



## **STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS**

### **VERSLO IR VADYBOS AKADEMIJOS VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

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## **INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. An international team of experts visited the Academy of Management and Business (AMB) on 22-23 November, 2011 to carry out an institutional review. The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education (22 September 2010) and was organised by the Studiju Kokybes Vertinimo Centras (SKVC) and authorised by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania. An external assessment of the Academy's learning resources was provided for the Institutional Review by Lithuania's Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA). The experts have also been presented with the results of the evaluation of learning resources and associated infrastructure conducted by MOSTA and with the evaluation decision of 22 June 2012.

2. The purpose of the institutional review was to ensure pre-requisites for the improvement of performance and the promotion of the culture of quality, also to offer recommendations for the development of the activities of the higher education institution. In particular the review assessed the operation of the institution in the areas of strategic planning; academic studies and life-long learning; research and/or art activities; and the impact on regional and national development. To arrive at its conclusions the Expert Team (the Team) drew on a wide range of documentation provided by the institution, including its self-evaluation report, and met with staff, current students, graduates, the Senate, the Research Centre staff, the self-evaluation group and the external stakeholders. The Team visited the campus of the AMB in central Vilnius.

3. The Team comprised Dr Michael Emery (Chair/Team Leader, UK), Professor Paavo Okko (Team Member, Finland), Dr. Jelena Tamulienė (Student Member, Lithuania), Mr. Saulius Olencevičius (Industrial Team Member, Lithuania), Dr. Ivo Matser (Team Member, the Netherlands), and Dr. Liudvika Leišytė (Secretary of the Team, the Netherlands). On all occasions during the site visit the Team received full cooperation and respect from the Director and staff at the Academy of Management and Business. This made the task of the institutional review so much easier for the Team to undertake.

## **II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION**

4. The Vilnius Management College was established in 2000. Applied research started in 2002. In 2003, two bachelor programmes of Management and Business Administration studies were registered in the register of studies and educational programmes at the Lithuanian Ministry of Science and Higher Education. In 2004, the two programmes were evaluated by a team of international experts led by Dr. Emery and in 2005 an institutional evaluation was carried out. These evaluations provided a list of recommendations on how to improve the study programme and the institution. On 14 October 2009, the name of Academy of Management and Business (AMB) was registered and it was awarded university status. It now offers one single bachelor studies programme in Business Administration. As noted in the self-evaluation report, the main aim of AMB is 'to provide education services for students, to contribute to the development of knowledge and business society with its experience and culture'.

5. The number of AMB academic staff has decreased from 69 in 2006 to 45, a fall of 29%. At the same time there was a significant fall in student numbers. Students in the final year of the programme can choose one of four specialisations: Financial Management, Marketing

Management, Project Management, and Management Information Systems. One overall focus of this programme is to develop students' independence and their abilities in entrepreneurship.

6. A Research Centre was established and recently a substantial Lithuanian Research Council grant was awarded over 4 years. AMB's academic staff have published in a variety of journals as well as authoring books and book chapters. AMB also is involved, to a small extent, in cooperation with local business companies in Lithuania as well, to some extent, as with other higher education institutions in Lithuania and abroad. Again, to a very limited extent, it participates in international mobility programmes.

7. The tuition fee at the AMB for a full time study is 6,200 Litass (1,824 Euros) per year. It offers three different modes of delivery of its programme – 4 years full-time, 5.5-6 years part-time, or 4.5-5 years distance education. It includes daytime classes, evening classes and weekend classes. The tuition fee varies per mode of study. The fees are comparatively high for Lithuania but still less than those in some other EU countries, for example, 10,000 Euros per year in England (3 years for a bachelor programme).

8. AMB is in the private sector and is one of the smallest universities in Lithuania with 321 students (total university students in Lithuania are over 144,000); 8027 university students are in the private sector in Lithuania. On this programme at AMB the female students are 66% and the male students 34%. In terms of equality of admission this compares favourably with the national figures of 76% female and 24% male respectively. The largest Lithuanian university has more than 23,000 students. Student numbers have declined from 549 in 2008-2009 to the current 321. This is a very significant fall, particularly so in the last year of some 26%, that is partly due to Lithuanian demographic trends and the current banking crisis across Europe. The Team hopes that the student numbers will now stabilise and maybe improve in the future.

