STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

**UTENOS KOLEGIJA**
**STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS "*VERSLO VADYBA* " (*valstybinis kodas –***
***653N90005*)**
**VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

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**EVALUATION REPORT**
**OF "*BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT*" (*state code - 653N90005*)**
**STUDY PROGRAMME**
at **UTENA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES**

**Review' team:**

1. **Prof. dr. Pandelis Ipsilandis  (team leader)** *academic,*

2. **Prof. Jürgen Bruns,** *academic,*

3. **Dr. Craig Thompson,** *academic,*

4. **Mr Mantas Jonauskis,** *representative of social partners'*

5. **Ms Ugnė Jakubauskaitė,** *students' representative*.


**Evaluation coordinator -**

*Ms Kornelija Bukantaitė*

Išvados parengtos anglų kalba
Report language – English

Vilnius
2017

**DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ**

| | |
|---|---|
| Studijų programos pavadinimas | *Verslo vadyba* |
| Valstybinis kodas | 653N90005 |
| Studijų sritis | Socialiniai mokslai |
| Studijų kryptis | Verslas ir vadyba |
| Studijų programos rūšis | Koleginės studijos |
| Studijų pakopa | Pirma |
| Studijų forma (trukmė metais) | Nuolatinė (3), ištęstinė (4) |
| Studijų programos apimtis kreditais | 180 |
| Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija | Verslo ir vadybos profesinis bakalauras |
| Studijų programos įregistravimo data | **2014-08-22** |

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**INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME**

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|---|---|
| Title of the study programme | *Business Management* |
| State code | 653N90005 |
| Study area | Social Sciences |
| Study field | Business and Management |
| Type of the study programme | College studies |
| Study cycle | First |
| Study mode (length in years) | Full-time (3), part-time (4) |
| Volume of the study programme in credits | 180 |
| Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded | Professional Bachelor of Business and Management |
| Date of registration of the study programme | **2014-08-22** |

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the evaluation process

The evaluation of on-going study programmes is based on the **Methodology for evaluation of Higher Education study programmes,** approved by Order No 1-01-162 of 20 December 2010 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC).

The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions to constantly improve their study programmes and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

The evaluation process consists of the main following stages: *1) self-evaluation and self-evaluation report  prepared by Higher Education Institution (hereafter – HEI); 2) visit of the review team at the higher education institution; 3) production of the evaluation report by the review team and its publication; 4) follow-up activities.*

On the basis of external evaluation report of the study programme SKVC takes a decision to accredit study programme either for 6 years or for 3 years. If the programme evaluation is negative such a programme is not accredited.

The programme is **accredited for 6 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as "very good" (4 points) or "good" (3 points).

The programme is **accredited for 3 years** if none of the areas was evaluated as "unsatisfactory" (1 point) and at least one evaluation area was evaluated as "satisfactory" (2 points).

The programme **is not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas was evaluated as "unsatisfactory" (1 point).

### 1.2. General

The Application documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by the SKVC. Along with the self-evaluation report and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the HEI before, during and/or after the site-visit:

| No. | Name of the document |
|-----|----------------------|
| 1.  | Lists of participants in the meetings with Management Team, SER Team, Faculty, Alumni, Social Partners. |

### 1.3. Background of the HEI/Faculty/Study field/ Additional information

Utena College (at present called Utena University of Applied Sciences, UUAS hereinafter) was established 1st September 2000 and is currently the only Higher Education Institution (HEI) in the East Aukštaitija region of Lithuania. In the framework of Quality

Assurance processes in Higher Education, in 2012 the college has received a 6 year accreditation by the Lithuanian Agency for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) and currently offers 21 first-cycle study programmes in the fields of social, technology and biomedicine sciences leading to Professional Bachelor in the corresponding fields of study. According to Lithuanian legal framework for Higher Education, the College is not accredited to offer 2$^{nd}$ cycle (Master level) and 3$^{rd}$ cycle (Doctoral) study programmes.

Academically, the College is organized in two faculties: Business and Technology faculty and Medicine faculty, which are furthermore divided into academic departments. Several other administrative divisions directly support the organization and delivery of the study programmes. These include: *Department of International Relations, Department of Studies, Department of Strategic Development, Career Centre, Centre of Electronic Learning* and *Library*.

The study programme of Business Management is implemented in Business and Management Department, which also offers a portfolio of programmes in the same field, such as: Hospitality Management, Transport Business, Accounting, and Tourism and Hotel Administration, thus creating certain synergies.

To increase accessibility to studies, the faculty of Business and Technology offers the programme in other locations in the area in cooperation with local Technology and Business Schools. As most of the students are studying in part-time mode, UUAS has built a very well equipped and functioning Electronic Learning Centre that supports distance learning teaching.

Finally proper management structures and regulations are in place comparable with quality assurance international standards in higher education.

## 1.4. The Review Team

The review team was completed according *Description of experts' recruitment*, approved by order No. V-41 of Acting Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on *3/4/2017*.

1. **Prof. dr. Pandelis Ipsilandis (team leader),** *Professor in Technological Education Institute of Thessaly (Greece);*
2. **Prof. Jürgen Bruns,** *professor in University of Applied Sciences Remagen (Germany);*
3. **Dr. Craig Thompson,** *Head of Stenden Hotel Management School, Stenden University (The Netherlands);*
4. **Mr Mantas Jonauskis,** *director of "ProBaltic Consulting" (Lithuania);*
5. **Ms Ugnė Jakubauskaitė,** *student of ISM University of Management and Economics, study programme Economics and Politics (Lithuania).*

**II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS**

*2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes*

As stated in the SER, the Business Management Study Programme (BM SP hereinafter) aims *"to prepare a specialist, understanding business establishment processes, business environment evaluation, market research, able to perform the work requiring personal responsibility for a company processes management, activity planning, organization, leadership of employees in the areas of business status control and business development independently, possessing general competences, allowing to adapt under changing environment conditions and labour market requirements"*. The need to provide not just knowledge but at the same time develop competencies that are sustainable and can help graduates integrate into an evolving labour market is surely acknowledged as a basic pillar of the BM programme.

