

Joint Final Report

Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences

Programs Assessed

5343665 Economics

Visit Date

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Expert Team

Prof. Heinrich Stremitzer
Head of the Dept for Insurance
and Risk Management
Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien
Augasse 2-6; A-1090 Vienna
Austria
Tel: 43-1-31336-4694
Fax: 43-1-31336-712
E-mail: Heinrich.Stremitzer@wu-wien.ac.at

Prof Ilkka Virtanen
Dean of the Faculty of Technology
University of Vaasa
PO Box 700
FIN-65101 Vaasa
Finland
Tel: 358-6-3248256
Fax: 358-6-3248557
E-mail: itv@uwasa.fi

Prof Juris Krumins
Vice Rector
University of Latvia
Raina bulv. 19
Riga, LV-1586
Latvia
Tel: 371-7034304
Fax: 371-7034422
E-mail: krumins@lanet.lv

Prof Kurt Pedersen
Dept of International Business
Aarhus School of Business
Fuglesangs Alle 4
DK-8210 Aarhus V
Denmark
Tel: 45-8948-6340
Fax: 45-8948-6125
E-mail: KUR@asb.dk

Prof Wim Meeusen
Dept of Economics
University of Antwerp
Prinsstraat 13
B-2000 Antwerp Belgium
Tel: 32-3-2204054
Fax: 32-3-2204033
E-mail: wim.meeusen@ua.ac.be

Part I

General Overview

THE ASSESSMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

The Higher Education Quality Assessment Centre of Estonia has invited a team of experts to assess programmes in Business Administration and Management at the Audentes University, Tallinn Commercial College, Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences and Estonian Business School.

The expert team

- Prof. Heinrich Stremitzer, Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien, Austria;
- Prof. Ilkka Virtanen, University of Vaasa, Finland;
- Prof. Juris Krumins, University of Latvia, Latvia;
- Prof. Kurt Pedersen, Aarhus School of Business, Denmark;
- Prof. Wim Meeusen, University of Antwerp, Belgium.

The assessed programmes:

AUDENTES UNIVERSITY

7343917 *Business Administration*

7343919 *Business Administration*

TALLINN COMMERCIAL COLLEGE

5343960 *Business Administration*

INSTITUTE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

5343665 *Economics*

ESTONIAN BUSINESS SCHOOL

7343950 *Business Administration*

7343949 *Business Administration*

6343949 *Business Administration*

6343993 *IT Management*

6343992 *Entrepreneurship and Business Administration*

8343914 *Business Administration*

The programme of the visit

The assessments took place during the period October 19-26, 2003. Sunday evening 19 October, the Committee had a meeting with the managing director of the Accreditation Centre and member of Higher Education Quality Assessment Council. An outline was given of the task of the Committee and the general situation of Estonian Higher Education.

Monday 20 October the Committee visited the Audentes University, Tuesday 21 the Committee visited the Tallinn Commercial College, Wednesday 22 the Committee visited the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences and Thursday 23 the Committee visited the Estonian Business School.

The programme and working method

Prior to the beginning of the visits, the Committee had a general discussion about the task as seen by the Committee, about the standards, formulated by the Accreditation Centre and the frame of reference for the assessment as seen by the Committee. At the same time the self -evaluation reports were discussed.

The program of the visit had next format:

- meeting with the leaders/heads of the institutions
- discussion with the writers of the self-evaluation reports
- interviews with groups of students of the different programmes in small groups
- interview with academic staff of the different programmes in small groups
- interviews with important Committees
- on-site visits of facilities

During the one major part of visit the Committee tried to assess especially the organisation of the programmes, the way the curricula had been designed, the way the quality is being assured, the qualification of the staff, the research activities and all other points the programmes had in common. The Committee formally had to report on 10 programmes.

What follows are the findings of the Team (Part II), its general recommendations (Part III), and its accreditation conclusions (Part IV). In Part II, the findings are relative to the "Requirements for accreditation of educational programme of university" (Approved by the regulation of the minister of Education No 34 of 14 December 1998 RTL* 1999, 9, 101).

Part II

Findings

GENERAL FINDINGS AT THE INSTITUTE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

The self-evaluation report submitted by the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, the observations made at the time of visit and the supplementary material and information received by the team form the basis of these findings. The team looked deeply into the elements of the programme. These included transcripts of recent graduates, diplomas, theses, course outlines, textbook materials, and the course materials produced by the teachers of the programme. The Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences serves an important niche in the Estonian education market, providing a non-university but higher education channel for young Russian speaking Estonians and residents to receive business education, so that they have access to the labour market in the country.

The self-assessment report, the discussions with the management of the Institute and the members of the university council were absolutely not convincing and conveyed a non-promising impression. Figures in the report could not be proved, new figures submitted were contradictory and misleading. Additional investigations of the team, however, revealed that the reality was better than the report and the statements of the managers. Especially positive and enlightening were the interviews with the teachers and the students of the Institute.

I. THE CURRICULUM

1. Aims and objectives, their correspondence to institute goals and educational policy.

The content of the curriculum does not correspond to the title of the programme. According to the content the programme should be named “business administration” or “business management” instead of “economics”.

2. Curriculum design, accomplishment and development. The role of various structural units.

Looked at as a programme in business administration, it is well designed and in accordance with the legal framework.

3. Subject structure, group balance, options and diversity of curriculum. Correspondence to international standards.

The team suggests that more flexibility by introducing some electives could improve the programme. Titles of some disciplines differ in the self-evaluation report, in the set of course programmes (Tallinn, 2003), and in diploma supplements.

4. Intake and graduation requirements.

The Institute observes the rules set up for intake and graduation.