9. The self-evaluation report was produced by a group of 7 members of staff including business representation and student representation. In this report the paragraphs are numbered, but not in the same manner as in the SKVC Methodological guidelines. It is of readable length of 46 pages with 6 annexes. It contains diagrams, histograms and pie charts and these are clear to the reader. However, various common areas are scattered throughout the report to some extent and this makes for more difficulty for the reader in their search for relevant evidence. Particularly, there is an imbalance across the four main sections of the report with 23 pages devoted to Strategic Management and only 3 pages to the Impact on Regional and National Developments. Usefully at the end of each section, there is an assessment of strengths and weaknesses. It would have been helpful if these were combined in a single SWOT analysis as an annex. There is some repetition across the report and it is not clear from the evidence how many questionnaires were issued to students and how many were collected in.

### **III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT**

10. AMB is a university offering business administration/management and is a private university. The school has an open mind for the students and considers the students as their clients. It is a small university with a strong informal family-type culture and a very informal way of management and communication. It is not a bureaucratic systems. It is a university allowing freedom and self-responsibility for the students as well as for the staff. Also the staff members, with mostly part-time and project-based contracts are highly self- responsible for their individual teaching and research. This means that the implementation of the vision and mission of the school is not an explicitly defined and implemented process because of the largely

informal ways of communication and management and the freedom granted to the lecturers and researchers.

11. The mission and vision are connected to strategic priorities and actions. The strategy itself is missing: there is a vision in learning, not written down, but very consistent in the programme and can be summarised as 'action learning'. The research activities appear as a collection of the research of individual researchers to the Team. The research of the students has a more coherent direction because it is directly connected to the bachelor programme, but this research is more consulting than true academic research with its strong bibliography of source material. For a bachelor programme this is normal and correct, but for a university it is insufficient.

12. The strategic plan is more focused on the ambitions of the school than on the current situation. It is difficult to assess the current feasibility because the poor external orientation in this plan. It is not easy to assess the current situation. There is a strong vision with a 'dream' for the future but this excludes, to a certain degree though not totally, external development and external relevance. Another aspect of the plan is the way of defining results. In a professional organisation it would be wise to define not only expected long term results for 2016, but also short term results more specifically. Thus, the Team believes that AMB's plan could be more concrete in its short term steps and how to achieve the expected results. It also needs more transparent decision-making processes, appointing staff with delegated responsibilities, and "plan, do, check, act" procedures (PDCA) in its management cycle.

13. The outcomes and indicators of the strategic plan are mainly defined in output. It is easy to assess, but it is difficult to assess the quality. It requires stated benchmarks to make it possible to judge in terms of good, satisfied, etc. otherwise it not clear how to assess the relevance of the outcomes. Based on the outcomes is it possible for AMB to have an opinion like 'well done', but it was not clear to the Team whether it is enough compared to competition and views of the stakeholders. The indicators could also be better defined towards the primary process of education and research. In fact the performance indicators are more corporate than useful for the individual academic staff and the administration.

14. As noted before, the strategic plan is more defined in actions than strategy; it could be more strategic; the action orientation gives the impression "that a lot is happening". For the Team, the management of AMB works like a small family business: "we do it strong and we do it together; the client satisfaction is leading and there is no indication that that activities are not happening". In a small organisation this has advantages because in small organisations the function differentiation can be difficult to achieve. But the disadvantage is a too strong internal focus; in fact, client satisfaction is also an internal focus, because they are part of the 'family'. From the formal point of view the system is centralised. The Director/owner is leading in most processes; there is concentration on students, but less so on managing the direction for teachers and researchers. The Team recommends a more formal approach in order to become more transparent and to create a learning environment for improvement on a constant basis. A more formal system would help foster more self- criticism at AMB, as is present at other universities.

15. There is a lot information in the strategic plan that is very relevant for the internal and external stakeholders. But it is not clear to the Team whether this information is indeed the desired information that the internal and external stakeholders require. There is not a process that the external stakeholders have real and actual input to the school. In listening to the stakeholders, the Team deduced that this can be better organised; it is not enough just to send information to the stakeholders. In this young university and a programme focused on entrepreneurship interacting with stakeholders should be improved. It is also important to offer more transparency in the process in managing and meeting expectations.