Programme Learning Outcomes (LOs hereinafter) comply with the requirements of the first cycle professional bachelor as defined by the *Descriptor of Study Cycles approved by the order No V-2212/21-11-2011 the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania*, and correspond to the aims of the programme as stated in the SER.

Discussions with various groups, during the review visit, revealed certain ambiguities regarding the programme aims. For example, while the management group considers focus on entrepreneurship as one of the programme's distinctive elements, currently this is not strongly reflected in the programme's aims and LOs neither in interviewed students' attitudes. The team of experts also felt the existence of certain vagueness as to whether the programme focuses to the regional needs for middle level managers at Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) or has a more generic orientation towards aspects of corporate management. The Expert Team´s opinion is that at this point there is an urgent need for the programme to obtain a stronger identity.

Overall, a review of the programme Aims and LOs can help in communicating them more effectively to prospective students and employees and will benefit to better position the programme among other similar ones.

In that respect, programme LOs, which currently are too descriptive, could be made more concise, and aligned to the overall programme aims, avoiding detailed references to elements of business processes that could be included in subject LOs. For example, "*collect and classify information*, *analyse and interpret data*, *evaluate the results, explain business information"* can all be combined under "*management of data and information"*, same with LOs referring to HR functions, etc. At the same time, emphasis should also be given to innovation and entrepreneurship dimensions (e.g. identify innovations, instead of describe innovations, etc.) and contextualize some that are very generally expressed (e.g. *Apply legal acts in the chosen activity area*).

UUAS takes care to have the aims and intended learning outcomes of the BM SP accessible at its web site, while general information on BM SP may be also obtained on the internet site of the Lithuanian Higher Institutions Association for Organizing Joint Admission (LAMA BPO), and the AIKOS database, an open system for information and guidance of applicants to universities and colleges. Dissemination of relevant information is also done through social media, local media, and school visits at the site of UUAS.

Interviews with Students, Graduates and Social Partners showed clearly that they view UUAS as a Higher Education Institution with a key role in the region, and the specific programme very valuable in supporting the growth of the local economy in terms of providing

graduates with management skills. Social partners who attended the meeting made it clear that the program is relevant to their needs and indicated specific examples like funding of the students, offering practical internships or direct employment. However, while the programme attracts a significant number of applicants it stands low in their preferences and enrolment is decreasing (see also section 2.5). The vast majority of interviewed Students and Graduates expressed clearly their ties with the region and their preferences to study and work in the area (according to programme administration 70% of the students are from the region). Alumni surveys of UUAS show that most of the programme's graduates are employed, mainly in jobs related to their studies in various employment positions.

The programme has developed closed cooperation with local businesses in the form of participation of social partners in committees for the defence of Bachelor thesis, joint work of academic staff and business representatives in organizing conferences, and participating in other projects, that create opportunities for informal contacts between social partners and programme faculty members. In contrast, systematic involvement of social partners in the programme development was not evident in the meeting of the Expert Team with Social partners.

The programme under review fits well the portfolio of the Business School of UUAS which includes professional bachelors in mature areas such as: Hospitality Management, Transport Business, Accounting, and Tourism and Hotel Administration. Interviewed Social Partners who had the opportunity to employ graduates or offer student internships do recognise the importance and significance of the programme in the local market and emphasized the need for the programme to focus more on social skills and cultivate the philosophy of "learning how to learn".

However it should be made clear among management and teaching staff that a three year programme with a clear professional orientation cannot address at the same time highly specialized areas in business management. This would result in weakening both goals.

The study programme aims at developing competencies corresponding to Level 6 (first cycle – professional degree) studies in accordance with the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework. LOs address the 5 different types of competencies – Knowledge and its application, Special competencies, Research abilities, Social and Personal abilities. In any case and regardless of the orientation of the programme aims, a review is needed to make programme LOs them more coherent, as explained in previous paragraph.

The Programme aims and intended learning outcomes comply with the profile of a professional bachelor degree in Business managements as they address the practical application of knowledge and the development of competencies in key business areas as required in entry level management positions. At the same time consideration is given to prepare and motivate students for lifelong learning.

Overall, the programme fits well in the portfolio of the Business School and its existence is considered very valuable for the local economy and gains strong support by the Social Partners. As the programme suffers from low enrolment, a more distinct identity of the

programme could help in making it more appealing to applicants and increase enrolment. Sharpening programme's LOs should be part of this process.


### 2.2. Curriculum design

The curriculum structure conforms to the ECTS system, meets legal requirements and the programme complies with the General Requirements of Lithuanian regulations for Higher Education.

The programme is offered in both full-time (duration 3 years) and part-time (duration 4 years) modes, both 180 ECTS credits. The study programmes and the individual subjects are identical in both cases.

The 180 credits (30 credits/semester) correspond to a workload of 4747 hours (an average of 26.27 hours/workload for 1 credit point), which meets the Bologna regulation of 25 to 30 hours workload for a credit point. The average workload per semester is between 780 and 799 hours (30 ECTS credits) for full-time and 526 – 645 hours (21-24 ECTS credits) for part-time students.

The allocation of credits to study field subjects, general college studies, electives practices and practical as well as the Professional Bachelor Graduation thesis are in accordance to provisions of relevant Lithuanian legislation for professional bachelors.


The scope of the programme extends to cover the basic functions in managing businesses from the point of view of low and middle level managerial positions.

During the first year basic subjects are taught to understand the principles of an economy (e.g. *Micro & Macroeconomics, Business Law, Business Communication, etc.*). Two practice modules provide students with basic insight of activities within a company.

