CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT
OF *BACHELOR OF ARTS IN MANAGEMENT* STUDY PROGRAMME
at ALMA MATER EUROPAEA

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Report language – English

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INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	*Management*
Study area	Social Sciences
Study field	Business and Administration Science
Type of the study programme	University studies
Study cycle	First
Study mode (length in years)	Part-time (3)
Volume of the study programme in credits	180
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Bachelor of Management
Date of registration of the study programme	Decision No. 2-201/2008

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the evaluation process

The evaluation of on-going study programme 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, Lithuania (hereafter – SKVC).

The evaluation process consists of the following main stages:

1. self-evaluation and self-evaluation report prepared by Higher Education Institution;
2. visit of the review team to the higher education institution;
3. production of the evaluation report by the review team and its publication;
4. follow-up activities.

This programme evaluation was conducted under the auspices of SKVC for the purpose of helping Alma Mater Europaea to improve further the quality of the study programme.

1.2. General

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

No.	Name of the document
1.	Sample of Theses produced by students who have graduated from the programme
2.	Various questionnaire templates designed to obtain feedback from students and staff as part of the quality assurance process operated by the HEI
3.	Information on the higher education system in the Republic of Slovenia
4.	Academic calendar – timetable for 2014-15 academic year
5.	Templates of awarded academic titles and Diploma Supplements
6.	Minutes of the Quality Committee meetings
7.	Other templates and academic staff curricula vitae

The review was conducted following a request to SKVC from Alma Mater Europaea.. The main purpose of the project was to assist the institution in identifying how the quality of this degree might be enhanced, and also to highlight those existing strengths worthy of reinforcement in the design, delivery and review of the programme. The reported success rate (100%) of graduates in gaining employment reflects well on the relevance of this type of study opportunity.

The evaluation team held a series of meetings with key stakeholders during the site visit which took place on 23-25 February 2015. These stakeholders included the President of the institution, senior management and faculty administration staff, staff members responsible for the preparation of the self-evaluation report, representatives of teaching staff, selected students and graduates, as well as employers of holders of the qualification. The facilities available for staff

and students were assessed, and time was also devoted to a brief familiarisation with students' final-year theses.

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

Alma Mater Europaea – European Centre, Maribor (called hereafter AMEU-ECM) is an independent (non-state) Higher Education Institution providing undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the Republic of Slovenia. Its mission is expressed as "to meet the needs of society, the market and the modern lifestyle". In accordance with this mission "Alma Mater Europaea - ECM - University of Leadership offers a liberal, interactive, methodological and professional approach to higher education. In all our undergraduate and graduate study programs, we implement this approach with an individual focus". The institution is part of an international University project under the auspices of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, based in Salzburg.

The HEI, established in 2007, introduced study programmes in Nursing, Physical Therapy, and Social Gerontology during the initial stages. Such specialisations either were not offered by any University in Slovenia or there was a great demand for graduates. Later, the fields of Management and Archival studies were added.

Currently, the institution comprises five academic departments: Social Gerontology, Nursing, Physical Therapy, Management, and European Studies. The academic structure is more or less in line with typical structures found at HEIs within the European Area of Higher Education i.e. Senate, Board of Management, Academic Assembly, Student Council, etc. Other units supporting academic work include: Study Office, Library, Publishing House, and an International Office. The vision of the management is to achieve international University status by becoming part of a larger University establishment, the Alma Mater Europaea University, which will operate in the inter-Danube region.

Over the last three years, Alma Mater Europaea has achieved significant academic growth in terms of enrolled students, programmes offered, academic organisation and infrastructure. The management team is committed to the institution's mission and to the achievement of the longer-term vision, as outlined in the strategic plan.

The institution currently offers a wide range of study programmes covering areas such as: Social Gerontology, Nursing, Physical Therapy, Management (at Undergraduate degree level), Humanities, Health Sciences, Management and European Business Studies (at Master's degree level); as well as Doctoral (PhD) Studies in the disciplines of Social Gerontology and Humanities. Other Doctoral (PhD) Studies are at the planning stage.

The Bachelor in Management study programme under review has a total enrolment of 40 students, as follows:

Year 1: 10; Year 2: 04; Year 3: 20; Extended Year: 06.