16. The quality system is focused on the student. The student can assess via the questionnaires and using the intranet but the amount of student evaluations is not clear in the self-evaluation report. There are a lot of informal conversations with the teachers and the administration about the quality of the courses from the perspective of the student. There is no evidence for other criteria to assess quality and to plan the enhancement of the programme. There is not a strong focus on the integration and dissemination of quality across the university. For example: the programme seems coordinated, teachers do not teach the same subjects, but the teachers do not seem to work together in a clearly defined and structured way to develop or improve the programme itself or discuss quality matters. As noted above, the quality management is strongly informal. It is not an assurance of quality; it should be more formalised and transparent in order to call it an assurance of quality system and one that can secure national and international educational standards for the bachelor programme.

17. The AMB approach on quality, as noted, is informal with academic staff focused on their own responsibility. The students and the staff are very satisfied and committed, as indicated in their meetings with the Team, but that is not management. It is a result of the values of a 'family culture'. So the evidence from feedback is not quite sufficient. A lot of universities would wish they had so many satisfied students, but AMB should implement a more rigorous system and encourage students to be critical. The Teams recommend that the current approach needs review and more rigour introduced.

18. In AMB's strategy there is a clear statement about specific culture development. During the site visit the Team discovered that the whole establishment, including management and teaching staff, follow this culture, which they named as democratic and focusing on 'family-type' links. Because of the small number of staff, the Team was told that AMB does not need any formalised process for information flow and reporting. Everything is largely undertaken by open discussions but this is not sufficient for university status and 21<sup>st</sup> century university-level management processes.

19. During the discussions on site, there was evidence that management of AMB has clear vision about what competences teaching staff must meet, develop and transfer to the students. However, the fact is that AMB management is forcing internal, and external, competition for the teaching staff, obliging them to be more competitive on the market and responsible for their own professional development: 'If a teacher fails to meet the qualification requirements, he/she is replaced with a more qualified one.' Teachers are not sharing teaching experience between themselves very widely. From the provided financial accounts the Team saw, and this was confirmed by AMB staff, that investments in developing lecturers' qualifications are very limited indeed.

20. The learning quality process is largely controlled by AMB administration. To evaluate the quality of the processes, which are claimed to be open, democratic and transparent, a number of quests are undertaken. The opinion of students, graduates and other stake-holders are important to a certain extent and can impact on lecturers' performance evaluation. The best staff are nominated to financial and other motivational and incentive rewards. Some teachers follow trends and try to develop themselves in order to be ready for increasing educational requirements and challenges. Substitution is always available in case one lecturer is not present. This is good risk reduction for the academy in case of lost competences and keeping students busy in tight timetables. On the other hand, there is a question as to whether one lecturer can completely substitute for another across several fields and courses. Some teaching staff also have their own view on assessing students' knowledge and have their own individual way and criteria for their assessment of student work, for example, in deciding upon the overall percentage of total marks

allowed for coursework, final examination, attendance and participation. The Team recommend a review of the overall AMB procedures for assessing student work and that a more formal and consistent process is implemented applicable to all staff and all courses and the students informed. A handbook on assessment would be useful. Benchmarking procedures with other universities for the assessment of student work would help such a review. Other universities include assessment details in their staff and student handbooks.

21. The effectiveness of the resources and infrastructure management is based, according to the self-evaluation report, on AMB's private status. During the site visit and discussions with participants, the Team found this to be true, and infrastructure resources are used in a cost-effective way. There are visible efforts to provide suitable conditions for the students to study including use of the library and IT equipment. AMB has only seven classrooms (as stated in AMB's self-evaluation report and viewed by the Team on the site visit), which are fully equipped for the lectures. They are used in different modes and this allows for the teaching to take place in the small number of rooms. All the premises are leased, currently at the market rate accounting for some 11% of AMB's expenditures, and apparently there may be opportunities in the future to obtain larger premises.

22. The library is small. The Team evidenced quite limited numbers of new and modern books. No hard copies of international magazines, or publications are present, such as the 'Financial Times'. The main problem for supporting students' studies is that there is no access to the international databases for students, like EBSCO and similar. This has to be seriously reviewed as international databases are normally available for business students in all university libraries.

