

Joint Final Report

Private Commercial College (Tallinn Commercial College)

Program Assessed: 5343960 *Business Administration*

Visit Date: 21 October 2003

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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 programs 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 Kruminis, 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

General findings at the Tallinn Commercial College

1. THE CURRICULUM

1.1. Aims and objectives, their correspondence to college goals and educational policy.

Tallinn Commercial College started student enrolment in 1991 as a private “Baltic Commercial University”. To its own premises at Kivimuru 13A it moved in 1995. In 2000 College acquired the right of giving higher professional education. A license to run a Business Administration programme was given to College in 2002 and it is valid four years.

Curricula development, as it is stated in the Development Programme of College for 2003-2007, is based on curricula of the University of Notre Dam (USA), Oulu Polytechnic (Finland), Oulu Business College (Finland) - which is a vocational secondary school level College, and other foreign and Estonian higher education institutions. It is not clearly stated, which curricula of Estonian and foreign higher education institutions are similar to the College curricula and are considered as a basis for further curricula development (Development Programme, p.2).

The College has set 23 particular goals to achieve the main goal of the College: to achieve the compliance of College activities with international standards due to Estonia’s EU accession (Self-evaluation report, p.6). The Team has serious doubts about ability of the College to use English as language of instruction during 3rd and 4th year of studies due to lack of English language skills of staff members teaching specialized disciplines.

Curriculum of the College fits to the requirements of Paragraph 12 “Applied higher education study” from the Standard of Higher Education (Regulation No.258, 13.08.2002).

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

Curriculum consists of a general part and sub fields in four specializations (Finance management, Advertisement, Internal and foreign tourism, International business).

The length of full time studies is four years or eight semesters (qualification: Manager). Each semester has 20 weeks (credit points) equal to 800 hours. Faculty of Management is responsible for a whole study programme, but departments for specializations:

- specialization “Finance management” – Department of Accounting and Finance;
- specialization “Advertising” – Department of Advertising and computerized design;

- specialization “Internal and foreign tourism” – Department of International Tourism”;
- specialization “International business” – Department of International Business.

The dean of faculty heads all departments! Faculty of Business Administration is one of three faculties at the College (other two: Faculty of Law and Faculty of Languages).

Curriculum development issues are insufficiently described in the Self-evaluation report. College administration and staff were open to explain to Team members necessary details and provided supplementary materials.

The College Council, headed by rector and consisted from vice rectors, deans, heads of departments (dean!) is the main decision taking body concerning curriculum development, studies and research in the College.

The Team suggests to establish an advisory board with respected members from the Estonian business community (including College graduates) and (if feasible) with members from foreign Business Schools or Colleges.

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

Curriculum is designed from three types of disciplines: A – General studies (in 1st and 2nd semester); B – Business training (“Delovaya podgotovka”) and C – Professional studies.

There is also type D – Optional studies or Electives (8-11 disciplines per semester), but due to the small number of students by specializations and study years there are limited resources to offer a variety of courses from the part D.

In each semester there is a praxis included. A study load for diploma thesis is 300 hours.

Students are satisfied with the applied character of disciplines studied and praxis.

1.4. Intake and graduation requirements.

About 2/3 of intake is formed from secondary school graduates of the enrolment year. Total number of enrolled students for the 1st study year has a clear declining trend: from 113 in the year 2000 till 13 in the year 2003. Number of graduates in 2003 was 31.

The Team considers graduation requirements sufficient for college level and graduates themselves stressed it as well.

1.5. Conclusions.

Requirements are met.

2. THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

2.1. Classroom and individual study organization. Use of computer methods. Development of teaching methods.

The workload of students of a full time studies seems to be fairly distributed over the programme. Study process is organized during a daytime and in late afternoon, depending on their job and workload.

Grading is done in a standard business school way by taking into account homework, class attendance, mid term and final exams.

College has computers linked in a local network, sufficient for current number of students. Part of students has computers at home.