In the second year, basics of management fields are introduced (e.g. *Accounting, Finance, Market Research, Personnel*) and two short practices are included. The first one takes place at the Utena College Business Practice Training Firm – a well-organized learning environment – where students perform business function in 5 business areas in a simulated environment (see section 2.5), in order to consolidate and apply knowledge in practical situations, develop responsibility and ability to work in a team and increase their confidence in making decisions. At the second one students perform work practice at a real company. The outcomes of this practice include performance of a market research, prepare SWOT and PEST analyses, evaluation activities of a company division, etc.).

In the third year students choose the field of specialization (among 3 specializations of 12 credits each), which determines where they will perform their practice. In the practice of Business Plan writing students have to prove their ability to apply their knowledge for systematic thinking and problem solving. The Final Practice and Graduation Thesis and the defence should reflect to what extend learning outcomes have been achieved and the students are prepared for the labour market.

Part-time students follow similar part extended to a four year period.

The programme is logic and structurally homogenous. The academic subjects show an interdisciplinary integration. The content of the programme shows a logic sequence in the students' development.

According to interviewed students and graduates, all students at each study location (Ukmerge and Utena) take the same specialization; the one chosen by the majority of the

students (even if they have other preferences). In 2016-17 academic year the Ukmerge student group followed the *International Business Management* route, while the Utena group followed that of *Management of Trade and Services.* .Although this is understandable from the operational efficiency point of view, because of the low enrolment, nevertheless it limits students' choices.

Under those circumstances, the Team of Experts was really surprised to hear that another area of specialization is considered to be added to the programme, in the field of *"Management of Electronic Business"*. During the review visit, the Expert Team did not get the feeling that Social Partners overall see the need for it (only one Social Partner indicated the supposedly need for this specialization). The experts suggest that the whole curriculum should be reviewed in an open roundtable with the participation of academic staff, social partners, students and alumni, before decisions are made and specializations, if any could be reviewed vis-à-vis the overall programme orientation.

The curriculum has a strong application orientation. A significant part of the programme study volume – well above the minimum requirements of the relevant provisions for professional bachelors is devoted to practices and practical. Specifically 1768 hours or 36.7% of the programme's workload is application of knowledge. Although, this fits the profile of the programme it does raises some concern whether students do develop a strong theoretical background that will sustain their professional development. The concern is greater for the part time studies, where theoretical contact hours are very limited (332 for the entire programme – approximately 27 subjects) and account for less than 10% of total work volume and just about 12 hours per subject. In addition there seem to be an imbalance for part-time studies when increasing hours for self-study go along with reduced hours for consultation (e.g. Applied Mathematics, FT: 70 hrs self-study / 16 hrs consulting, PT: 148 hrs self-study / 6 hrs consulting, according to SER Annex 1)

Significant effort was put to formulate detailed descriptors that link subject learning outcomes to programme LOs. In certain cases however it seems that the subject LOs seem to be content driven instead of the opposite. Several cases were noted where subject LOs are somehow out of context and are set at a rather higher level (e.g. *Applied mathematics*, *Fundamentals of finance, Financing of international Trade, etc.*) or exceed the scope of the programme *(e.g. Marketing)*. In other cases subjects could be more aligned to the business world (e.g. macroeconomics cover greater part of the scope than microeconomics, applied math could focus on quantitative methods in business instead of mathematics, etc.). A characteristic example is that students refer to the specialization "*Management of Trade and Services*" as "*Sales*" but not a single subject in Sales management appears in the curriculum

The Expert Team's realizes that teachers are eager to provide as much knowledge as possible, each on her/his area of expertise but believes that a review of the subject LOs will lead to improvements and contextualization of the content vis-à-vis the profile of the programme. In this aspect the review of the necessity for specialization should also be considered. It is important that this review is not confined within the academic community, but takes place with active participation of social partners and alumni.

As a professional programme the programme is geared towards developing strong basic knowledge and application skills. The rationalization of the curriculum could provide room for

enhancing areas that are related to contemporary businesses, and strengthen the innovative and entrepreneurial skills of the students.

Overall, a strong point of the curriculum is its development along the problem-solving learning approach. Well organized practices using both traditional (in-company training) and contemporary (e.g. simulation-based) methods fit that philosophy. Know-how in this area is valuable for the continuous development of the curriculum. Future developments should focus in areas like Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Practices in this area will enhance skills needed in the job market such as: Engagement & motivation, Creativity, Assertiveness, Results orientation, etc. At the same time the level and the breadth of the scope in certain subjects should be aligned to the level and the aims of the programme. Enhancing the integration of business partners and academic staff - currently done in a fragmented subject oriented approach – is essential for future development.

### 2.3. Teaching staff

The teaching staff who is involved in the delivery of the BM programme is formed according to the-law of Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania No. V – 501. According to the data in the SER a total of 29 Teachers are involved in the delivery of the programme's subjects, 25 of them as permanent teachers and 4 of them as part-time teachers. The roster includes 2 professors and 5 associated professors, all holders of doctoral degrees who teach 5 core and 3 elective (1 in each specialization) subjects satisfying the minimum requirement that *"No less than 10 per cent of the subjects in the study field should be taught by scientists or scholars"*. The vast majority of teachers (23 out of 29) have more than three years practical experience in the subject field they teach.

The majority of the teachers have postgraduate degrees in the areas of Economics, Management and Social Sciences, the vast majority of them over 10 years of teaching experience and the same holds true regarding their practical experience. Since this is a teaching oriented institution it is worth mentioning that 8 out of the 29 teaching staff members hold a postgraduate degree in education. Students and graduates praised their teachers for supporting them in their learning process and especially for bringing into classroom practical real life experiences.