23. The number of students has fallen significantly during recent years and particularly so in the last year. This puts AMB in a risky financial situation because fees income is the major input into AMB, being 98.7% of income in 2010. During the discussions the Team found that the management has a vision to have more income from consultations projects. The Senate stated to the Team that it had a slightly different vision from this and suggested that the numbers of students might be recovered in time; however, no actual plans as to how to attain the increased student numbers were presented to the Team at the time of the site visit. The Team recommends that a major student recruitment drive is undertaken to at least maintain current student numbers and, hopefully, to increase them.

24. AMB, as a private institution, aims to assure that funds are used rationally and effectively. According to the self-evaluation report, all funds are allocated for the implementation of AMB's aims and plans. The biggest part of budget is allocated for staff salaries and research activities, being 81% in 2010. This is in line with AMB strategy. Currently, AMB is financially viable. It also has reserves. In future, however, its financial viability will be tested if the student enrolments continue to fall.

25. The Team found that academic ethics, including plagiarism, and moral standards are introduced to students somewhat ad hoc. The dialogue is largely based on face-to-face discussions. The Team found a lack of significant official procedures; students, administration and teachers all presented different views on this to the Team; each group had a personal opinion on how to prevent students cheating and any other academic and social misbehavior. The Team recommends that more formal and consistent procedures are put in place in respect of plagiarism and this is included within a student handbook, as is common at virtually all universities.

***Judgement on the area: Strategic Management is given a negative evaluation***

#### **IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING**

26. AMB is a young organization having quite recently been upgraded to be a university level institution. The AMB's vision is to be a modern non-state university type business school, which organises studies for students willing to create their welfare independently. Important aims of AMB are to provide education for students, to contribute to the development of knowledge and the business society with its experience and culture. The aim of the study programme is to educate business bachelors that are able to tackle the business environment and technological changes as well as to meet the requirements of the changing labour market. The graduates are expected to work in an independent business environment, business partnership or investment, or to go on to further studies. The programme also aims also at developing creative and entrepreneurial personalities.

27. The Division of Studies organizes the bachelor programme of Business Administration, which is the sole degree programme at AMB. It is a first cycle degree programme containing full-time studies of 4 years (160 credits/240 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credits). There is a transition to the ECTS credit system. In a case of part-time studies the length of studies may vary from 5 to 6 years. As noted in the Introduction, the bachelor programme offers four different specialisations: Financial Management, Marketing Management, Project Management, and Management Information Systems. These are all typical areas and quite traditional. Some innovation might prove beneficial. The study programme is based on the strategy of AMB, and it is reflecting some principles of the EHEA (European Higher Education Area) though it is a four year programme rather than three years.

28. The structure of the programme is not described in details in the self-evaluation report. During the site visit more detailed information was received by the Team. The first year of studies is dedicated for the general subjects related to business studies and business fundamentals. Those studies are to a large extent obligatory to each student. After acquiring some experience during the practice, students can choose the specialization for their studies during the final year. A part of studies, especially self-education and the graduate work, are allocated according to the needs of the students and to the labour market.

29. Information on student satisfaction with teachers and with teaching and learning facilities is collected through questionnaires. Learning outcomes of the study programme are described following Dublin descriptors lists. According to experiences of the graduates and the students, they are encouraged to give feedback and their feedback is considered. In discussions with the Team, students appeared satisfied with their close contacts with their teachers and the supportive study atmosphere at AMB; they indicated to the Team that these are an important feature of their education. However, in the best cases, other universities normally produce a useful detailed student handbook indicating all aspects of academic and social support provided.

30. The academic staffing establishment is currently 45 teachers with 58 % of them are holding a scientific degree. The share of teachers having appointments as professor/associate professor is 18 %. More than half of the academic staff are adjunct members who are employed at other institutions. Even if many have been teaching for a long time at AMB, the full-time permanent teaching staff is very limited. It creates a severe pressure on the full-time teaching staff and limitation for human resources development. AMB aims at a flexible staff recruitment process but without a formalised screening process. The Team recommends that the recruitment be more structured and transparent in spite of a small organisation. It is good practice if applicants provide an example of their teaching before an appointment is made. Regular staff appraisal and skills development are needed. There are some concrete incentives for good teaching: according



to the strategy of AMB teachers are expected to take part into research activities too. Five teachers are doctoral students at other universities.

