



VILNIAUS VERSLO KOLEGIJOS

vadybos ir verslo administravimo krypties
verslo vadybos studijų programos
išorinio išsamiojo

VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

Vilnius Business College

study field of management and business administration
external assessment of
business management study programme

Final Report

Grupės vadovas:
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Profile of Management and Business Administration Study Programmes

Title of study programme	Business Management
State code	65303S134
Kind of study	Non-university
Mode of study¹ (duration in years)	F (3), PX (3,5)
Volume of study programme in credits	120
Degree and (or) professional qualification to be awarded	Manager
Programme registration date, order No.	2001 08 31 Nr. 1254

1 **F** – Full-time; **PE** – Part-time (Evening); **PX** – Part-time (Extramural).

1. Introduction

The self-assessment report (SAR) was produced in September 2003 for one non-university programme in Management and Business Administration. The SAR was produced by a self-assessment group comprising the Head of Vilnius Business College (VBC), staff and student representation.

The site visit was on Thursday March 3, 2005. The visiting experts comprised: professor J Ljung (sub-group leader), professor A Ainamo, professor W Karten, professor D Goss and professor V Pranulis.

The programme is managed by VBC, a non-university educational institution. The Management and Business Administration Study Programme had been evaluated and approved by experts and external assessment groups from the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The programme started 2001 with 60 students. The programme is split into full-time and part-time modes. The SAR was produced over two months in 2003, with each member of the self-assessment group allocated an aspect of the SAR. The SAR is informative and self-critical; it provided a sound start to the site visit. It is well produced overall with many relevant charts and tables.

2. Aims and goals of the Study Programmes

The aim of the non-university *Business Administration and Management* programme is to provide high quality business management education preparing specialists for professional activity, to carry out applied research and other curriculum activities aimed at satisfying the demand of the country and regional labour markets.

The aims and goals relate appropriately to these labour markets, the interests of employers, and the interests of students. The goals relate directly to the aims of the programmes and Vilnius Business College seems able to implement the goals within the set time limits for the two study strands: marketing management and Finance management.

Vilnius Business College might consider making reference to the EU standards and requirements in its documentation.

After finishing the college with a diploma the students can apply for a bachelors degree at a university taking an additional 2 years. Fifteen of 35 students in the last year have continued their studies at university. Vilnius Business College co-operates with polytechnic colleges in Finland, England and Poland, which gives students a chance to receive a bachelors degree with one extra year.

3. Analysis of the Programme

3.1. Study programme *Business Management (non-university studies)*

3.1.1 Structure, contents and study methods

The full-time studies are for 3 years and part-time for 3,5 years. Three departments at Vilnius Business College are responsible for the courses: Department of Foreign Languages, Department of Economics and Business Administration; and IT Department. The students have

to be fluent in at least one foreign language. According to course descriptions and teachers' accounts, practical and theoretical training meet the necessary vocational profile. Weekday classes are scheduled over four days from 8.30 to 14.00. Part-time studies (Saturdays) are scheduled from 8.30 to 16.00. Lectures, workshops are used for teaching and students meet representatives from companies and business partners.

At the end of every subject course there is either a test credit or an examination. Test credits build up during the course. At the end of the study period there is a final thesis, assessed by the Qualification Board and reviewers appointed by the head of department.

The SAR says that 87% of the college graduates successfully gain employment or become self-employed. Practice periods and internships support vocational training and appear helpful in securing employment.

3.1.2 Execution of studies and support for students

Library resources seem to be rather limited as are subscriptions to periodicals. Computer facilities (2003) were 20 computers, implying four students to one computer. Part-time students have their classroom at Sarūnas hotel from September 2003. New premises are under construction during spring 2005 and the poor condition of the existing building will hopefully be solved quite soon. The students pay for full-time studies 4300 LTL and for part time studies 2800 LTL per year. Students are given the opportunity to provide feedback through questionnaires, although this does not seem to be fully systematised for each subject; nevertheless students appeared to be happy that they could make their views known and that the college would respond. Although the college claims that it makes use of international teachers, the students questioned by the experts seemed not to think this was so (however, it was discovered that at least one such teacher is employed). Overall staff-student relationships seemed to be generally good, although the high proportion of part-time staff gave the impression that there may be a question about complete commitment to the college.

3.1.3 Variation in the number of students

The total number of students in full-time studies in 2001 was 60 and in 2002, 89 students (58 full-time). The number of students accepted for studies in 2003 was 72 (34 full-time). In 2004 there were 67 students accepted (25 full-time). Distance and part-time (extramural evening) programmes have not attracted many students.

3.1.4 Teaching staff

70% of the academic staff have academic degrees. No less than half of the staff have at least 3 years of work experience. Five of the faculty seem to be working only at VBC and 22 have other positions in other institutions, many of them at Vilnius University. Lecturers have at least Master degrees. The lecturers' possibilities for research at the college are rather limited (and also seem to be so in the main employment).