CONCLUSIONS

In spite of the doubts resulting from a non-professional presentation and contradictions the team unanimously concludes that the requirements are fulfilled, if the programme's name is changed into "business administration" or "business management". The team states unanimously that from the scientific point of view it is not a programme in "economics".

II THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

1. Classroom and individual study organisation. Use of computer methods. Developments of teaching methods.

Classroom and individual study organisation are well balanced. Computer methods are used and make the student life in learning and communicating easy.

2. Study load planning and monitoring; progress inhibiting factors.

The study load – students also say – is distributed equally over the study period. The students' progress is monitored and assessed.

3. Conditions for laboratory and practical work and individual learning.

Practical work is a key factor in this programme. It is well organised, and no complaints were heard. Students were satisfied with the current situation. Enough time is dedicated to individual learning.

4. Assessment of student achievements and examination methods. Progress analysis.

Students' achievements are regularly assessed and recorded. The examination methods in use do not differ from international standards.

5. Organisation of final examinations. Educational level of graduation thesis.

According to the students' opinion final examinations are organised adequately and enough time is dedicated for preparation. The level of the diploma theses looked at by the team was adequate.

CONCLUSIONS

The team concluded that the educational process was following usual standards and that there was no need for changes.

III. ORGANISATION OF STUDIES

All organisational information is available for students.

CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation team did not see any deficiencies in the organisation of the studies.

IV PRACTICUM AND PRACTICAL WORK

1. The organisation of practicum.

Practica are important in this kind of applied diploma studies. Teachers, students, and employers are closely co-operating in organising, executing, and reporting.

2. The supervision of practicum.

Teachers thoroughly supervise the practica.

3. Accordance of the content of practicum with objectives and professional requirements.

According to the evidence given by the students and teachers the fulfilment can be confirmed.

V. RESOURCES

It was evident that investments in the building and in the infrastructure have been made recently. Lecture rooms and offices are in good shape and well equipped. The team was not satisfied with the number and selection of the books in the library. More emphasis should be laid on diversity and international books and periodicals.

CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation team does not have any objections in the field of resources except the recommendations for the library.

VI. ACADEMIC STAFF

1. Quantity, qualification and experience of academic staff. Full-time and part-time personnel rate. Teaching workload. Qualification enhancement.

The self-evaluation report did not show a clear picture of the academic staff. In spite of clarification during the discussions with the management of the Institute the unclear picture remained until the personal confrontation with the faculty members. The evaluation team was positively impressed by the competence of the teachers.

2. Staff election policy and regulations. Assessment of teaching staff. Staff review arrangement.

In spite of a non-sufficient record of the personal management the selection process seems to work well.

3. Sufficiency of teaching staff for curriculum accomplishment and development. Adequacy of complementary staff.

Teachers seem convincingly committed to the Institute, the programme and above all to their students.

CONCLUSIONS

In spite of first doubts, the team definitely believes in the potential of the teachers.

VII. STUDENTS

1. Size and structure of student intake; average admission level; deficiencies of pre-university education

It was not easy for the team to get a clear picture of the student's structure and size. But eventually the administration could submit credible figures, which are now shown in the annex to this report.

2. Students' motivation, expectations, guidance, counselling services, progress level.

The team dedicated much time to interviewing the students. The students' motivation to study can be described as being extremely high: so are their expectations. They feel satisfied and taken care of to their best. Their knowledge both in business administration and in languages (e.g. English and German) in many cases were excellent and astonishing. Especially their knowledge of English was much better than that of the management of the Institute and the majority of the teachers. Students seem not sufficiently informed about student mobility possibilities. All of them were committed to their Institute and especially to their teachers.

3. Study load and learning conditions. Monitoring of Achievements

Students are satisfied with their learning conditions and find their study load adequate. Students' achievements are monitored carefully and feedback is regularly given to the students. They actively participate in staff and course evaluations. They feel that their views are always given careful consideration.

4. Activity of student bodies. Students' role in academic councils and in self-assessment.

There is a students' representation in the academic council, but it seemed to the team that this representation was not important for the students who were asked about this.

CONCLUSIONS

The team unanimously concluded that the accreditation requirements concerning the students have been met.

VIII. FEEDBACK AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

1. Existence of quality assurance system and its efficiency. Role of student feedback.

A quality assurance system exists. Students evaluate course programmes and teachers. Students feel – as already mentioned above – that their evaluation is given careful consideration.

2. Contacts with potential employers' representatives and professional associations. Contacts with alumni. Analysis of obtained information.

Teachers and students have close contacts with the practical world. Students meet with potential employers during their practica. The team also interviewed alumni, who were very much committed to their former school.

CONCLUSIONS

Feedback and quality assurance meet the requirements.

Part III

General Recommendations

1. The team was not happy with the documents and explanations of the Institute's management. A reliable reporting system is necessary and its establishment is extremely recommended.
2. The title of the programme to be evaluated does not reflect the content of the programme. "Economics", according to international understanding – perhaps also to Estonian understanding – does not cover a predominant business programme. The evaluation team recommends unanimously a change of the label in the direction of "business management" or "business administration".
3. The Institute should develop international student exchange possibilities.

Part IV

Accreditation Conclusion and Recommendations

**As a result of its visit and thorough evaluation of the
documentation the evaluation team unanimously
recommends**

CONDITIONAL ACCREDITATION

of the Diploma Programme 5343665 Economics

The conditions are as follows:

1. The Institute's Management has to improve its documentation and reporting.
2. The Library's diversity concerning books and periodicals in the field of business administration has to be extended.
3. The Programme should not be called "Economics", but "Business Administration" or "Business Management".