31. AMB organises the studies in different modes in order to serve students working during their studies. This also serves life-long learning. Teaching is organized in the daytime, evenings, weekends, and in session/periods. This helps students to combine their work and studies. It is even possible to study according to an individual programme. Distance learning is used, too, and in line with current educational thinking AMB may wish to extent this method of teaching. The AMB bachelor programme might be actually used as a way of life-long learning, and there are special arrangements for life-long learning, like an opportunity to take only some courses.

32. Possible construction of a master programme (the Strategic Plan for 2012-2016) might also be a way of developing the life-long learning. This has also been mooted in the past but has not progressed for a variety of reasons. This has now been discussed in 2011 by the Senate of AMB at recent meetings. At the moment there is no separate executive education-type programme, but the bachelor degree programme has actually some features for executive and life-long learning studies.

33. AMB keeps contacts with some graduates, but an actual concrete alumni organisation is at the moment only in the Strategic Plan for 2012-16. AMB collects follow-up information from the labour market via questionnaires. The students upon graduating are generally employed (many are already employed in a range of jobs during their studies) and their opinion on the relevance of their studies to their work is reasonable to a degree. There are some areas, for example, knowledge of the work with foreign markets, with which they are not entirely satisfied. More organised feedback from the social partners and from the graduates is important for programme enhancement and improvement and is strongly recommended by the Team.

34. Internationalisation of studies and research is one of the four main aims of AMB. International exchange of student and teachers is supported in some ways by AMB, for example, Erasmus activities. The transition to the ECTS credit system is a part of the strategy. The actual numbers of exchange, both for teachers and students, are currently very low indeed. There is a large joint programme with foreign universities and polytechnics (RIBA), which is supposed to increase this activity and integrate AMB more to the EHEA. The Team recommends that much more direct and regular contact is required to promote AMB as having an international attitude and programme; this should be supported by formal meetings with prospective partners abroad and minuted for the record. To attain any success, it is essential that the use of English and occasionally other international languages are fully embedded at AMB with both staff and students. Much practice is required to obtain proficiency orally and verbally.

***Judgement on the area: Academic Studies and Life-Long Learning is given a negative evaluation.***

## **V. RESEARCH ACTIVITIES**

35. As a young academic institution AMB is in urgent need for developing its research activities with more research articles published in refereed journals. Its first priority in the 2004-2010 strategic plan has been to develop fundamental and applied research. The same target is also the first priority in the AMB Strategic Plan for 2012-2016. In order to achieve this goal AMB has been improving its coordination of its scientific research. The main concrete action was establishing of the AMB Research Centre in 2000. The objective of the Research Centre has been to develop theoretical and applied research by involving active researchers and students in scientific activities. The Research Centre creates research groups composed of teachers and

project researchers. AMB does not have at the moment any master studies programmes or a doctoral programme with their accompanying research activity, as many other universities have.

36. The strategy of the Academy resulted in a transition from a teaching college to a university-level business school. Due to the limited resources and without master or doctoral education the task is difficult. In order to reach the targeted scientific level the Research Centre is concentrating on certain fields of business studies research. Its major achievements are related to the development of computational intelligence solutions and their applications in analysing financial capital trends. Other research topics include the penetration of Internet, topics of business ethics, Lithuanian firms in the EU and global competition, pricing in the energy market, and the systems of automatic translation. The Research Centre has created a specific translation robot. These topics reflect staff research interests and produce some original science results, but these are not necessarily near to the core areas of AMB's curriculum. This needs reviewing in order that more research activities directly support the curriculum and its future development.

37. According to the strategy of AMB research is targeted both to serve both teaching at AMB and to create relevant results for Lithuanian enterprises. The research plan of the Research Centre tries to combine different topics in a way that they are complementary with each other and they support Lithuanian business activities. Relevance of the results for aiding the economy is emphasised. The themes of graduate works of the students are seen as an important part of the strategy. As noted, they are often relevant for the company involved but might be applied much more widely. This last target is limited by the fact that students' final theses are indeed mainly made specifically in cooperation with one firm. The theses are in Lithuanian with an English abstract. Consideration might be given to producing the theses in English also, or occasionally in another widely-used international language, to help with greater internationalism.