However, there is a general lack of consistency in all documents recording the exact number of registered students on this programme (the above statistics are taken from Annex 9 document supplied to the external review panel). The programme is offered on a part-time study basis over three years. It commenced in October 2009 and attracts a total of 180 ECTS. The language of instruction is Slovenian.

The team responsible for the production of the Self-Evaluation Report (hereafter – SER) consisted of eight members. This group did not contain a student or graduate representative which represents a missed opportunity to obtain feedback from these key stakeholders. The SER, while helpful to the external review panel, would have benefited from a more analytical and critical approach to the internal review process.

1.4. The Review Team

The review team was completed according *Description of experts' recruitment*, approved by order No. 1-01-151 of Acting Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on *23-25 February, 2015*.

1. Mr John Cusack (Team Leader);
2. Prof. dr. Pandelis Ipsilandis;
3. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nerijus Pačėsa;
4. Mr Richards Blese (Students' Representative).

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

Students who complete the programme successfully are conferred with a degree entitled in translation 'Manager of Business Operations'. The study programme leading to this qualification consists of 'Business Management' content according to the wording of the parchment presented to the graduate. However, the SER refers to the qualification awarded as 'Bachelor of Management'. While these apparent discrepancies may be due to a certain inexactitude in translation, it is essential that all references to the programme in the English language contain identical wording.

A more fundamental question for management relates to the most appropriate title which would reflect programme aims and objectives with the greatest accuracy (please see recommendations below). The fact that Alma Mater Europaea uses the term 'Management' as the title for both the Bachelor and the follow-on Master degree programmes could cause some confusion and misunderstanding for current/prospective students and other stakeholders generally. Besides, the common use of 'Management' in the title of both degree programmes fails to make the necessary distinction between the levels of study involved and does not highlight what should be substantive differences in content and levels of the respective curricula.

The programme aims and learning outcomes should be defined more explicitly, with a stronger emphasis on appropriate wording to depict analysis, evaluation and synthesis. Currently, the

focus seems to concentrate mainly on student acquisition of knowledge and the training dimension, with an insufficient emphasis on theoretical aspects and the conceptual framework.

The programme aims and learning outcomes should be clearly identifiable as corresponding to the norm for studies at this level and represent the foundation upon which the student learning experience is based. They should also cascade downwards into manageable and readily understandable subject learning outcomes, also at the appropriate level. The final step in the integrative process is to ensure that all tools used for assessment purposes specify which particular learning outcome(s) is (are) being measured by the instrument used - be it the examination, project, seminar paper, thesis etc.

Different approaches to the determination and writing of learning outcomes have been adopted for individual subjects within the curriculum. Additionally, subject titles are not always fully compatible or consistent with each other or with the syllabus content for which the title represents 'an umbrella'. Examples of subjects where the content is not suggested by the name include ' Information Systems Development' and 'Business Intelligence'.

From discussions between the expert panel members and the various stakeholders, particularly students, it was clear that a significant area for further development relates to the writing and clear understanding of the learning outcomes, followed by their practical application within the programme. It is essential that students are fully aware of what is meant by the learning outcomes concept at both programme and subject levels and also that they are informed of the direct link between each learning outcome and the different elements of the assessment system in use.

2.2. Curriculum design

The programme content is organised over six semesters, each of which yields 30 ECTS, with four elective subjects being responsible for a total of 26 ECTS. The Diploma thesis in the sixth semester has been allocated 16 ECTS.

The curriculum includes many topics normally found on study programmes of this nature. However, there is an imbalance in subject content and a lack of essential study areas typically found in this type of Bachelor degree programme. Additionally, individual syllabuses have been drafted differently and do not appear to follow a standardized approach in terms of the format adopted.

The institution should also consider rationalizing the curriculum in terms of ECTS credits. Having subjects of 7-8 ECTS credits each is not usual for undergraduate programmes – since it is difficult for a single subject to justify the amount of work required for the awarding of 7-8 credits.

While the inclusion of topics related to Leadership Psychology, Business Ethics, Project Assignment I and II, Information Technology, Career Development, Business Law, Business Finance, Quality Engineering etc. is welcome, the insufficient attention to the development of students' creativity, problem-solving capability and entrepreneurial skills should be addressed.