2.2. Study load planning and monitoring: progress-inhibiting factors.

A dean has a key role in a study load planning and monitoring. A Faculty Pro-rector and Faculty Council, chaired by dean, are responsible for implementation of control. Among tasks of Council are: improvement of study process, analysis of practical training, analysis of examination results and term and diploma papers. Questionnaires are used to improve organization and content of teaching.

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

Conditions for laboratory and practical work for students are sufficient, but seem not so sufficient for full-time staff. Library space is too small for individual learning. Therefore books are borrowed during weekends.

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

In each discipline written or oral tests are used during a semester. A written exam at the end of each course consists usually of two parts – theoretical and applied (practical). Due to small number of students in a class, many individual forms of communication are used both by teachers and students.

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

Graduation thesis are prepared according to Methodological Recommendations for Writing Graduation Papers, prepared for each specialization. Compilers of Methodological Recommendations are full time teachers, but no reference about any approval by collegial decision-making body is given.

2.6. Conclusions.

Educational process and conditions are satisfactory. More resources should be invested to working environment of full-time teachers.

3. ORGANISATION OF STUDIES

3.1. Rationality of study organization. Co-operation of academic institutions with college services.

During first two years of studies classes are organized mostly during a daytime, but during the 3rd and 4th study years – evening classes are pre-dominant.

3.2. Attainability and quality of information about studies organization. Academic calendar.

Students have a necessary information about study process, organization and academic calendar. College administration has not necessary skills to present it to the evaluation team.

3.3. Counselling and registration for studies and examinations. Analysis of participation rates, failures and suspension from studies.

Due to small number of students there is no special staff to do counselling and registration. Full-time academic staff does it. It seems that College administration and faculty still have not done serious analysis about enrolment, failures and suspension from studies.

3.4. Existences of recreation facilities and other non-educational services (food, housing, mental, medical et al.).

A small student restaurant is available in the College building. Some students said, that prices in that restaurant could be more reasonable for them. There are events (College anniversary) celebrated together staff and students.

3.5. Conclusions

Requirements are met. College administration and faculty have to analyse seriously information about enrolment, failures and suspension from studies.

4. PRACTICUM AND PRACTICAL WORK

4.1. The organization of practicum.

Practicum is included in a study programme for each semester. Amount and content fit to requirements of Standard of higher education (Paragraph 12, (3)).

4.2. The supervision of practicum.

Full-time and part-time academic staff supervises practicum

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

Content of practicum is sufficient for College education.

4.4. Conclusions.

The requirements are met.

5. RESOURCES

5.1. Adequacy of the infrastructure of the institution, laboratory facilities and learning resources.

Infrastructure of the College is sufficient for the current number of students, but it would create problems if number of students will increase

5.2. Library organization and usage. Availability of textbooks, learning materials, scientific literature, special (professional) issues.

Library, established in 1991, has about 3500 units, including about 2000 copies of books. Students are allowed to borrow books during weekends. A limited number of textbooks in English language and international journals is available, but not up to standards of libraries of most European business colleges.

5.3. Access to information networks and resources.

There is still no access via Internet to information databases, e-learning facilities and Estonian library network.

5.4. Financial policy of institution. Development of physical and information resources. Resource limits per student.

A main financial source of College is tuition fees paid by students. Tuition fee is 27 000 EKK per academic year, which allows to pay teachers moderate salaries, taking into account small number of students. Requirements are partially met.

5.5. Conclusions.

Resources are satisfactory only for current small number of students. Availability of textbooks, covering all disciplines, should be increased. There is serious lack of journals (including international) in library.

6. ACADEMIC STAFF

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

Academic staff consists of 27 persons (7 men and 20 women), of which 13 are full time (including two professors) and 14 part time.

6.2. Research and other scholarly activities of academic staff.

Several international meetings were organized by College: “Business, Education, Middle class” (7-8 March 1997), “Problems of Moral, Humanitarian and Economic Rearmament at the turn of the Century” (May 2001), focusing on applied business issues and business education.