38. For a small unit both national and international cooperation is important. According to the principles of the ERA (European Research Area) the Research Centre prepares some joint research projects with some universities or polytechnics in Europe and in USA. Research is applied and business partners have a role in the research activities to a certain extent. Partner firms are occasionally foreign. There are a few international research visitors at AMB over time. Visiting international researchers also teach for a period during their visits, and scientific cooperation is sometimes combined with these visits. Overall, this area is somewhat limited and the Team recommends its significant expansion when more funding is available at AMB.

39. The output of research work is not very extensive as evidenced by a low number of publications in total with 9 ISI-articles in 2008-2011, AMB has its own working paper series and it is organising further the publication of books. However, only one monograph is planned for 2012-2016. The Team acknowledges that the Research Centre has been invited to participate in the future in the European research project FuturICT. Seminars are seen as an important way of disseminating research results. As an evidence of the scientific quality AMB has recently received a grant for a 4-year project from the Research Council of Lithuania on the 'Creation of Oscillation based Paradigm for Simulation of Social Sciences Behaviour'. The Team points out that the scientific output is a critical aspect of any university and consequently AMB needs to review its research activities in this respect including the provision of an effective incentive scheme for successful staff research activity. It also should disaggregate consultancy and research to allow increased focus on each one separately.

***Judgement on the area: Research and Art is given a negative evaluation***

## VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

40. The mission and strategic documents describes what kind of impact AMB has on the national and regional society. But there appears no real involvement in local and international educational activities, except for some research projects. Even these projects are not always directly related to the mission of the AMB, but as mentioned above they are related to real practice problem-solving in business companies and some have been implemented.

41. AMB publishes books and periodic publications, which are related to AMB's activities. However, there is no clear qualitative evaluation procedure of those publications. Students' final theses and scientific research are related to practical business cases. As noted, these final theses are not in English, or any other international, language. The abstract, however, is in English. At university level, it is appropriate that final theses are produced in English to support the economy's liaison with the EU and enhance student mobility within the EU. Since year 2005 the AMB has published 14 books (2011 - 0, 2010 - 1), 67 scientific publications (2011 - 2, 2010 - 4) and 47 conspectus (no data as to time). All of them are available not just for the internal use, but also for society.

42. The personnel of AMB have, as noted, created a web-based translation robot ([www.vvam.lt](http://www.vvam.lt)) based on computational intelligence methods. It is free to use and publicly accessible. But the Team was not able to find any evidence of international activities awarded to AMB, including studies or social activities.

43. The AMB bachelor programme is in line with national social needs, but not national economic needs. According to the Ministry of Education and Science and Lithuanian Labour Exchange, currently there are too many experts in the economics (social sciences) field, as indeed in some other European countries at the moment. Other universities in Lithuania have similar management programmes. AMB may wish to review its policy in this respect and innovate and vitalise its bachelor programme.

44. Cooperation with social partners and other educational institutions are very limited. Therefore, the Team strongly recommends AMB to be more active in cooperation with local international partners. Currently there are several important international companies in Vilnius and AMB should consider making pro-active contact with them to improve its internationalism. Students of AMB have the opportunity to be close to real businesses including international companies and do practical research related to business challenges. The topics of students' final theses are generally real and practically useful. A well-developed alumni association would help ensure that this continues by assisting with finding placements for students on this programme and also advising on curricular matters.

45. Some lecturers of AMB participate in community-based organisations that are not directly related to their professional experience, but more as personal hobbies. But a few of these are international and support the development of international relations. A positive attitude of some academic staff to environmental issues is exemplified with the printing of documents on both sides of the paper, and the participation in the annual well-known ecological project "Darom". However, the Team found little activity on scientific voluntary projects like involvement in academic conferences, presentations at conferences, and AMB publicity. These aspects need urgent consideration as they are typical for aiding university status, prestige, and student recruitment and the Team recommends such action.

*Judgement on the area: Impact on Regional and National Development is given a negative evaluation.*

## **VII. BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES (POSITIVE FEATURES) AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Strategic Planning**

#### Positive Features:

- The relationships between the staff and the students are good; AMB has a serving attitude and understanding towards the students.
- Most staff seen by the Team appeared committed to the learning process of the students.
- The strategic planning enables for the design of the bachelor programme to give to students the possibility to study, to work and to practice their entrepreneurial skills.
- AMB has a cost-effective use of material resources and classrooms with bachelor programme classes timetabled across the daytime, evenings, and weekends.
- Teaching staff share a common vision of AMB.
- AMB has a flexible and non-bureaucratic attitude to problem solving; in the past, it has worked for a time as a 'family-type' business.
- There is an empathetic approach by staff to environmental issues.