The curriculum is also missing distinct subjects such as: Marketing and Sales (including e-Business/e-Commerce); Human Resource Management; Accountancy; Economics (the subject 'Enterprise Economics' cannot be said to relate fully to a typical Economics syllabus which would also include an international economics dimension, with particular reference to the EU); the Principles/Practice of Business Management/Administration; and elements of Business Strategy. It is also surprising that 'Research in Social Sciences' is listed in the elective rather than the mandatory category.

Discrepancies in subject titles, as presented in English, appear in different documents, for example: Business Finance (as per the programme description) versus Corporate Finance (SER); Commercial Law (programme description) versus Business Law (SER); Decision Support Systems (programme description) versus Decision Making Support Systems (SER); and Fiscal Burdens of Business (programme description) versus Enterprise Taxation (SER).

The syllabus content listed for the majority of subjects is not sufficiently comprehensive or detailed to communicate the range of coverage intended for students. Additionally, syllabuses at this level in higher education often include a percentage weighting for the various topics in order to establish the relative importance of each.

The inclusion of two-four week work experience placements as part of the curriculum is an important positive feature. However, the learning outcomes and distinct features of each placement, including the process in operation to assess the student's performance, requires further elaboration and clarification for relevant stakeholders. For example, it is essential that those students already in work do not just continue with their usual duties and responsibilities in order to fulfil this requirement of the programme.

The overemphasis on technical/computing type subjects within the curriculum should be considered. The range of subjects such as: Business Informatics; Systems Analysis; Business Information Systems; Artificial Intelligence; Management Information Systems; Intelligent Systems; Systems Simulation; and Organizational System Development implies a focus not normally found to the same extent on a Bachelor degree in Management. As well as the fact that the syllabus content of some of these subjects is not in harmony with the title, the priority given to these more technical areas at the expense of core business management subjects is worthy of revision in order to enrich the learning experience for students and promote the relevance and quality of this study programme for the benefit of all stakeholders. The career prospects for graduates should be enhanced by making the changes necessary to achieve the fundamental programme goal, which is stated as "developing a comprehensive study in management". In this respect, the balance struck between theory and practice is of paramount importance. Also, significant are provisions to ensure that the syllabus content adequately reflects the subject title in every case. For example, in the programme description the subject entitled Labour Law is said to include "finding solutions to practical problems in the field of company law." The similarities between the Bachelor degree and the follow-on Master's in Management are evident to the detriment of both, particularly the postgraduate study programme. Such commonality is evident in different ways, including the apparent inclusion of two identical subjects-Artificial Intelligence and Labour Law in the respective curricula.

For some subjects outlined in the programme description there is no indication as to the time allocation for content delivery. Examples in this respect include Career Development, Commercial Law, and Intellectual Property Rights (which is difficult to justify as a full subject within the curriculum). With regard to providing students with the most appropriate curriculum, it would appear that some subjects currently designated as electives should be deemed mandatory and vice versa, while greater detail on the direct teaching methodology used in the classroom could have been provided in the SER.

The list of reading material associated with all subjects varies in length and is substantially out of date, thereby reflecting adversely on the quality of the programme. This factor is mitigated somewhat, however, by the opportunity available for students to avail of the library facilities and resources provided by Maribor University and other sources.

2.3. Teaching staff

Some listings of teaching staff were more comprehensive than others in the different documents presented to the review panel. The nominated subjects assigned to individual teachers were not always consistently presented across the source material consulted by the panel members.

From reading the curricula vitae, the review panel is aware that the academic staff team consists of highly qualified and experienced lecturers, including three full Professors, and two at Associate Professor level out of a cohort of twelve academics. A significant factor, however, is the absence of full-time teaching staff members for this particular programme. The academic staff are also employed by other external institutions/organisations and this militates against the level and extent of formal communication between them and potentially could impact upon their availability for consultation with students. From discussions held with a minority representation of lecturers, the panel concluded that the involvement of teaching staff members in the self-evaluation review process and in syllabus revision has been limited and much less than is desirable. The establishment of a formal structure to define their roles and ensure their effectiveness in such processes is strongly recommended.