All teachers teach subjects in their area of specialization and/or supervise practices. Overall the programme has an excellent student to teacher ratio, since the class sizes are normally small (24-40) students per cohort - both full and part-time, amounting to a total of 17 full-time and 106 part-time students in 2016. The Expert Team had the opportunity to meet most of the teachers in the programme who were enthusiastic, showed sincere interest about their teaching, reported specific improvements that made to their subjects and shared the philosophy of Problem Based Learning approach. All teachers create additional teaching material and put their videoed lectures on the electronic teaching platform (see section 2.4). Overall, the stable environment of teachers, most of whom work full-time for UUAS, is an asset for the programme and its future development.

Staff turnover is low and mainly due to retirements and year to year fluctuations in the number of students. Retired lecturers were replaced by more qualified teachers, holders of

doctoral degrees. Staff renewal helps the programme to improve quality of studies, introduction of new teaching/learning methods, supplementing the study programme with contemporary scientific and business views issues. Currently, 80% of the teachers who teach in the study programme are between 40 and 60 years.

Teachers' workload at UUAS is 36 hours per week, 40 weeks per year and includes conducting lectures, practical classes, and consultations, supervising the professional bachelor graduation thesis, practice placements, being a member in the committee of graduation thesis presentation and examinations and any other contact activity with students. Associate professors and full professors carry less workload in teaching related activities so that it allows time for involvement in scientific and research activity.

The institution cerates good conditions for in-service training of the academic staff. Provisions exist for teachers to update their qualification, to participate in various courses, seminars of in-service training as well as in conferences, projects, events, organized by associations. Opportunities for teachers to perform research, to leave for other Lithuanian and foreign education institutions for in-service training, scientific or practical internships do exist. Teachers may take a fully paid 1 year sabbatical every 5 years of service. Specific results are listed in the SER.

Emphasis is given to developing academic and general competences of teaching staff. Several teachers took place in projects like "*The Efficiency of the System of Studies of Utena University of Applied Sciences", "Training Regarding the Issues of the Implementation of Study Quality Management System" "E-Learning Methodology, E-Tools and Aids based on Open Learning Resources for the Staff of Educational Institutions".* The results include the development of textbooks, compendiums of teaching and learning material, tasks for practicals, e-learning courses uploaded to Moodle, etc.

Teachers do participate actively in teaching mobility programmes giving lectures at other EU Higher Education Institutes and helping to establish cooperation with other institutions.

Research activities are limited to the academic staff and include research on education related topics and some tailored applied research projects. Scientific output of the teaching staff reflects the professional (non-academic) profile of the programme and is relatively low in quantity and limited in oral and/or poster presentations and some scientific articles in Lithuanian.

Formal evaluation of appointed staff members takes place at the end of the first two 5-year terms and includes their performance in teaching research course development as well as student feedback. The practice of annual teaching staff self-evaluation reporting could be extended to include staff development plans that can help align personal professional development with the institutional and programme goals.

Overall, the programme is supported by highly qualified teaching staff with rich academic and professional experience who share the philosophy of a Problem Based Learning approach in teaching, thus providing a solid basis for further programme development. Staff management and development policies are well accepted and seem to work effectively and efficiently contributing in a very constructive work environment. Teaching staff is actively involved in the development and publishing of additional teaching materials as well as research. However, coherence of staff cooperation at programme level, as well as synergies in involving students in practical research need to be further enhanced.

*2.4. Facilities and learning resources*

Facilities at Faculty of Business and Technology of UUAS are sufficient (19 auditoria and classrooms) for the realization of theoretical teaching and practical training. The auditoria and classrooms are located in 2 buildings close-to each other. All of them have internet access, free wireless internet connection, and a large number is equipped with overhead projectors, and multimedia means. The size of the classrooms can accommodate the small student numbers at UUAS. Additional facilities include administrative offices (e.g. rooms for the head of the department, an administrator, the heads of Business Practical Training Firms), and also space for the Students' Representation and students' events.

ICT facilities include 10 computer-based laboratories with 16 workplaces in each connected in a network and access to the Internet. Specific lectures and trainings take place in computer-based classrooms according to teacher's request. Student have permission to access to relevant software for office applications, statistical analysis, business simulation, such as MS Office, *SPSS*, *Stekas-Personalas, Stekas PLIUS*, *VEDA*, *AIVA documents 3.6* and *AIVA 9001*, *PrestaShop*. An Internet reading-room located in the library is available to students to work on self-study assignments.

UUAS has to be commended for organizing establishing a fully functional *Electronic Learning Centre* that supports the applied orientation of the programme and the problem-based-learning approach. Some of the facilities for on-line work in groups and self-study include the *Moodle* learning environment, *FirstClass* - a teamwork system, and several open on-line resources such as *www.verslilietuva.lt*, *www.virtualiklase.lt*, *www.vmi.lt*, and *http://www.investlithuania.com/lt/*. The Electronic Learning Centre also provides services that students can use to participate in conferences, listen to lectures, and participate in projects, discussions and various meetings.

The library of UUAS Faculty of Business and Technology is hosted at the modern building of the city community library, having its own space there. The library is fully functional and provides the academic community of UUAS with information services, access to information resources, and is instrumental in implementing the aims of studies, research and continuous learning. Based on the faculty needs the library acquires books relevant to the subject of the programme and subscribes to various databases and journals. A great part of e-publications and other learning resources in Lithuanian, English and Russian, necessary to implement the study programme under discussion, were purchased using own and EU funds in the period 2012-2016. A detailed list of all acquisitions is given in Appendix 12 of the SER.

Given the above provisions, users of the library have access to 26825 scientific and professional journal electronically, and to scientific databases like EBSCO. Teaching resources developed by the programme's teachers are also available through the library facilities.

