

RIT Croatia’s hospitality program graduate Andrea Kečić recently had her capstone research thesis accepted for publication by the International Student Conference in Tourism Studies, organized by the Management Center Innsbruck (MCI) and IMC University of Applied Sciences in Krems, Austria. Her research, under the mentorship of Dr. Besim Agusaj, explored the impact of various technologies on the future of employment opportunities in the hotel industry.

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Adapting to online learning:
A Guide for Students

Making the transition to fully online learning is a challenge for both faculty and students. Our International Business student Emily Arnold shares her tips for managing the online structure, communicating with faculty, beating procrastination, and staying on top of all while keeping the stress under control.

By Emily Arnold

The Importance of Structure
In times of uncertainty, it’s important to focus on the things in your life that you can control. You will have more peace of mind and a consistent sense of accomplishment if you maintain goals for yourself. After all, being stuck at home a majority of time, you’ll probably never have this much idle time again to work on the most important person in your life, yourself.

Working 9 to 5
To structure my days, I treat university like it’s a 9 to 5 job. This gives you enough time for a relaxing, waking up in the morning and the knowledge that after 5 pm you’ll have plenty of time to socialize from a distance, binge watch whatever is left on Netflix, and enjoy your hobbies before you go to bed.

Step 1: Start With Your Online Classes
Your online classes are probably the only clear cut obligations you have in a day. Here are some tips for managing them online! Whether the faculty member has made class attendance mandatory or not, attend your classes!
If your instructor gives you the option to leave your video on, do it! This forces you to stay focused during the lesson.
It’s time to take notes... Even if the instructor is going to post the recording online later, pay attention and take notes the first time while it is fresh in your mind. If you rely on re-watching the lessons later, it only takes away from the time you could be using for something else. Use class recordings as a tool for revision and not as a first time learning experience.
If live lecture time is reduced, use the extra time to: a) review the presentations the faculty have posted in place of synchronize classes, and b) revise other materials relevant to that subject. This will keep you productive and sticking to a daily schedule.

Step 2: Deadline’s approaching
Once your 9 to 5 schedule is complete, you need to actually follow it. Keep trying and you’ll reap the rewards. Imagine, finals week has arrived. Who’s freaking out? Not you.
Because you have a plan and you’re on top of things.

Getting the best from online learning!

continued from cover page
Our faculty know how to be flexible, how to design learning situations that actually work, overcome technical difficulties, find workarounds, and design creative kinds of learning situations and assignments that are well suited to an online environment, whether it’s through live lectures, small group discussions, or individual consultations.
We are making deeper and smarter use of technology and building on the strong personal relationships we have with our students and colleagues. We are still a community. Many faculty members are using this opportunity to learn, discuss and write about what is actually happening in our world and communities at this difficult historic time. Students are learning, reflecting, discussing and writing about the ways that this crisis is affecting the economy, business, communities and their own personal lives.
To complement regular instruction, the college has launched a series of successful online events for our virtual community, including an online induction ceremony for the new members of the Eta Sigma Delta hospitality honor society, fun live quiz events created by the Student Government, guest lectures from industry leaders, or participating in an informative lecture series on student wellbeing from our Dubai campus. On the administrative side, RIT has instituted a more flexible grading format and extended withdrawal policy to support students this semester.

Learning about the crisis, studying solutions
In the midst of serious worldwide concerns about health and the economy, some faculty members have adapted their course material to help students think seriously about short- and long-term solutions.
“...In times of crisis, sometimes we forget, that as a society we possess great agility, flexibility and resilience. We can see this throughout history,” said Dr. Besim Agala, who teaches in the Hospitality and Tourism Management program at the Dubrovnik campus. “In that light, I asked students from my International Destination Management class to reflect on what can we learn from this crisis. Our key question was: how should Dubrovnik improve its competitiveness and attractiveness as a global tourist destination, during and after the ongoing crisis? The students’ message was: we know that people will always travel. Just look at historic data and we will see that we are capable of bouncing back from major setbacks.”
Students discussed how this crisis may, in fact, be an opportunity to rethink our current tourism strategies (from national to city level), improve products, develop more robust businesses that may withstand future setbacks.
“This crisis will undoubtedly change our reality (it already has!), but we need to learn this change, not only manage it. Our homes, businesses and infrastructure are solid and ready to restart.”

Benefits of online learning
Many faculty members have used the transition to online learning as an opportunity to strengthen their courses and their relationships with students.

“To prepare young people for the future, it is not enough to give them knowledge from books,” said Dr. Kristina Šorić, who teaches mathematics and management at the Zagreb campus.
“I do not want students to simply reproduce facts. I want them to be able to spot the problem, to know how to systematize it, to model it, to discuss it with their team, to propose a solution, to interpret that solution, to improve and ultimately make the optimal decision. I want to prepare students for life, not for a TV trivia quiz! I want my students to be agile and able to face any situation without fear, both at work and in their personal lives.”

“Moving on to online classes, I have noticed many benefits. When the material is well prepared for online teaching, we suddenly have more time for discussion, students are more engaged and focused, feel more free to communicate. In their home, with a cup of coffee or a glass of juice, in comfortable clothes, everything is somehow relaxed. They have also learned new ways to use technology; it becomes a new challenge for them, more dynamic and fun.”

Student Honors and Awards

Since 1976, RIT has honored the top 1 percent of undergraduate students who have earned a consistent high standard of academic excellence while also giving back to their communities through civic or volunteer work, conducting research, or employment in their field of study.
This year, the prestigious Outstanding Undergraduate Scholar award was given to the following graduating seniors:

Hospitality and Tourism Management
Pamina Benčić
Belma Sokolović

International Business
Ivan Kolembus
Nikola Sladić

Web and Mobile Computing
Marko Čačić
Paolo Stožić
Domagoj Rade

RIT Croatia
Prestigious international accreditation for RIT’s business programs

This spring, RIT’s Saunders College of Business earned extended accreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International, the premier accrediting organization for business schools worldwide. Since 2011, RIT Croatia has offered the International Business undergraduate program at the Zagreb campus.

“RIT has earned and maintained this prestigious AACSB accreditation now for 32 years. At our Zagreb campus, we were the first institution to offer an AACSB accredited degree program in Croatia and the region. Having gone through several rigorous re-evaluations for extensions of the accreditation, this proves the very high quality of our degree program,” said Don Hudspeth, President and Dean of RIT Croatia.

Saunders College was one of 38 business schools to receive this extended accreditation in business in April 2020. AACSB accreditation is focused on maintaining and promoting the highest standards in business education; less than five percent of institutions around the world that offer business degrees at the bachelor’s level or higher, have received this recognition. RIT’s Saunders College of Business initially achieved this distinction and honor in 1988. The re-accreditation process currently occurs every five years.