Programme management is financially committed to supporting those teaching staff members who are willing to engage in additional research and international mobility exchange programmes (three members have taken part in Erasmus exchange schemes since the inception of the programme). The introduction of a formal staff appraisal scheme would reinforce the value and importance of such activities, serve to identify individual training needs, and extend the current appraisal system which seems to rely to a large extent on the use of student feedback to assess teaching quality. The willingness of the institution to replace particular teachers in the interests of providing the best possible service to students is admirable.

Linked to the quality of the education process is the required involvement of teachers in the provision of recommended study materials and relevant reading associated with the particular subject. In this context, significant variations appear i.e. the subject Business Finance contains a reading list extending to 30 items, while the subject Business Informatics makes reference to just one example of source material (dated 2005).

Further staff training related to areas such as the determination and writing of learning outcomes, the identification of individual student's learning styles, the more widespread use of established case studies, and the introduction of integrated assessment tests to help cement the connection between particular subjects across the curriculum would strengthen the programme and enhance the knowledge, skills and competencies of future graduates.

Further scope for staff research related to the aims and objectives of the programme can be identified. While some lecturers can boast of substantial achievements in this respect, the output produced is either related to complementary study fields (rather than Management) or more relevant to the work and reputation of their principal employers. The benefits and profile of this particular study programme would be enhanced greatly by a stronger involvement of the designated academic staff in the production of scientific papers in peer-reviewed publications and in making presentations at national and international conferences. The importance of student research activity also cannot be overemphasized.

From the programme description, it would appear that the involvement of visiting lecturers in syllabus delivery is limited. In order to strengthen the relationship between theory and practice and reinforce the currency of learning, it is advisable that external experts from industry, commerce and the public service become involved to a greater extent as guest lecturers across the curriculum.

2.4. Facilities and learning resources

Alma Mater Europaea is planning to move inside the coming months to a new headquarters close to the existing premises in Maribor. The relocation will provide valuable additional space for the expansion proposed in the institution's strategic plan. The facilities and resources currently available (including those for students with disabilities and special needs) will be enhanced, while the new premises will add a further infrastructural facility in line with management strategy for the future of the institution.

Currently, the virtual learning environment (VLE) is available online and also offers a single entry point - e-classroom - to students and employees, based upon the following three pillars:

- The latest version of Moodle;
- The Adobe Connect Conference System;
- Interactive SMART boards and SMART podiums.

Teaching staff may also use their own software for the preparation and presentation of lectures or may decide to deploy "a first class software interactive board which is available free of charge".

The video conference system allows students to watch the lectures on their home computers, thereby supporting real-time interaction between the lecturer and the students. The use of interactive Smart boards allows the capture of the lecturers' work on the board or the podium during the lecture. In addition, lectures are taped and uploaded to Moodle for off-line use, so students may both watch in live stream and re-run these at home as often as required. Student

representatives, in discussion with the review panel, emphatically expressed their appreciation of the range of technology available to support their studies, as well as their satisfaction with its operation.

While the documentation presented to the review panel refers to the use of case study materials in the learning process, much scope exists for expansion in this area. Up-to-date, reputable case studies, for example those available from sources such as the Harvard Business School, would enrich the programme by developing further the students' analytical and critical competencies while also strengthening their perception and understanding of the interconnectedness between different business and management functions in the modern organisation. The inclusion of an 'umbrella' Business Administration subject in the curriculum would also help significantly in the achievement of such an outcome.

Reference has already been made to the inadequacy of the recommended textbooks and other reading materials (many are dated in the 1990s). This deficit is particularly significant in the context of subjects of a technical/technological nature. For example, in the subject Business Intelligence, the reading list contains a publication "Getting on board with emerging IT" which is twelve years old, while the Financial Burdens of Businesses (or Business Taxation) subject makes reference to a source entitled "Tax Planning Opportunities", dated 1997.