Extended provisions support student practice, so that students consider it as one of the strengths of the programme. The practice placements of *Business Communication*, *Speciality Skills Mastering*, and *Business Plan Development* take place in classrooms equipped with specific software applications. The practices of *Business Enterprise Activity*, *Work in a Business Enterprise*, takes place at enterprises. The *Final Practice* is performed in companies according to

the chosen specialization and in job positions similar to the ones that the future graduate is trained for.

UUAS has signed 22 cooperation agreements with various enterprises (UABs and ABs). Duriŋ the period under assessment 94 students had their practices in 145 enterprises.

Students get acquainted with practical aspects of businesses before the final in a simulated environment. Two virtual "Business Practical Training Firms (BPTF)" have been established where students "work" as employees of Personnel, Purchasing, Sales, Marketing, and Finance departments using 6 specific software products. Both firms meet the requirements established by the provisions of EUROPEN regarding office equipment, BPTF structure and organisation, communication and relations to other BPTFs, and academic staff, and have received international accreditation in 2005, 2009 and 2013 by EUROPEN (valid until 2018). These facilities are very much appreciated by the students as they give them an opportunity to get a realistic inside into company processes.

Overall, the premises and the learning resources are appropriate and support a problem-based teaching and an independent learning. Since most of the premises are located in an older building, some improvements are needed so that all facilities are easily accessible for the disabled who can access all relevant areas

## 2.5. Study process and students' performance assessment

Students' admissions are done according to UUAS rules and general national admission order via Lithuanian Higher Education Institutes Joint Admission (LAMA BPO). Information about the admission and the procedure for admission are presented on the College website. Selection criteria for the entrants include the evaluation of a score based on performance grades at secondary education. Although the minimum entrance criteria is very low, the percentage of students enrolled is only about 8% for full time applicants, and 23% for part-time applicants. A large drop in the number of applicants is also noted in 2015 (almost 1/3 of the previous year numbers). Besides the decrease in enrolments due to demographics across all Higher Education Institutes, the fact that only a very small of applicants is finally choosing the programme raises serious concerns about the attractiveness of the programme to potential students. It seems that applicants, for various reasons, do not consider the specific programme on the top of their preferences.

The programme has a definite applied orientation and delivery follows a Problem-Based-Learning (PBL) approach. As explained in previous sections, the profile of the teachers, the learning resources are geared to fit the profile of the programme and definitely support this goal. The applied side of the programme is enhanced by many means:

- In-class training through the use of virtual environment where students learn the bases of business establishment, business development, business plan preparation, business management, etc.,
- Practices in Business Communication, Speciality Skills Mastering, and Business Plan Development performed in classrooms equipped with specific software applications
- Practices in Business Enterprise Activity, Work in a Business Enterprise, that take place in companies

- The establishment and operation of two virtual Business Practical Training Firms on campus, where students apply their gained theoretical knowledge in practice by virtually working as employees of Personnel, Purchasing, Sales, Marketing, and Finance departments.
- The Final practice which is performed in companies in a relevant position with the student specialization and tuned the topic of the final professional bachelor thesis.

Opportunities for students of the programme to participate in various events and competitions exist. Some of the students were involved in entrepreneurship events and competitions and other informal activities (e.g. FB *Entrepreneurship Education Club*) through social media. In the last two years students of Entrepreneurship Education Club won funding for running the project "*Be entrepreneurial*".

The International Relations Department, the Erasmus+ programme academic coordinator and the head of the department provide advice regarding the Erasmus+ programme. Participation of programme students in mobility has dropped in the last two academic years because it mainly involves full-time students, while in terms of incoming students is moderate. Language barriers and work obligations for part-time students are the main reasons. Enhancing the international dimension of the programme (i.e. offering some subjects in English, efforts to organize summer intensive courses, international teachers) may result in increased mobility.

Academic support is rather fragmented. Each full-time study group is assigned a tutor (teacher in the programme) at the beginning of the academic year, who is responsible for being in contact with the student group and helps them to adapt in the College environment, communicates the latest information, advises, etc. Faculty tutors and the practice supervisor consult on the issues of practice place selection. Student internship in companies is headed by the company experts-practitioners. The induction of students and their orientation with regard to the aims of the programmes includes introducing students to e-learning resources and tools, in the context of using the e-tools applications in their study process. Information pertaining their studies is available at the Web site of the College and the Student Academic Base.

The very high drop-off rate for part-time students that happens mainly during the first study year is certainly an area of concern. The difficulty for freshman students adopting to the study requirements at College level has been pointed out as the main reason for the drop-outs. Given that the minimum entrance requirement set by the state is very low (1.5 out of 10) additional support may be provided for first year students.

Learning support includes excellent e-learning courses which were designed and developed by subject teachers and are now available for every subject of the study programme. Lectures are also broadcasted in real-time-mode to the students of the programme who study in another location while lecture videos are stored in Moodle where students can access them any time.

A *Career Centre* provides information on employment, individual consultations and guidance to students on matters related to application preparation, career planning and implementation. Seminars are also organized to communicate information more effectively, introduce to the employers, to plan career, etc.

Students may receive financial support in many forms: grants based either on merit or on social needs, state loans, allowances for students with special needs, etc. Other forms of social

support include accommodations for out of town students, subsidies for students with social needs or disabilities

A variety of assessment methods relevant to each subject are used. They are linked to subject LOs and are clearly shown in subject descriptors. However, in certain subject descriptors, it is noticed that the final exam element is overweight, reaching 60% of the final grade. Specifically, for subjects that are more advanced (e.g. Entrepreneurship, Strategic Management, International Marketing etc.), alternative forms of assessments should be considered. Other possible improvement that may be suggested is to include in the subject a guide that sets the standards of student achievements for the different level of grades (i.e. pass, merit, distinction). These should be made clear to students, presented and explained to them during the first class meeting, and be always accessible electronically by students.

Detailed guidelines exist for the development and assessment of the professional bachelor thesis. Plagiarism is currently controlled by the individual teachers. The use of plagiarism software that will make plagiarism control more efficient is suggested.

