



## OVERVIEW REPORT FOR ACCOUNTING STUDY FIELD

*Year of Evaluation: 2017*

### INTRODUCTION

This report is based on the external quality evaluation of the following three study programmes in the study field of Accounting in Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions:

1. Lithuania Business University of Applied Sciences: Accounting (Bachelor Programme)
2. Šiauliai State College: Accounting (Bachelor Programme)
3. Panevėžys College: Accounting (Bachelor Programme)
4. Utena College Accounting (Bachelor Programme)
5. Kaunas College Accounting (Bachelor Programme)
6. Marijampole College Accounting (Bachelor Programme)
7. Vilnius University Accounting and Audit (Master Programme)

The external evaluations were organised by the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC).

The external evaluations were performed according to the evaluation areas and criteria: (1) Programme aims and learning outcomes, (2) Curriculum design, (3) Teaching staff, (4) Facilities and learning resources, (5) Study process and students' performance assessment, and (6) Programme management.

Comprehensive external evaluation reports including strengths and weaknesses and concluding with some recommendations were prepared for each evaluated programme and included evaluation marks. This overview focuses on the main findings of the external evaluation of the Accounting study field from a general point of view.

All Bachelor programmes received a positive evaluation. Vilnius University Accounting and Audit (Master Programme), therefore statements below are not applicable to this particular Programme, as all positive and negative aspects are described in details in the final report of the experts' panel.

## **OVERVIEW BY EVALUATION AREAS**

A major overall strength in Lithuanian accounting education is the openness to new challenges and rapid development in certain cases. Another strong overall feature is the adjustment of the study programmes to the local or regional demands. One major overall weakness nevertheless is that the accounting programmes do not have a uniform, internationally acknowledged basement of teaching of the most important (core) courses. A second weakness concerns English language skills: Nowadays in the current highly globalized financial and educational world it seems odd that the accounting study programmes include only a few courses held in English. In consequence it will be harder to join the internationalization of the education process within EU structures (both to send students and to accept foreign students or to participate in any other forms of internationalization). In this context it should also be outlined that the general knowledge of both academic staff and students needs to be strengthened and improved and definitely merits more attention from HEIs.

### **(1) Programme aims and learning outcomes**

The programme aims and learning outcomes of the six Bachelor study programmes are mostly clear; they are publicly announced and meet the needs of the labour market. The aims and intended learning outcomes of the study programmes correspond with the mission and operational objectives of the Colleges. They are conforming to the Descriptor of the study field of accounting and the descriptors for bachelor studies.

### **(2) Curriculum design**

The curriculums of the six Bachelor SP are in line with all legal requirements. The study subjects and modules are mostly logically structured and spread evenly between semesters and years. Although the content and methods of the subjects are mostly appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, the modules are not fully focused on the learning outcomes. Some courses of the study programmes could be replaced by more accounting related courses. Only a few textbooks in English languages are used as literature in the courses, some books are outdated and need to be renewed.

### **(3) Teaching staff**

The lecturers of the study programmes are generally well prepared, motivated and committed to the SP. The qualification of the teaching staff is adequate and is constantly monitored in the faculties. The language capacity of faculty is still relatively low. Language capability of lecturers has to be improved in any accounting course and students also must learn languages more intensively (see general remarks).

### **(4) Facilities and learning resources**

All reviewed HEIs are generally well equipped with adequate educational space and technology. Facilities and material resources are developed continuously. Accounting software used varies from institution to institution, but something is present in all cases, which is very positive. International textbooks and databases are partly used for education in some HEI. They are mostly accessible and in general adequate. However, more articles published in international journals on accounting topics could be presented in the courses' descriptions.

### **(5) Study process and students' performance assessment**

Academic support and grading is fair in all three institutions. International relationships are not yet utilized properly: Erasmus exchange possibilities are seldom used by students in most of the HEI. The reasons mentioned were: part-time lifestyle of students, language capabilities and financial difficulties as well. Erasmus exchange of professors and lecturers is more intensive, but it is also far from the optimal level. Overall, requirements for admission of the studies are mostly well founded, while the decreasing number of students remains the main issue for improvement in the study programmes.

#### **(6) Programme management**

Overall, Programme's management should be more proactive and efficient in identifying issues and areas for improvement (as non accounting-topics) and implementing relevant solutions. Typical areas, such as mismatches between the aims of a Study Programme and the outcomes, specialisations offered in the Programme, proactive implementation and delivery of courses in English and a more systemic usage of anti-plagiarism software for all written papers might indicate that some Programme management processes on both strategic and tactical level lack focus and/or efficiency. Relationships with stakeholders of the programmes are vary from HEI to HEI. There are generally no regular meetings with graduates and social partners, nevertheless these groups did express repeatedly their willingness to advise and support the development of educational programmes. All Study Programmes would benefit, however, from a co-operation with graduates and social partners on a more strategic level, such as, for example, identifying future needs of the businesses for accounting specialists and positioning and shaping the Programme accordingly.

### **MAIN STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE ACCOUNTING STUDY FIELD**

- **Strategic recommendations at institutional level (for Higher Education Institutions):**
- To verify retrospectively the fulfillment of each specified learning outcome in individual courses the review team recommends to establish and implement a formalized procedure. The fulfillment could be checked by analyzing the attainability of learning outcomes in all the courses offered in a study programme. All written and oral exams should be considered to verify if the learning outcomes are achieved. This should be done by an independent committee (external experts) or another independent body on Faculty or HEI level.
- Some modules in the SP are not fully accounting related and the review team strongly recommend focusing them more on accounting related courses. Specialisation modules are not fully integrated in the SP's.
- Quality management systems need to be further developed, with a more regular and systematic work, by a more formal cooperation with the social partners.
- International aspect of the programmes should be strengthened by offering more courses in English, improving the general knowledge of English of both academic staff and students, incoming and outgoing academic mobility of academic staff and students should be encouraged.
  
- **Strategic recommendations at national level (for the Ministry of Education and Science):**
- Some further guidance should be provided to the HEI: The core modules of programmes in the field of accounting have to be internationalized

- and standardized according to global standards, preserving local, national and regional specialities.
- More explanation in the field of preparation of LOs according to the Descriptor should be provided to HEIs.
  - Regarding decreasing number of students international competitiveness of graduates and attractiveness of the accounting programmes could be increased by the proposed measures.

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