AMEU-ECM recently made efforts to organize the small library facilities which are located in Maribor and Murska Sobota, so that these would meet academic standards. A library administrator was appointed after being trained, while the services of an external librarian were hired for organizing the library. Students also may use the facilities of the library of the University of Maribor and the library in Ljubljana. Virtually, they are provided with the possibility of electronic access to approximately 10,000 bibliographical units inserted in the COBISS (virtual library services in Slovenia) system. With reference to the teaching and learning materials at the disposal of students, the inadequacy of the recommended textbooks and other reading materials (many are dated in the 1990s) should be addressed. This deficit is particularly significant in the context of subjects of a technical/technological nature.

The institution's guidelines for the production of student theses place appropriate emphasis on the importance of up-to-date research sources, including the necessity for references to international publications. Consequently, there is an onus on members of academic staff to not only revise and update syllabuses (including rationalisation, as appropriate), but also to modernise reading lists. It would be beneficial across all subjects to distinguish between essential and recommended reference material. The reputation of this study programme is likely to be impacted upon adversely as a result of the current situation.

2.5. Study process and students' performance assessment

The admission requirements for students entering the programme appear to be well founded, albeit somewhat unclear in the English translation. Scope is currently allowed for suitably qualified applicants with prior formal learning experience to join at Semester 3 stage (Year 2).

The organisation of the study process is open to further improvement in terms of procedures and related quality standards. Of particular significance is the fact that the actual teaching hours

delivered are significantly below those stated in the programme description for the various subjects. This anomaly, combined with non-obligatory student attendance in class, has implications for the coverage of the curriculum to the extent required in order to achieve the successful attainment of programme aims and learning outcomes. It also raises some concern as to whether the ECTS credits assigned to individual subjects, as well as to the entire programme, can be fully justified.

The desirability of encouraging a fuller student attendance at lectures has been identified as a target in the institution's strategic plan. The review panel readily concurs with such an intention. Another area mentioned in the strategic plan is the necessity to monitor more closely the independent self-study learning activities of students, as well as the workload of academic staff members. While the greater proportion of the total student hours for each subject has been assigned to self-directed learning, a structured system to define and monitor this process has not been implemented. However, steps are in place to ensure appropriate corrective action in this and in many other areas highlighted by the panel and referred to in this report. Similarly, the institution's intention to constantly review and develop the Quality Manual will help to ensure that the quality dimension of this and other study programmes remains in the spotlight.

Greater students' involvement in research at the appropriate level would strengthen their career development prospects upon graduation, as would their participation to a fuller extent in international student exchange programmes under Erasmus and similar schemes.

The set of guidelines available to assist in the production of Diploma theses is highly commendable in terms of the information and level of detail provided. However, it is noted by the external panel that "80% of theses produced by students are research based". This could be interpreted as though it is possible for one student in five to produce a thesis that is not substantially research based. However, the panel is of the opinion that such a perception would incorrectly reflect the current situation where it is assumed that 80% of all theses' content is based on research. The variety of topics chosen by students for thesis purposes reflects well on the scope of the curriculum, and helps to counteract the more limited and confined impression likely to be formed from merely reading the curriculum content.

A wide variety of approaches to student assessment applies across the various subjects. The spectrum extends from a 100% oral examination (Intellectual Property Rights) to a 100% written examination (Business Ethics). A more standardised approach is recommended. While a certain flexibility in the approach adopted towards assessment is understandable, the current system is too disjointed. Potential should be explored for the replacement of some written examinations with practical tests, especially in subjects of a more technical/practical nature. The custom whereby students may request an oral rather than a written examination is worthy of careful monitoring in the interests of equity, fairness, and the maintenance of common assessment standards.

As a general comment, the scope of the different assessment tests does not seem to have been defined, and the allocation of marks reflects a clustering in the 8-10 band. This raises a question as to whether examiners should be more discriminatory in assessing students' work in order to

reflect different levels of performance to the extent which may be necessary. The grading system in use to categorize each student's performance is worthy of revision. For example, the bands listed on the template are uneven and appear to be somewhat illogical, while two different and distinct bands are each described as 'very good'.

As is generally accepted, the introduction of assessment tests of an integrative nature for the purpose of measuring the attainment of associated learning outcomes across more than one subject would enhance the quality of the student learning process. A more widespread use of case studies for assessment purposes should also be promoted, while the expanded use of English in programme delivery would benefit the students in the longer term.