According to the UAS Career centre annual surveys, employability of graduates is high. In 2016 it reached 96% with only one graduate listed in records of the Lithuanian Labour Exchange as unemployed. Similar data from previous years show 82% in 2014 and 85% in 2015. Based on the data of KVIS - unified career information management system of Lithuanian higher HEIs, employment in jobs relevant to the studies reaches 72%, 76% and 80% in years 2014 to 2016. The fact the most students in the programme enrol in part-time study mode because they already have a job is a positive factor for increased employability among the graduates of the programme.

As explained in session 2.1 it is important for the programme to pay more attention in enhancing students' social skills such as Engagement & motivation, Creativity, Assertiveness, Results orientation, Entrepreneurial orientation, Innovativeness, communication in foreign languages. Interviewed students seemed to want to get more out of their education but lack strong initiative. For example, while they all stated emphatically that they would like to enhance their English skills by being taught certain subjects in English, they never demanded that from the programme. The Expert Team strongly believes that future efforts for Programme and Study process development should focus in that direction.

Students overall feel that they get a fair learning environment with clear rules and appropriate support. The UAS Study Regulations and Code of Ethics set an appropriate academic environment.

The UAS Administration and Students' Dispute Commission handles student claims and appeals, on issues related to legal interest breaches, studies, subject assessment, etc. An Academic Ethics Committee handles issues related to breach of the Academic Ethics. In both cases students submit applications to investigate the situation in writing and receive an answer at an indicated time period.

Overall, the study process is characterized by certain strong points as the Problem Based Learning approach, well organized practices, and extended support of the learning process, especially to part-time students by electronic platforms with rich content. The declining of enrolments and the low number of students cause adverse effects for limiting the applicability of group methods and social interaction, while the limited use of English language in the delivery of the curriculum prevents enhancement of students' communication capabilities in English.


### *2.6. Programme management*

The management of the study programme, including decision making and responsibilities for the programme implementation, monitoring and development of the programme are distributed on several management levels. The main roles in the management of the programme rest with the Department Head, the Study Programme Committee and the Dean of the Faculty. The Study Programme Committee comprises the Head of Department, as head, 3 members of the teaching staff, one student and two graduates.

Although the SER tries to describe the division of responsibilities between the management roles, in certain places there are overlapping responsibilities. For example "*direct monitoring and evaluation following the position description is executed by the head of the Department of Business and Management, the Dean of the Faculty", "The findings of check-up are analysed in the meetings of the Department, the Dean's Office where the decisions taken make the ground for the improvement and renewal of the study programme"* but also *"BM Study Programme Committee analyses and improves the content of the study programme, reviews it annually and, if needed, makes necessary changes and updates"* while relevant information is analysed at Dean's level.


General evaluation of the study satisfaction of students and graduates is carried out once in an academic year: of students – usually after autumn semester is over, of graduates – at the end of their studies. The evaluation of a subject/module is carried out twice in an academic year – after autumn and spring semesters are over. The head of the Department organises the surveys of students and graduates and generalises the findings.

The head of the Career centre organises and carries out the survey of the employers' satisfaction and generalises the findings.

The Rector may order special surveys and appoints people who will be responsible for the design of questionnaires to survey clients' satisfaction. The Vice-Rector for Science and Development is responsible for the analysis of the collected data of ordered surveys.


Although a lot of data and information exist from the internal quality assurance processes and the external evaluation, the quality improvement process is not systematic and lacks efficiency. For example, while the recommendations from the last external review were considered and analysed, the resulted actions were concentrated mainly in partial changes in the curriculum, and temporarily improvements in mobility. No significant improvements have been noticed regarding introduction of some English taught topics, emphasis on development of soft skills. A holistic review of the programme, its profile, aims and LOs is missing.

The management of the programme is concerned about the declining in student enrolments and has tried to attract students from Technology and Business Schools in the area (e.g. Ukmergė Technology and Business School). However, no information or any analysis was

taken so far to investigate the applicants' perceptions about the specific programme at UUAS and the reasons for their low preference, so that proper remedies (e.g. stronger identity, different orientation, etc.) and marketing strategies could be implemented. The lack of marketing strategy presents a threat for the programme's sustainability. The number of full-time students is already below that of a critical mass and proper action should be taken by the management.

The positioning of the programme to the market needs to be reviewed urgently with the active participation of Social Partners (see also section 2.1) to address issues regarding its orientation, entrepreneurial dimension, enhancement of internationalization, specializations.

Since February 2013 an ISO based Study Quality Management System is implemented (hereinafter SQMS). The SQMS covers quality management planning, organisation, check-up and monitoring. These means and measures are available and accessible electronically by the academic staff of the College. They describe various processes of quality management – development and improvement of study programmes, management of studies, management of applied research, processes of the feedback with clients, resource management, evaluation and improvement of quality management system, etc. As an ISO based system the SQMS is effective in the management of operations but the Expert Team is not convinced about the effectiveness of the system in contributing to decisions regarding the future development of the programme. As it was stated in previous paragraphs only partial improvements were taken place, while the issue of enrolment declining seems not to addressed efficiently so far.

All relevant information regarding Quality Assurance, the description of the System's processes is available for the employees of Utena UAS at the institution's web-site: https://dga.utenos-kolegija.lt.

Overall, the management lacks a transparent organisation with objectives, competences and control functions that will allow a strong leadership to carry on the future development of the programme and, its marketing strategy.

**2.7. Examples of excellence**
The programme exploits information and communications technologies effectively to support student learning. A very well equipped and functioning Electronic Learning Centre provides excellent distance learning support, especially for part-time students and counterbalances the low contact hours in the part time mode, while 2 Business Practice Training Firms were established in a computer simulation environment for student practice.