#### Recommendations:

- AMB has to expand and improve its external orientation towards business, society, and also the competition/colleague-institutions; there needs to be a positive and proactive application to achieve this. AMB needs to benchmark its strategic operations against those at other appropriate national and international universities.
- It is important to support more critical thinking for the students and the staff. There is currently a strong focus on 'harmony' across the campus that does not necessarily motivate staff nor students to improve. There should be more challenge and rigour overall both for staff and students to in order to maintain university-status levels of academic study and research and improve.
- It is essential to improve the transparency of the decision-making processes at AMB and the quality improvement processes. It would be wise to better formalise the management processes, to incorporate more fully the staff, and also the students and external social partners. AMB should design a more formal, transparent, and consistently applied quality system within an AMB regulatory framework and, in particular, its procedures for programme development and review and the accompanying student assessment regime.
- There needs to be a greater staff team work approach overall with clearly defined and delegated responsibilities. This again would improve the transparency of the strategic planning and management of AMB. Information and decisions taken would be made available both across the university and also upwards to the Senate and the Directorate.
- Strategically, AMB should develop a concrete vision on education and research. It will give the staff more direction and it makes it easier to manage and to define any necessary performance indicators.
- More formal processes are needed to develop lecturing skills and lecturers' qualifications at AMB.

- Evaluation targets and criteria for the teaching staff must be settled. The formalisation of human resources management is needed, including the revision of teaching staff employment contracts.
- More formalisation of student assessment of their work by teaching staff is required; some staff currently are applying different criteria in assessing student work. A detailed handbook setting out assessment criteria would be useful for both students and staff. Benchmarking with other national and international universities might prove helpful to AMB.
- The update of the library is strongly recommended by the Expert Team. More up-to-date electronic international databases are required in the library to support the students in their bachelor business administration programme. Additionally, some collaboration with other university libraries might be explored.
- There should be a pro-active drive to recruit more students. Student fees provide 98.7% of AMB's income, thus it is clearly important that student numbers do not fall further. AMB needs to monitor carefully its student numbers and recruitment data and take more positive action when appropriate.
- More formal, effective and consistent procedures are required to prevent plagiarism. Currently, teaching staff have individual approaches to deal with plagiarism as students and staff testified to the Team.

## **Academic studies and life-long learning**

### Positive Features

- Good relations between teachers and students have created an interactive learning environment.
- The student-driven structure for different modes of studies provides a range of possibilities for the bachelor studies students – daytime, evening, weekends – and this caters for students from different backgrounds.
- As noted, teaching staff in the best cases, though not in all cases as indicated by some student comments to the Team, are committed to their teaching and student learning.

### Recommendations

- AMB has over-reliance on its part-time staff and needs to strengthen its long term teaching staff; with the large number of part-time staff there needs to be a greater connection beyond their contracted hours between themselves and AMB in order to provide the effective operation of the Business Administration programme and the effective development of its students. This was a recommendation 7 years ago in the 2004 programmes evaluation.
- The bachelor programme covers traditional curricular areas; innovatory development is needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and today's changing economies. A high level of challenge and critical thinking should be incorporated. This might also attract more students seeking modern university-level studies with good standards.
- AMB is advised to benchmark its bachelor programme against those at other national and international key universities.
- Greater internationalisation of the study programme is needed, as well as increasing of English language teaching in the bachelor programme. More staff and student mobility would be advantageous here. Lithuania is an EU member state with its use of English

particularly. This need was noted by AMB itself in its self-evaluation report and also recommended by experts 7 years ago.

- Teaching skills development of the faculty should be promoted and enhanced by regular organised activities. This is particularly important for new staff entering teaching at AMB. Regular Staff appraisal should be introduced to advise staff on their teaching abilities, as at other universities nationally and internationally. This is in addition to using student questionnaires. Some students indicated to the Team that teaching methodology is too often static and less invigorating and communication between staff and students is poor. This requires reviewing by AMB.
- A Student Handbook is normally provided at other universities. AMB should consider this and produce one containing full details of the academic and social support available to the students at AMB.