Overall, the study office plays a key role in providing essential student services, and is seen to display a high-level of commitment in dealing with all administrative tasks related to students during their study period. The students receive well-organised support from administration through intense and regular communication. The study office staff also demonstrated their organizational capability during the site visit by supplying any additional documentation or information requested by the review panel.

The spirit of cooperation and team working between students and teachers is a very positive feature of the study process. The interest taken in their progress by teachers was commented upon favourably by students, whose goodwill towards the programme and the institution represents a strong platform for future developments and progress.

2.6. Programme management

The management arrangements in place are generally appropriate and in accordance with similar organisation structures in other higher education institutions.

The decline in student enrolment is a concern for management, which suggests that a systematic review to discover the reasons might be undertaken. Without wishing to prescribe the nature of such a review, it is felt that both the investigative process and the programme profile generally would benefit considerably from the establishment of a Social Partners Forum. Such a committee might meet, say, twice per year in the initial stages and could be representative of alumni, professional bodies, employers, public bodies and organisations, external academics, students, and members of the teaching staff. The ideas emanating from the group should be highly beneficial, not only for maintaining the currency of the curriculum but also for promoting the reputation of the programme, widening the opportunities to obtain practical work placements for students, and sourcing guest lecturers.

The commitment of management towards ensuring the academic integrity of this and all other study programmes is evidenced through the use of appropriate software to detect plagiarism. The availability of a comprehensive, widely available and readily understood anti-plagiarism policy is essential for all higher education institutions wishing to protect their reputation and the credibility of the awards conferred upon students. Management is encouraged to develop and continue to guarantee and reinforce such a policy as the institution expands and develops in future years.

The introduction of a representative programme committee would facilitate the ongoing administration of this programme. Such a group might meet every semester to review problems, discuss progress and make future plans. Its existence would add another dimension to programme management and alleviate some of the pressure on the Head of Department, without in any way lessening the interest or involvement of the person fulfilling this role. The appointment of a designated programme leader may also be worthy of consideration by academic management.

For the future success and even the viability of the programme, specific attention to its promotion amongst prospective students is necessary. While the institution has established an impressive array of formal partnerships since its foundation, it is admitted that comparatively few of these have involved the wider business community. A targeted campaign in this direction could result in the formation of valuable links which would help to both strengthen different aspects of the programme and also serve to make it known to a wider audience.

The following recommendations are intended for consideration by Alma Mater Europaea for the purpose of strengthening this Bachelor degree programme still further. These proposals are not necessarily listed in order of importance. It should also be emphasised that this report has been written as a unified document, which means that suggestions already made and not repeated amongst the recommendations should not be considered as having a lesser importance than those presented below.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following list is not intended to be comprehensive but rather to facilitate Alma Mater Europaea in signposting areas for critical attention as part of the institution's stated and genuine commitment to enriching the programme and to establishing its status, nationally and internationally.

- Benchmarking—the programme would benefit substantially from comparing and contrasting its focus and content with similar-type student opportunities, both within Slovenia and abroad. Such an exercise should include a SWOT analysis.

- The current balance between theory and practice needs to be reviewed to ensure that training does not continue to receive an undue emphasis at the expense of students developing the capacity to analyse problems, identify and evaluate alternatives, and critically appraise issues likely to arise as their careers develop.

- It would be worthwhile to incorporate a mandatory 'Learning to Learn' (or similar subject title) into the curriculum at the very early stage of programme delivery. The content could include topics such as individual learning styles, effective study methods, time management, preliminary research methods, preparation for examinations/ assessment tests, stress management, and the importance of developing a positive attitude as the foundation for successful career planning and implementation. Such a component could then be linked to the 'Career Development' subject provided in Semester 3 (Year 2).

- As referenced earlier in this report, the introduction of essential business and management-based subjects into the curriculum is vital for the future success of the programme. In addition to the vital key subjects already mentioned above, consideration should also be given to the benefits to be gained from a stronger emphasis on Management Accounting, Business Logistics and Office Administration. Similarly, the comparative scarcity of Quantitative Techniques i.e. Mathematics and Statistics content would seem to differentiate this programme from other study opportunities at the same level in higher education. While it might appear that little scope for expanding the curriculum actually exists, the suggested inclusions referred to in this report could be achieved by a substantial rationalisation of existing subject content, together with the elimination of topics currently duplicated to a greater or lesser extent across subjects. Note: The additional subject material suggested for inclusion in this and the other two programmes should be considered as indicative only and not be regarded as comprehensive.