## III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The development of a Marketing Strategy is necessary to address the continuing reduction in enrolments. An integral part of this development must address of the profile of the applicants and their perceptions about the programme, so that proper actions can be taken to improve the enrolments to applicants' ratio which over the review period is very low.

2. The Expert Team would have liked to have seen greater evidence of systematic stakeholder and staff involvement in future programme development. The BM programme at UUAS can substantially benefit by instituting an external advisory board at faculty level consisting of business and industry leaders.

3. The Programme needs to establish a distinct identity that will appeal to prospective students. The results of the previous recommended actions will certainly be instrumental in this exercise. Specific comments made in this report can help in reviewing and addressing issues related to programme orientation, aims and learning outcomes, building generic skills, as well as the offering of specialized modules. In general the programme has to be sharpened.

4. The entrepreneurial dimension in the programme must be enhanced and serve as a possible differentiating factor. The programme should exploit the know-how gained from the successful establishing and running of virtual "Business Practical Training Firms (BPTF)" where students "work" as employees in creating similar structures where students will work as entrepreneurs.

5. To create an assistance and support system to help reduce the drop-out rates of the students, particularly in part-time mode. The programme needs to investigate the reasons behind drop-out rates in order to build a necessary support system and improve completion rates.

6. The programme must respond to the student needs for stronger language skills. Certain subjects could be taught in English for all students in the programme.

7. Faculty members should be encouraged to participate and be more involved in the development of the entire programme besides their own subjects.

## IV. SUMMARY

The Business Management Study Programme at Utena College aims to provide proper knowledge and practical skills to students who would like to start or upgrade their career in managing business operations and functions. A basic pillar of the programme is that it provides not just knowledge but at the same time develops competencies that are sustainable and can help graduates integrate into an evolving labour market. The programme does have a strong applied orientation, and follows a Problem Based Learning approach, features that were praised by students and alumni. Students, Graduates and Social Partners showed clearly that they view UUAS as a Higher Education Institution with a key role in the region, and the specific programme very valuable in supporting the growth of the local economy in terms of providing graduates with management skills.

As the Higher Education market becomes more competitive and student population is decreasing, the programme needs to develop a distinct identity with clear aims and LOs and emphasis in building entrepreneurial skills that will distinguish it from similar ones. Besides making the programme more focused, this will enhance the appeal of the programme among prospective students who currently seem not to put the specific programme high in their preferences.

Strong point for its future development are the academic staff, and the IT technology in learning expertise. A stable group of highly qualified teaching staff with rich academic and professional experience, cares about their continuous improvements in their teaching, is actively involved in the development and publishing of additional teaching materials and responding to students need, sharing the Problem Based Learning philosophy in teaching. Information and communications technologies are effectively exploited to support student learning. A very well equipped and functioning Electronic Learning Centre provides excellent distance learning support, while computer simulation technologies alow students to practice business skills in 2 virtual "Business Practice Training Firms" established and supported by the teaching staff.

The programme exhibits certain elements of internationalization, more in mobility of teaching staff and less in that of students. Since no subjects are taught mandatory in English – a feature that students would welcome – limits the internationalization of the programme.

Social partners – mostly local businesses are involved and support the programme in many forms: participation in defence of Bachelor thesis committees, joint work of academic staff and business representatives in organizing conferences, participating in other projects etc. Thus plenty of informal contacts between social partners and programme faculty members exists, but a more systematic involvement of social partners in the programme development is suggested.

The development of marketing strategy for the programme, along with increased systematic stakeholder and staff involvement in future programme development is necessary.

## V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Business and Management* (state code – 653N90005) at Utena University of Applied Sciences is given **positive** evaluation.

*Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.*

| No. | Evaluation Area | Evaluation of an area in points* |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Programme aims and learning outcomes | 2 |
| 2. | Curriculum design | 2 |
| 3. | Teaching staff | 3 |
| 4. | Facilities and learning resources | 3 |
| 5. | Study process and students' performance assessment | 3 |
| 6. | Programme management | 2 |
| | **Total:** | **15** |

*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;
2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;
3 (good) - the field develops systematically, has distinctive features;
4 (very good) - the field is exceptionally good.

| Grupės vadovas:<br>Team leader: | Pandelis Ipsilandis |
|---|---|
| Grupės nariai:<br>Team members: | Juergen Bruns |
| | Craig Thompson |
| | Mantas Jonauskis |
| | Ugnė Jakubauskaitė |

**UTENOS KOLEGIJOS PIRMOSIOS PAKOPOS STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS *VERSLO VADYBA* (VALSTYBINIS KODAS – 6211LX028, 621N90006) 2017-07-05 EKSPERTINIO VERTINIMO IŠVADŲ NR. SV4-149 IŠRAŠAS**

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## V. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS

Utenos kolegijos studijų programa *Verslo vadyba* (valstybinis kodas – 6531LX076, 653N90005) vertinama **teigiamai**.

| Eil. Nr. | Vertinimo sritis | Srities įvertinimas, balais* |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai | 2 |
| 2. | Programos sandara | 2 |
| 3. | Personalas | 3 |
| 4. | Materialieji ištekliai | 3 |
| 5. | Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas | 3 |
| 6. | Programos vadyba | 2 |
| | **Iš viso:** | 15 |

\* 1 – Nepatenkinamai (yra esminių trūkumų, kuriuos būtina pašalinti)

2 – Patenkinamai (tenkina minimalius reikalavimus, reikia tobulinti)

3 – Gerai (sistemiškai plėtojama sritis, turi savitų bruožų)

4 – Labai gerai (sritis yra išskirtinė)

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## IV. SANTRAUKA

Utenos kolegijos studijų programos Verslo vadyba tikslas – suteikti tinkamų žinių ir praktinių įgūdžių studentams, norintiems pradėti karjerą verslo srityje ar pasitobulinti. Pagrindinis studijų programos aspektas tas, kad ji suteikia ne tik žinių, bet tuo pat metu ugdo tvarias kompetencijas, kurios gali padėti absolventams integruotis į kintančią darbo rinką. Studijų programa tvirtai orientuota į praktinį pritaikymą, taikoma probleminio mokymosi metodika; tai teigiamai vertina studentai ir alumnai. Studentai, absolventai ir socialiniai partneriai aiškiai parodė, kad Utenos kolegiją mato kaip aukštojo mokslo įstaigą, atliekančią

svarbų vaidmenį regione, o ši konkreti studijų programa yra labai vertinga ir remia vietos ekonomikos augimą, t. y. absolventams suteikia vadovavimo įgūdžių.