3.1.5 Advantages and disadvantages of the Programme

Advantages:

The college can transfer its credits to other educational institutions giving students the choice of extending their studies if desired. The small number of students at the college can be seen as

a strength, allowing close contact between staff and students. The college also provides students with important experience in practical business skills.

Disadvantages:

Although having a clear SAR, it sometimes seemed that the actual practice in terms of formal procedures and documentary evidence was not as strong as it could be. Although staff-student relations appear to be good, there is a danger that reliance on part-time staff who are not integrated into a strong college culture may reduce the critical mass of teaching competence and limit the prospects for the programme's continued development. Distance learning students have problems to use internet, and where a part of the studies rely on such communication this can lead to difficulties. The small number of students gives also a risk that the financial situation may be precarious if levels of recruitment and retention cannot be consistently maintained.

4. Material conditions

The Vilnius Business College is moving to new premises soon after our visit. The premises the expert team saw were clearly below standard, a fact which the VBC representatives readily brought out themselves. For example, electrical wiring did not appear safe and the rest of the basic building infrastructure was of similar sub-standard quality, in relation to modern Lithuanian standards.

Computers were of sufficient quality. There was at least one computer projector. Since the school is very small, this might be satisfactory. The Internet connection was below acceptable standard (very slow).

The classrooms were acceptable. There were several classrooms, one of them fully equipped with video and audio equipment.

There were few books in the library, with very basic material. Students said that discussions with specialist-business practitioners and the Internet served to make up for the shortages of material in the library.

Given that the Vilnius Business College is expected to grow, a strategy for development of material conditions is necessary, and should be controlled in the new few years.

5. External relations

The college has useful contacts with national and local organizations. Meetings with employers confirmed that such contacts were substantive and utilised effectively to help students and the programme. Internationally the college has relations with institutions that allow their students to acquire bachelor's degrees and these appear to be welcomed by students. There is inward and outward exchange of students and staff exchanges are planned. A small number (2) of subjects are taught in English. Links with social partners enable students experience real working conditions, although it was felt that these could usefully be extended and broadened.

6. Feedback

Teaching staff use feedback as an assessment tool to review and improve their teaching methods and contents of the study programme. Their means are regular anonymous questionnaires during the studies and graduate opinion polls. Close contact to employers and various associations as well as education institutions gives useful feedback about graduates and about the reputation of the college in labour market.

Teachers give feedback in department meetings discussing their working conditions and opportunities to realise their potential in order to develop their competence. There is scope for improvement here with a more systematic approach to capturing and documenting feedback at the subject level.

7. Internal assurance of study quality

The presented SAR provided some structural and methodical approach toward internal quality assurance. However it gives almost no information and facts about practical activities in the field of internal quality assurance. Questions with staff at our visit suggested that the quality system was not as strong in practice as it appeared on paper and more attention should be given to ensuring that systems are adequately documented and supported by an explicit evidence-trail.

8. General assessment of the programmes within the study field

The general assessment of the program is positive, largely due to the small numbers and the fact that many of the faculty are qualified for higher education. The standard of student work meets the requirement for a vocational training. However, there was some concern that the college was not putting sufficient resources into the development of a distinct sense of pedagogic mission and the creation of a culture to encourage staff, especially part-timers, to work creatively to ensure the college develops proactively within the country's fast-changing economy. As well as the advantages and disadvantages for each programme in the text, the overall recommendations of the experts are given in 8.1 below:

8.1 Recommendation to the higher education institution

- The co-operation with colleges abroad in order to give the students a chance to receive a bachelors degree within an extra year is good. That will, in a longer perspective, create a demand for offering courses taught in English. Something to prepare for the coming years.
- The college's coming movement to new premises may give new opportunities for the programme, and the school must now focus on strategies to move forward. We would recommend that the college management works to strengthen the culture of forward-looking innovation within the college in order to match its pedagogic achievements to its improving material conditions.
- The practical elements in the program of practice and internship seem to be the strengths for the studies; these should be further strengthened, perhaps by contacts with a wider and more diverse range of social and commercial partners.
- The critical mass of faculty is rather small due to the great number of part time teacher. That can be a hindrance for development of a strong college, especially when the transition to the new premises is a reality. The core competencies rely more or less on the part-time teacher.
- The internal quality assurance of diploma work could be more developed and be done in a more systematic way.
- The small-number advantage for close relations between students and faculty is good but due to the reliance on part-time teachers may be more fragile than an institution with more full-time staff.
- Library and computer standards are low but will, hopefully, increase in the new location.

8.2. Proposal on accreditation

Vilnius Business College:

- Non-university study programme *Business Management* (state code 65303S134) is given **conditional accreditation**

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