- The introduction of a healthcare management dimension into the curriculum (even as an elective) could prove to be attractive in light of the institution's involvement and strengths in this area. With reference to electives, a shorter menu is suggested to avoid disappointment when certain subjects are selected by students but cannot be provided for economic reasons due to insufficient demand.

- Many higher education institutions source 'real-life' student projects from industry, as well as from public and private organisations. Students, under academic supervision, become involved in such projects and recommend viable, practical solutions. Such an approach helps students to prepare better for the problems, challenges and opportunities likely to be encountered either in their current jobs or in future employment. The review panel commends this type of initiative to programme management.

- While there are limited references to innovation and entrepreneurship as within syllabuses such as Business Anthropology (incidentally, not entitled to full subject status according to one stakeholder whom the panel met) and Enterprise Economics, it is surprising that a stronger emphasis has not been placed on preparing students to establish small enterprises and create their own jobs rather than always seeking suitable employment, particularly when the economic climate may not be favourable. Social Entrepreneurship (and associated projects) should form an important part of any proposed syllabus in this area.

- The introduction of simulated conditions, using appropriate software, could also help to encourage student thinking along entrepreneurial lines, as well as facilitating them in understanding the links between business processes and functions. Local industry might be willing to sponsor such an investment and provide prizes for the best ideas, business plans etc. produced by students, working either individually or in groups. The introduction and application of more recent templates, such as the Business Canvas Model (2010), could complement such developments.

- Ongoing staff development, with a particular emphasis on research-based publications and presentations at national/ international conferences (in addition to the major DIT conference in which Alma Mater Europaea is involved) is worthy of the fullest encouragement and support. Similarly, the involvement of students in research activities extending beyond the production of the Diploma thesis would strengthen their competencies. As a prerequisite, Research Methodology should become a mandatory feature of the curriculum.

- As already mentioned, the grading system used to record the level of student achievement warrants revision and adjustment. For example, the bands in percentage terms used to delineate different levels of performance differ significantly in width, while, as alluded to above, two distinct categories of performance are described as 'very good'.

- All documentation, for whatever purpose and whichever reader, relating to this Bachelor degree should contain consistently presented, identical information as part of a coherent strategy to inform all stakeholders of what may be expected in relation to programme design, content, delivery and review.

- The designation of a programme leader and an associated programme committee (as distinct from the recommended Social Partners Forum) could help to reinforce a unity of

purpose, while allowing senior management currently responsible for such functions to devote more time to the strategic development of this and other study programmes.

- The name of this Bachelor degree could be reviewed. Included in such a discussion might be alternative titles, such as "Bachelor of Business in Business Administration" or "Bachelor of Business in Management".. The use of the term 'Bachelor of Business' rather than 'Bachelor of Arts (provided it is justified and allowable) could be significant in terms of how the programme is perceived by stakeholders. A similar comment could be relevant for postgraduate studies in this area.

- The Commission formed to examine the students' theses might be reconstituted to include external representation from the world of business and commerce. This could contribute to ensuring that theory and practice are integrated effectively in this element of the assessment process.

- The momentum behind current efforts by management to monitor and improve programme quality must be maintained. This will help to ensure that any new developments which emerge in business management theory and practice are incorporated into the teaching and learning process.

- A refreshed programme, along the lines proposed above, could revitalise student demand and provide a stronger foundation for graduates who wish to progress to a follow-on Master's degree opportunity or to advance in their chosen careers.

In conclusion, the panel members wish to record their gratitude to the President and staff of Alma Mater Europaea at all levels for the support and cooperation received throughout the evaluation process. The willingness and commitment of management to build upon and enhance the quality of this study programme was readily discernible. We wish their efforts every success in the years ahead and trust that the graduates from the programme will continue to enjoy rewarding and fulfilling careers.