6.3. Staff election policy and regulations. Assessment of teaching staff. Staff reviews arrangement.

Staff vacancies are determined by changes in curricula and number of students. Qualifying committee of College, consisting of College administrators and students, evaluates candidates for vacancies.

6.4. Sufficiency of teaching staff for curriculum accomplishment and development. Adequacy of complimentary staff.

Currently a student/staff ratio in College is 4/1 (53:13) for full time staff and 2/1 (53:27) in total. Staff is teaching not research oriented which fit to goals of College. Practical experience in a relevant professional area is condition to be appointed.

6.5. Conclusions.

General requirements for academic staff fit to Standard of higher education (Paragraph 15).

7. STUDENTS

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

During the years 2000-2003 a total number of application in the Business Administration Faculty has declined from 126 to 32, but number of persons enrolled – from 113 to 13. A teachers/students ratio in 2003 was 1: 2.5 .

7.2. Students’ motivation, expectations, guidance, counselling services, progress level.

Meeting with 21 students and graduates provided the Team with arguments to conclude that students are satisfied with studies in a small higher educational

institution with applied orientation and friendly atmosphere. They are not satisfied with too many disciplines in study programme.

Graduates could follow lectures in Estonian language as well.

Students are in general insufficiently informed about other institutions and possibilities to obtain applied higher education in Estonia.

7.3. Study load and learning conditions. Monitoring of achievements.

Study load and learning conditions are satisfactory. System of monitoring achievements exists.

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

Student council of the College is active. Students, when based on the students' suggestions teachers with insufficient pedagogical skills were replaced mentioned several cases.

7.5. Conclusions.

Students and graduates are satisfied with learning conditions.

8. Feedback and quality assurance.

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

A quality assurance system exists especially with respect to teaching and students performance. It seems to Team members to function.

8.2. Contacts with potential employers representatives and professional associations.

Only informal connections to alumni and the local business society exist.

8.3. Publication of adequate information about scientific and educational activity. Investigation of public opinion about college and study programme.

There are some publications, including Conference proceedings, of applied character concerning scientific and educational area of College. Students consider investigation of public opinion about College insufficient. Deputy rector yields the opposite point of view.

8.4. Conclusions.

Requirements are met.

Part III

General Recommendations

On the basis of the above the Team unanimously suggests a number of changes or improvements.

These recommendations are not given in any order of priority and academic community of the College may consider them for the general improvement of its study programme and study process.

Curriculum. An academic community of the College should consider necessity of all four specializations and to continue keep running all business and professional modules with small number of students. Teachers in current circumstances are underpaid. In case of more clear formulation of College goals, with further integration of smaller courses and reduction of wide range of electives, College could find a more clearly defined niche in the Estonian business college education, to attract skilled business people from outside and to increase salary of full time personnel.

The Team suggests to establish an advisory board with respected members from the Estonian business community (including College graduates) and (if feasible) with members from foreign Business Schools or Colleges.

More emphasis should be made to teach languages through special disciplines not through language classes.

Part IV

Accreditation Conclusions

Tallinn Commercial College has finally found a niche as applied higher education institution. Current student body and graduates find their education contributes to career improvement and business performance. There is a serious threat for College if enrolment numbers will continue to decline in the future. College has reached in some respects minimal academic capacity to keep running a normal study process and to attract skilled staff from a local business community.

Team has serious doubts about ability of the College to use English as language of instruction during 3rd and 4th year of studies due to lack of English language skills of staff members teaching specialized disciplines. To realize ambitions for the future English language skills of staff (excluding language teachers) should be improved.

Staff and student mobility between College and similar higher education institutions in Estonia and other countries should be stimulated.

Part V

Recommendations

*The Team assessed one program at the Tallinn Commercial College.
The unanimous advice about accreditation of the Team is:*

5343960 Business Administration: Full accreditation

The team has based its decision on the information received, the outcome of the accreditation visit, and the concerns expressed in this report.