## **Research activities**

### Positive Features

- There is a concentration on a relevance-based approach in applied research at AMB.
- The research strategy attempts, but to a limited extent only, to combine research and teaching in order to achieve synergic efficiency with, in the best instances, some research activity feeding into teaching in the classroom.

### Recommendations

- The target level of research output should be raised with more articles presented to refereed journals for publication.
- Consultancy and academic research should be disaggregated to allow an increased focus on each one.
- Research topics should relate more directly to the staff teaching and the core curriculum and aid future curricular development, as is required in many other European universities. Combining research and teaching would produce synergic efficiency with the one motivating and enlightening the other.
- AMB needs a larger research staff with increased international interests and cooperation. This would help raise the profile of AMB both nationally and internationally.
- A strategy for international scientific publishing with a clear incentive structure for the researchers is needed.
- Student research could be more widely applied rather than for one specific business. This would enhance AMB's impact across the economy.
- Student theses are produced in Lithuanian with an abstract in English. The Team suggests that some consideration might be given to the students to attempt to produce a copy of their theses in English as well as in Lithuanian. This would mean more internationalism generally at AMB and for the students there would be more interaction with staff and with research activity in English to assist this process. If appropriate, another widely-used international language might be considered.

## **Impact on regional and national development**

## Positive Features

- The projects of the bachelor students are generally related to practical business issues of individual businesses. This reflects the aims of the programme in respect of aiding regional and national development to a certain extent.
- The staff research projects are also often related to practical problem-solving for businesses and some have been implemented and also implemented internationally to a limited extent.

## Recommendations

- The cooperation with other universities, including competitors, has to be expanded by AMB. This would lead to a greater impact on the region and also nationally and internationally.
- Social activity of AMB staff is quite limited, therefore it has to be developed and expanded. This should include organising scientific/management/entrepreneurial conferences in Vilnius, in order to capture a much wider client group and to improve and enhance the visibility of AMB.
- An active alumni association needs to be established in Vilnius and in Lithuania, in order to advise current students on career and job opportunities, to assist with practice places, to attract more students to the programme, to advise on appropriate curricular development, and also again to improve the visibility of AMB.
- In order to impact on overseas companies now operating in Vilnius and Lithuania, a much wider use of English in particular, or if appropriate other widely-used international languages, is needed at AMB. This would help staff and students to more easily make contact and impact with these international businesses on a regular basis. Again, this would improve the visibility of AMB regionally, nationally, and internationally and help develop university standing for AMB in Lithuania and abroad.
- AMB should innovate and vitalise its bachelor programme in order to provide a wider range of career opportunities for its students and to enhance AMB's impact regionally and nationally.

Some of the recommendations listed above were advocated in the 2004 evaluation report and the Team finds only limited improvement since that time. In accordance with SKVC's 'Methodology for Conducting Review in Higher Education Institutions and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania's 'Procedures for the External Review of Higher Education Institutions', the Team advocates the monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations and a further external review in 2 years time. The Team believes such measures are warranted if AMB is to maintain and continue with its university status.

## VIII. JUDGEMENT

The Academy of Business and Management is given a **negative** evaluation.

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## ANNEX 1: ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS RESPONSE TO THE REVIEW REPORT

After getting acquainted with the evaluation conclusions the AMB team is broadly in agreement and is grateful for the experts for their thorough work and valuable recommendations. At the same time we provide our comments:

1. We think that the preparation of the final bachelor theses of the AMB in English or other foreign language is purposeful when the study programme is conducted in that language. Moreover, the preparation procedures of the final theses are fine tuned by the national law.
2. Seeking the higher research results, the AMB does not associate its research only with the currently conducted study programme but expands it into the social science field and interdisciplinary relations with other sciences which allows getting more original science results. For the young and small university 9 ISI publications and a monograph in the social science field during the last three years it is a very good result compared to Lithuanian wide. Currently the AMB Research Centre is invited to participate in the national study group which consists of five groups from Lithuania from three universities (VU, VGTU, and AMB) in the European research project FuturICT.
3. The mistake in section 21 of the institutional review report has been observed which states that “AMB has only seven classrooms, which are fully equipped for the lectures”. AMB disposes of nine classrooms.