Aukštojo mokslo rinka tampa vis konkurencingesnė, studentų skaičius mažėja, todėl ši studijų programa turi turėti savo tapatybę su aiškiais tikslais bei studijų rezultatais ir pabrėžti verslumo įgūdžių ugdymą, kas ją išskirtų iš kitų panašių studijų programų. Be to, jei studijų programa būtų labiau orientuota, tai leistų padidinti studijų programos patrauklumą būsimiesiems studentams, kurie šiuo metu, atrodo, šios studijų programos tarp pirmųjų prioritetų nenurodo.

Svarbus studijų programos tolesnio tobulinimo aspektas – akademinis personalas ir IT technologijų taikymas mokymosi procese. Nuolatinė aukštos kvalifikacijos dėstytojų, turinčių turtingą akademinę ir profesinę patirtį, komanda rūpinasi savo tobulėjimu dėstymo srityje, aktyviai dalyvauja rengiant ir publikuojant papildomą mokymo medžiagą, reaguoja į studentų poreikius, dalijasi problemų sprendimu pagrįsto mokymosi filosofija dėstymo srityje. Informacinės ir ryšių technologijos yra veiksmingai naudojamos ir padeda studentams studijuoti. Veikia labai gerai įrengtas Elektroninio mokymo centras, kuris teikia su nuotoliniu mokymu susijusią paramą, o kompiuterinio imitavimo technologijos leidžia studentams praktiškai ugdyti verslo įgūdžius dviejose virtualiosiose verslo praktikos mokymo firmose, kurias sukūrė ir palaiko dėstytojai.

Studijų programa rodo tam tikrus tarptautiškumo elementus – daugiau dėstytojų, o ne studentų judumo srityje. Nė vienas dalykas nėra privalomai dėstomas anglų kalba (kam studentai mielai pritartų), o tai apriboja studijų programos tarptautiškumą.

Socialiniai partneriai (dažniausiai vietos verslo atstovai) dalyvauja ir remia studijų programą įvairiomis formomis: dalyvauja bakalauro baigiamųjų darbų gynimo komitete, akademinis personalas kartu su verslo atstovais organizuoja konferencijas, dalyvauja kituose projektuose ir kt. Egzistuoja neoficialūs ryšiai tarp socialinių partnerių ir studijų programą vykdančių dėstytojų, tačiau siūloma socialinius partnerius sistemingiau įtraukti į studijų programą.

Būtina parengti studijų programos rinkodaros strategiją, kartu numatant padidinti sistemingą dalininkų ir dėstytojų įtraukimą plėtojant studijų programą ateityje.


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## III. REKOMENDACIJOS


1. Siekiant spręsti nuolat mažėjančio stojančiųjų skaičiaus problemą, būtina parengti rinkodaros strategiją. Šios strategijos rengimo neatsiejama dalis – išanalizuoti pareiškėjus

ir kaip jie suvokia šią studijų programą, kad būtų galima imtis tinkamų veiksmų stojančiųjų skaičiui padidinti, kuris vertinamu laikotarpiu yra labai žemas.

2. Ekspertų grupė pageidautų, kad dalininkai ir personalas aktyviau ir sistemingiau dalyvautų plėtojant šią studijų programą. Būtų naudinga, jei UK vykdomai studijų programai *Verslo vadyba* fakulteto lygmeniu būtų įsteigta išorinė patariamoji valdyba, kurią sudarytų verslo ir pramonės lyderiai.

3. Studijų programa privalo turėti aiškią tapatybę, kuria pritrauktų būsimuosius studentus. Anksčiau rekomenduojamų veiksmų rezultatai tikrai padėtų tai pasiekti. Konkrečios šiose išvadose pateiktos pastabos gali padėti išnagrinėti ir spręsti klausimus, susijusius su programos orientavimu, tikslais ir studijų rezultatais, bendrųjų įgūdžių ugdymu, taip pat su specializuotų modulių pasiūlymu. Apskritai, studijų programą reikia stiprinti.

4. Reikia stiprinti studijų programos verslumo aspektą ir naudoti jį kaip galimą skiriamąjį bruožą. Studijų programa turėtų išnaudoti mokslinę ir praktinę patirtį, sukauptą sėkmingai įsteigus ir vykdant virtualias verslo praktinio mokymo firmas (VPMF), kuriose studentai „dirba" kaip darbuotojai ir kuria panašias struktūras į tas, kokiose baigę studijas dirbs kaip verslininkai.

5. Sukurti pagalbos ir paramos sistemą, padedančią sumažinti iškritusių studentų skaičių, ypač pasirinkusiųjų ištęstines studijas. Studijų programa turi išnagrinėti iškritimo priežastis, kad būtų sukurta reikiama paramos sistema ir pagerintas studijas baigusiųjų skaičius.

6. Būtina reaguoti į studentų poreikius ir gerinti kalbos mokėjimo įgūdžius. Kai kurie dalykai galėtų būti dėstomi anglų kalba visiems šios studijų programos studentams.

7. Skatinti dėstytojus aktyviau dalyvauti tobulinant visą, o ne tik savo dalyko, studijų programą.

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Vertėjos rekvizitai (vardas, pavardė, parašas)